
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 June 2018

by Robert Parker BSc (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4 July 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/G1250/W/17/3190322

3 Southbourne Coast Road, Bournemouth BH6 4BE

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Highdean Ltd against the decision of Bournemouth Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 7-2017-19611-C, dated 28 June 2017, was refused by notice dated 27 September 2017.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing dwelling and construction of two (semi-detached) dwellings.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The appeal is accompanied by a revised layout plan which omits the garages for both plots. Although the local highway authority has been able to comment on the plan, it has not been the subject of public consultation and would have implications for other matters such as cycle parking. My determination of this appeal is made on the basis of the plans considered by the Council.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in this case are:
 - a) the adequacy or otherwise of the proposed parking arrangement and its effect on highway safety in Warren Edge Close and surrounding streets;
 - b) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - c) the effect on the living conditions of the occupiers on 5 Southbourne Coast Road, with particular reference to outlook.

Reasons

Parking

4. Policy CS16 of the Bournemouth Local Plan: Core Strategy (2012) (Core Strategy) stipulates that parking provision for new development shall be in accordance with the Council's adopted parking standards. Those standards, contained within the Parking Supplementary Planning Document (2014) (SPD), are expressed as benchmarks which are applied on a zonal basis to reflect differing accessibility

levels. The SPD sets out the general presumption that sufficient car parking should be provided within the development in accordance with the benchmark figures for the appropriate zone. It explains that there should be no reliance on on-street parking, unless it has been appropriately designed in from the start (i.e. large new residential developments). The guidance states that robust justification should be provided to support any variation from the benchmark figures. Displacement parking in surrounding streets is not supported, unless sufficient and adequate on-street capacity has been demonstrated.

5. The benchmark figure in this case is two allocated spaces per dwelling, plus an additional space for visitors. The plans show a garage and parking space for each of the units and therefore there is a shortfall of one space against the Council's adopted standards. Visitors would be expected to park on the road or in the nearby public car park. At the time of my inspection, which took place at mid-morning on a weekday, there were numerous spaces free. However, on a weekend and during the holiday season the competition for spaces is likely to be significantly greater due to the close proximity of the beach. There is no evidence, in the form of a parking survey and assessment of 'Parking Stress', to demonstrate that there is on-street capacity to absorb the displaced visitor parking during these busier periods.
6. The parking court for both proposed dwellings would be accessed via the existing narrow driveway belonging to 3 Southbourne Coast Road. The local highway authority has provided swept path analyses which illustrate the protracted manoeuvres that cars would have to undertake to access and egress the spaces. In certain instances multi-point turns would be required but in others there would be insufficient room to enable a vehicle to turn around on site to exit in forward gear. This is notwithstanding the specification of spaces that are larger than required. Whilst I note that the swept path analyses are based on the dimensions of a large car, there is no detailed evidence to persuade me that the arrangement would be acceptable even for smaller cars. In any event, the layout needs to be appropriate for all types and sizes of domestic vehicle.
7. The appellant acknowledges that there may be occasions when drivers are forced to reverse their vehicles along the shared driveway onto Warren Edge Close. It is suggested that residents would use each other's spaces for turning. However, this relies upon a level of cooperation which may not be forthcoming. Whilst I accept that reversing onto the turning head of the cul-de-sac is not unsafe due to the low traffic speeds and the absence of through traffic, the constrained parking layout and resultant conflict between users is likely to deter use of the allocated parking spaces. In my opinion, residents would be more inclined to park on-street for convenience. As with the visitor parking, there is no firm evidence to show that Warren Edge Close and surrounding streets have the ability to accommodate overspill parking all year round without the adverse highway impacts which arise from obstructing pavements, driveway entrances and junction visibility splays.
8. I conclude that the proposed development would conflict with Core Strategy Policy CS16 as supported by the SPD. Based on the evidence presented, there are no material considerations to outweigh this conflict. The failure to make adequate on-site parking provision would be likely to result in unacceptable highway safety issues in the locality, particularly during the busy summer period. The substandard parking layout would also constitute poor design which brings the scheme into conflict with Core Strategy Policy CS41.

Character and appearance

9. The appeal site is bounded to the east by a detached bungalow and to the west by Clear Waters, a modern flatted scheme which marks the junction of Warren Edge Close and Southbourne Coast Road. The wider area is characterised by its mix of building scales which range from diminutive bungalows to substantial blocks of flats. On the north-western frontage of Warren Edge Close stands a new development of 2½ storey apartments which were permitted on the plot of a former bungalow. This sets the context for the proposed development.
10. The Council raises no issue with the proposed architectural language and given the diversity of styles evident in Southbourne I have no reason to take a different view. The new building would have the same contemporary feel as other recent developments in the area. The matter in dispute is whether the scale and massing of the development would be appropriate to its surroundings.
11. The proposed dwellings would be deeper than the existing bungalow but they would also be marginally narrower. The development would contain 3 floors of accommodation but its vertical scale would resemble a 2-storey house with the top floor Juliette balconies neatly recessed within the front gables. The height of the building would fall somewhere between the tallest part of Clear Waters and the roof ridge of 5 Southbourne Coast Road. Its position within the plot and the hipping of the roof away from the side boundaries would ensure that adequate space is maintained between adjacent structures.
12. Although the scheme would be visibly bulkier than the neighbouring bungalow, the relationship would not be significantly different to that which presently exists between Clear Waters and 3 Southbourne Coast Road. Having regard to this, and the above assessment, I do not share the Council's view that the development would appear cramped and out of scale. The new building would sit comfortably within its plot and it would make an effective transition between the larger flatted block on one side and the domestic scale dwellings on the other.
13. I therefore conclude on this issue that the proposal would not cause material harm to the character or appearance of the area. It would comply with Core Strategy Policies CS6, CS21 and CS41 and saved Policy 6.8 of the Bournemouth District Wide Local Plan (LP), insofar as these policies seek good design which complements and respects the street scene and surrounding townscape.

Living conditions

14. The Council contends that the proposal would be overbearing and oppressive for the occupiers of No 5. There can be no question that the new building would appear taller and bulkier in comparison to the existing bungalow. However, the additional scale would be mitigated by the lower ground levels on the appeal site and the pitching of the roof away from the boundary. The development would sit almost directly in line with the buildings on either side and in my judgement it would not have a detrimental effect on the enjoyment of the neighbours' rear garden. The relationship would be comparable to that which already exists between Clear Waters and the bungalow on the appeal site, with the occupiers of No 5 having a similar outlook. I therefore find that the proposal would not have an unacceptable adverse effect on their living conditions. The scheme would respect the amenities of neighbouring residents in compliance with Core Strategy Policies CS21 and CS41 and LP Policy 6.8.

Other Matters

15. My attention is drawn to the fact that a similar parking arrangement was deemed acceptable under a previous refused scheme. The reasons for this are unclear but the planning history does not justify an unsatisfactory parking arrangement in this case.
16. I have noted the concern from one local resident that the proposal would block the last remaining sliver of sea view from her property. Whilst I empathise, the protection of a private view is not a matter to which I can attach any significant weight. It does not justify dismissal of the appeal.
17. The appellant has supplied a copy of a signed unilateral undertaking which would secure a financial contribution to fund measures to mitigate the effect of the proposal on the ecology of the Dorset Heathlands European sites. This would overcome part of the reason for refusal. However, it does not address my fundamental concerns regarding parking provision and thus has not had a significant bearing on my decision.

Conclusion

18. I have concluded that there would be no material harm to the character or appearance of the area, or the living conditions of neighbours. However, the appeal scheme would have substandard parking arrangements which bring the scheme into conflict with Core Strategy Policies CS16 and CS41. I have taken account of the policy support for urban intensification in this location, but in the overall balance there are no material considerations to justify a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.
19. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Parker

INSPECTOR