
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 September 2019

by Andrew Tucker BA (Hons) IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/G1250/W/19/3229628

14 Russel Road, Bournemouth BH10 7HD

- 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 Mrs Leslie Rigler against the decision of Bournemouth Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 7-2018-24600-B, dated 18 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 22 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is to provide 2 no parking spaces on existing front lawn.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed

Preliminary Matters

2. On 1 April 2019 Bournemouth Borough Council merged with Borough of Poole Council and Christchurch Borough Council to become Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. The development plans for the merged local planning authority remain in place for the former area of Bournemouth Borough Council until such a time as they are revoked or replaced. It is therefore necessary to determine this appeal with reference to policies set out in the plans produced by the now dissolved Bournemouth Borough Council.

Main Issue

3. The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is in an area of spacious mid 20th century housing. Buildings are set back from the road, behind generous front gardens. Although some of these front garden areas have been altered through the introduction of hedges and fences, the majority are fairly open. This spacious appearance is a significant characteristic of the area.
5. Despite the generous depth of front plots there is almost no off-road parking to the fronts of buildings in the area. Off-road parking is to the side of buildings, or in the form of garage blocks to the rear. This is the case with the recently formed parking area to the east of the appeal site, associated with a neighbouring flat, which, in a position to the side of the building, does not appear to be out of character.
6. The appeal site relates to a block of two storey flats, which is set back behind a large open area that is laid to lawn. Although evidence suggests that parts of

this open area belong to each flat, the area looks more like a single communal space shared between the flats as it has very little physical division. The appellant suggests that the area is featureless and has limited design quality. However, at my visit I found that the simple open area provides a generous space between the building and the road that is of benefit to the living conditions of its occupants, and contributes to the spacious character of the area. The building is very similar to nearby buildings. Although the space at the front of No 28 has been divided up more significantly it is not used for off road parking. Furthermore, a similar building on the opposite side of the road to the southwest of the appeal site has almost no subdivision at the front.

7. The proposal would alter a central portion of the front area by introducing an area of hardstanding for the parking of two cars. The proposed hedges to either side would soften its appearance to a certain extent, however the presence of parked cars would still be very apparent over the height of the hedges, and to the front where the hardstanding area would be open to the road. As a result, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area by reducing the open appearance of the area fronting the building and introducing on-plot parking to the front of the building, which is an arrangement that is almost entirely unseen in the area. The appellant suggests that she could plant hedges without planning permission. However, new planting in isolation would not have the same harmful effect.
8. Although the road is wide enough to safely accommodate parked cars on either side, evidence submitted suggests that finding space to park a car in the evenings can be difficult. The appellant rents a garage, although it is understood that this is distant from the property and access to the garage can be difficult. Furthermore, the appellant is a blue badge holder. A disabled parking bay is marked out on the road, close to the appeal site, however this is often used legitimately by a neighbouring resident. Whilst I give this matter considerable weight there is no information before me to suggest that a further disabled parking bay could not be marked out, or that the existing bay could not be extended to accommodate two cars. This matter is therefore not sufficient to outweigh the harm I have found in relation to the character and appearance of the area.
9. I note that the Council's Highways Officer did not object to the scheme, and differing advice was received from its Housing and Communities Office. I must however determine the application on its own merits, on the basis of the evidence before me and my visit to the site.
10. At my visit I viewed the parking area that has been formed at the front of No 38. This parking area does not relate well to neighbouring front gardens or those opposite, and in any case, as an isolated example, has not altered the prevailing character of the area.
11. In summary, the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policy CS41 of the Bournemouth Local Plan: Core Strategy adopted 2012, which seeks to ensure that development proposals are well designed to respect local distinctiveness.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons above, the appeal should be dismissed.

Andrew Tucker

INSPECTOR