



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 July 2019

by Rachael Pipkin, BA (Hons), MPhil, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th August 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/B1740/W/19/3226917

New Forest Water Park, Ringwood Road, Fordingbridge, SP6 2EY

- 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 Mark Jury against the decision of New Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref: 18/11130 dated 17 August 2018, was refused by notice dated 9 January 2019.
 - The development proposed is erection of clubhouse including accommodation for fishery manager.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the countryside.

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies on the west bank of the middle lake of the three Hucklestone Lakes which are used in association with the New Forest Water Park. This lake has no built development and is used for coarse fishing with access restricted to members of the club. The northern lake is primarily given over to water sports with a large area of parking and a substantial clubhouse at its north-western corner.
4. Planning permission was previously granted by the Council for a new building to serve recreational users of the lake for boating purposes at the northern end of this lake. From my site visit, I observed that some limited groundworks had been carried out where this building would be located. Since that permission, an earlier scheme for an alternative clubhouse, on the western side of the lake, in association with the current use of the site, was dismissed on appeal¹ on the grounds that the proposed building's height and bulk would make it stand out in relation to the undeveloped natural rural context, damaging the rural character of the area. The Inspector also found that the building would be located in a more tranquil part of the water park and that the additional activity would add to its prominence.

¹ APP/B1740/W/16/3155045

5. The proposed development would be sited in the same place as the previous appeal on the western side of the lake, just north of a small mounded promontory, in a cleared area of woodland. It would be visible from a number of viewpoints around the lake and glimpses of the site could be gained from the access road leading from the A338 road to the east of the site.
6. From the measurements set out in the Council's committee report, the main difference between the previous appeal and the one before me relates to the height of the building which when viewed from the lake would be around 1.5 metres lower and from the rear, lower by approximately 3 metres, which is almost half the height of the previous proposal for this site. There would be a small increase in the length of the building as viewed from the front and rear but a reduction in the width. The overall floorspace would be similar to the previous scheme, with around a third of the space at first floor level indicated as a reception area/caretaker's sleeping area for occasional use for supervision purposes.
7. The Inspector in relation to the previous appeal considered the caretaker's accommodation to be disproportionate in relation to the basic requirements for an occasional overnight stay which resulted in a high and bulky building. In this case, the accommodation would form part of a shared space with the reception area. The precise layout of this accommodation has not been provided, however, this shared space would be a large area which would presumably need to be subdivided to provide the caretaker with some degree of privacy when staying overnight.
8. The revisions to the scheme have reduced the overall height by removing the personal space accommodation from the roof space, however, the shared space in this scheme would be accommodated in a long and boxy looking rear projection to the building. This would occupy a prominent area of relatively open grassland at the top of the bank next to a footpath running around the lake. While the height of this part of the building would be relatively low, the design of the rear projection with its flat roof would appear clumsy, bulky and incongruous in the context of the main part of the building with its pitched roof.
9. The appellant has sought to overcome the previous issues around the height and two-storey appearance of the building by reducing its ridge height. From the lakeside elevation, the balcony would project at a low level over the water with the ground floor area beyond and I do not find this gives a two-storey appearance. However, when viewed from across the lake, the addition of windows and a balcony at first floor level within the roof slope emphasises the size and height of the building. Therefore, despite its reduced height and focal point of entry, the proposed building would still appear bulky and as a substantial addition to this undeveloped shoreline when viewed from across the lake. The small increase in its length on its lakeside elevation would add to this.
10. I observed during my site visit that this section of shoreline has few trees. Some additional trees would need to be removed to accommodate the proposed development. However, there would still be trees to the side and rear of the proposed building. This would provide a wooded backdrop which the proposed building, with the use of appropriate materials including wooden cladding, would blend in with.

11. There is no change in terms of the location of the proposed clubhouse, and, with a similar amount of floorspace being provided, the additional activity associated with this building in this tranquil location would be almost identical to the previous appeal. While this on its own would not render the development unacceptable given that there is already activity associated with the lawful recreational use of the site, it does contribute to the overall impact of the development on the rural character of the site.
12. I accept that there is a need for a facility to serve the needs of users of the middle lake. However, I find that the design and scale of the proposed scheme, due to its height and bulk, in this location, would harm the rural character of the site.
13. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the countryside. It would therefore conflict with Policy CS2 of the New Forest District Core Strategy (New Forest District outside the National Park) (the Core Strategy) 2009 and DM25 of the New Forest District Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management (New Forest District outside the National Park) 2014. Together these policies, among other things, seek well designed development that contributes positively to its setting and support development associated with recreational uses where it would not unacceptably impact on rural character. Policy CS10 of the Core Strategy deals with the spatial strategy for the district and is not directly relevant in this case.

Other Matters

14. The appellant has indicated that he does not intend to continue with the extant planning permission as it was designed in association with the use of the lake for boating and that he would confirm this by a legal agreement. I have not been provided with any such agreement during the appeal process. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, I have not pursued this matter further.
15. I note the appellant's point about the Council's consideration of the submitted documentation, but in reaching my decision I have had regard to all the evidence submitted as part of the appeal based on its own planning merits.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Rachael Pipkin

Inspector