

## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 January 2018

**by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 27 February 2019**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/G1250/W/18/3211939**

**Connaught Lodge, 32 West Hill Road, West Cliff, Bournemouth BH2 5PH**

- 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 Soubise Ltd against the decision of Bournemouth Borough Council.
  - The application, Ref. 7-2017-5877-AM, dated 17 August 2018, was refused by notice dated 13 April 2018.
  - The development proposed is the extension of the mansard roof to form 5 additional hotel bedrooms.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Preliminary Matter and Main Issue

2. The Notice of Refusal includes a passing comment as to the proposal being of poor design. Paragraph 4.5 of the Council's appeal statement says this refers to the parking arrangements of the proposal. Be that as it may, the site falls within the West Cliff and Poole Hill Conservation Area and paragraph 15 of the officer's report (which in my view correctly analyses the impact of the proposal on the existing building and its surroundings) concludes that, on balance, the roof extension is acceptable. The proposed extension would therefore at least preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.
3. Accordingly, the main issue is the effect on surrounding roads as regards the free flow of traffic and highway safety as a result of any increase in demand for visitor parking.

### Reasons

4. The parking for the additional visitor accommodation falls to be considered in the light of the Council's Parking Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) 2014. Despite the appellant's assertions I consider this relevant and note that it requires that new hotel bedrooms are provided with one parking space per bedroom. On this basis the proposed development should provide five new parking spaces. As the existing hotel (the Lodge plus the main hotel) already has a shortfall of 15 spaces under the SPD this would increase to 20 as a result of the development.
  5. The Planning and Transport department of the Council (the Highway Authority) considers that the lack of parking provision for the development would displace
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vehicles to surrounding roads, exacerbating existing parking pressure. The likely consequence would be inconsiderate and illegal parking on roads close to the hotel, prejudicial to highway safety.

6. In response to these arguments the appellant commissioned a parking survey and I have given this careful consideration. This indicated that over three separate periods there was spare capacity within the survey area of at least eight spaces at any one time. It was concluded that the existing hotel does not operate at a capacity that requires the SPD provision of one space per room.
7. However, I share the Council's reservations as to the survey findings, in particular because the survey was conducted at the end of the first week in January, quite possibly one of the quietest periods of the year for visitors in that it was too late to capture the Christmas and New Year visitor trade in Bournemouth's tourism industry. In any event I consider it is certainly not likely to be representative of the demand for parking by hotel guests during the peaks of Easter and the summer period.
8. The Highway Authority's evidence includes a parking survey conducted in early December 2018 (11 months after the appellant's survey) and although again not peak season, at a time busier than the appellant's survey, possibly because it was in the run up to Christmas. In two separate 15 minute spot surveys (Tuesday evening and Sunday morning) this found a high occupancy of parking in both hotel car parks including double parking at the main hotel, and seven examples of illegal parking in roads close to the appeal premises.
9. In terms of existing parking stress within 100m of the appeal site, this amounts to a maximum of 104%, including parking on double yellow lines, and predicted to rise to 110% with the proposed development. Further evidence provided by the Highway Authority is in the form of a report on parking obstructions reported to the police between October 2011 and March 2015, and a Parking Review for the town centre and the Lansdowne carried out in November 2017. Both documents show a high incidence of inconsiderate / illegal parking in West Hill Road and nearby roads.
10. I acknowledge that no amount of surveys, whether carried out by the appellant or the Council, can predict with absolute certainty that an additional five bedrooms at Connaught Lodge would in themselves directly lead to specific cases of obstruction or illegal parking in roads near to Connaught Lodge. Indeed, I note that the appellant refers, albeit without any great detail, to the operation of a valet parking system at the hotel that would have the effect of increasing actual capacity when there is a shortage of available on-site spaces.
11. Nonetheless, I consider the Highway Authority's evidence through its wider base and greater detail to be more persuasive than the appellant's arguments in this appeal. From all that I have seen and read, a clear picture has been painted of an existing high degree of parking stress in the West Cliff area of Bournemouth. Despite the lack of absolute certainty, the appeal scheme would be highly likely to add parking demand to a site where there is already an existing shortfall of spaces under the Council's adopted parking standards. And there is in my view a probability rather than a possibility that at times this will create a further need for parking in roads already effectively at full capacity. Even if I accept the appellant's point in relation to the valet parking, I am not satisfied that this

would either be adequate to prevent or sufficiently mitigate the off-site parking stress, or that it could be relied on to continue in the long term.

12. The link between the excess of demand over supply and the consequences for highway safety and convenience has been explained by the Council - namely vehicles obstructing sight lines at junctions; individual private accesses; pedestrian dropped kerbs, and pavements (necessitating pedestrians walking in the road). Furthermore, the Bournemouth Visitor Survey of 2013 reported that nine out of ten hotel guests in Bournemouth arrive by car, and there is no substantive or persuasive evidence in this appeal either that this is too high a percentage for Connaught Lodge or that this figure will be lower in the future. I also note that the nearby Durley Road public car park with its capacity of 112 spaces is earmarked for development by the Council and cannot therefore be relied on in the future as an alternative parking location for holiday visitors.
13. A number of other matters have been raised by the appellant, including the parking provision at the Travelodge in West Hill Road and the Premier Inn in Poole Road. However, the context of the latter is quite different, whilst I do not consider the fact that these hotels operate successfully would justify a decision in this appeal that on my assessment of its particular merits would be likely to result in existing acute parking problems in the area being made worse.
14. Overall, and taking these and all other matters raised for the appellant into account, I conclude that the proposed extension would be likely to lead to the displacement of vehicles onto surrounding roads and that this in turn would have an unacceptably adverse effect on the free flow of traffic and highway safety. This would be in conflict with Policy CS16 of the Bournemouth Local Plan: Core Strategy 2012 and insofar as the scheme would not contribute positively to the safety of the public realm also with Policy CS41. The scheme would additionally not be in accord with paragraphs 108 and 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2018.
15. For the reasons explained above, the appeal is dismissed.

*Martin Andrews*

INSPECTOR