



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 August 2019

by Tim Crouch DipUD MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/T1410/W/19/3230765

26 Meads House, Denton Road, Eastbourne BN20 7ST

- 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 Prital Moskal of Meads Care against the decision of Eastbourne Borough Council.
 - The application Ref PC/190038, dated 14 January 2019, was refused by notice dated 24 April 2019.
 - The development proposed is change of use from existing residential care home (C2) to 9 x residential apartments (C3). Single-storey side and rear extension. The rear extension will be located in the existing garden at a lower level to the existing ground floor. Provision of new car & cycle parking spaces within the front garden. Addition of a new internal passenger lift and internal refurbishments to suit the new layout. Demolition of the existing garage structure.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. As part of the appeal the appellant has provided plans demonstrating vehicle tracking within the frontage of the site to show how parking spaces would be accessed and the associated manoeuvring to exit the site in a forward gear. This adds more detail to the proposed parking spaces and I do not consider any views prejudiced by acceptance of these plans. I have therefore considered these as part of this appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are firstly, whether the proposal would represent overdevelopment of the site due to the number of units proposed and the arrangement and number of off-street vehicle parking, and secondly, whether the off-street parking provision would lead to an issue of highway safety.

Reasons

Whether the proposal would represent overdevelopment

4. The site is a substantial detached two storey property with rooms within the roof. It is an attractive Arts and Crafts Edwardian style building forming part of the strong character of the north-west side of Denton Road. This character is created by the uniformity of similar sized and style properties set spaciouly in their plots, within which landscaping combines with the street trees to create a spacious and verdant character. The site lies within the Meads Conservation

- Area (CA). The CA Appraisal document identifies the open and spacious character as a notable characteristic of this part of the CA and notes that the north-west side of Denton Road provides the most complete group of such houses within it. These were originally large detached dwellings with gardens. The significance of the CA is therefore partially derived from the consistent style and size of the properties set within a spacious and green character.
5. The existing front boundary comprises of a flint and brick wall, containing planting and landscaping behind, which rises above and contributes to the verdant character. Behind this is gravelled drive with some parking and turning.
 6. Whilst the proposal would convert the building to additional dwellings, these would mostly be contained within extensions already permitted to the building. However, the proposal would introduce 6 formal car parking spaces and remove much of the landscaping features to accommodate this use. Whilst some features are proposed to remain, and I note that the appellant considers only a very small percentage of the landscaping to be affected, the resultant frontage would appear much more urban due to the proportion of frontage required for parking and the proximity to the front boundary. This would therefore be visible and incongruous within the streetscene.
 7. Moreover, some of those features identified to be retained would also be under pressure from vehicles as shown on the tracking plans, with spaces 1, 3 and 4 required to cross or overhang the features and space 6 located directly underneath the canopy of a mature tree. Whilst the drive currently passes underneath the canopy, the proposal identifies this as a formal dedicated space and will increase the impact.
 8. Overall this would create an urban and stark frontage harmfully out of character with the wider area. Whilst the proposal would convert the building to additional dwellings, these would mostly be contained within existing extensions permitted to the building. The number of spaces and level of parking would also highlight the density of the proposal and appear over developed. This would be exacerbated by the proposed number of bins required to serve the units positioned in the open frontage, as well as the constrained shape of parking space 5, and the manoeuvring area of parking space 1 appearing to impinge on the area for secure cycle parking spaces.
 9. I recognise that the building has been used as a care home, however much of the original spacious and verdant character of detached dwellings within the streetscene still exists on site. Whilst these parking plans might be indicative and could be rearranged, the plans represent the appellant's proposals, no doubt following detailed consideration, and I am not convinced that there is sufficient space for an alternative layout to be subject to condition.
 10. I also note that the appellant considers the density to be suitable with an ample amount of the overall site area retained for low intensity amenity use. However, this is mainly to the rear and does not mitigate the impact within the streetscene.
 11. The proposal would therefore harm the significance of the CA due to the arrangement and number of off street parking spaces creating a harmfully urban and stark frontage which would appear over developed. Whilst the harm to the CA as a whole and its significance would be less than substantial, the

modest improvement to housing supply, which is not specific to the detail of the appeal proposal, would be little public benefit to outweigh this harm.

12. The proposal would therefore be contrary to saved policies UHT1 and TR11, in so far as it relates to design matters, of the Eastbourne Borough Plan (Saved Policies 2007) (EBP). Taken together, and amongst other objectives, these require development to harmonise with the appearance and character of the local environment, respecting local distinctiveness and ensuring car parking is not visually dominant.
13. Although not listed on the Council's reason for refusal, the proposal would also be contrary to Policy UHT15 of the EBP as this harm would mean that the development would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the CA.

Highway safety

14. The proposal seeks to provide 6 car parking spaces on site which would meet with the East Sussex County Council (ESCC) parking standards, however it is noted that this is subject to discretion based on site specific circumstances. I recognise that there is a level of local concern in relation to parking, identified in part due to the proximity of University buildings and I recognise that a small number of visitors and proposed residents may wish to park on the street.
15. However, I am also aware that the site is considered a sustainable location by ESCC given the proximity of regular bus services into the town centre and the area is not identified as an area of parking stress by the ESCC. It is also identified that the daily trip rate for a care home would be similar to the proposed number of flats, which would also require parking for staff and visitors and which could involve parking in the road whether or not this proposal is allowed. I give these circumstances material weight.
16. The width of Denton Road is generous, reflecting the openness of the area. It is sufficient to accommodate vehicles parking on one side, with double yellow line restrictions on the opposite edge. The pedestrian footpath on either side is set in from the carriageway separated by a distinct grass verge and occasional street trees. Therefore, given this width, ability to accommodate parked cars and allow flow of traffic, and provision of separation of pedestrians from the vehicle carriageway, combined with the circumstances of the existing Care Home use, I do not consider that the proposal would result in a harmful impact on highway safety for pedestrians or drivers in this case, despite the local concerns. The proposal would therefore not be in conflict with saved policy TR11 of the EBP, in relation to parking standards, or paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) in relation to highway safety.

Other matters

17. I recognise that there are other flats within the street, however overall these retain the open and verdant character identified as a characteristic of the CA and are materially different in size and scale to this proposal.

Conclusion

18. Despite finding that the proposal would not result in highway or pedestrian safety issues, I consider that it would be harmful to the significance of the CA and whilst this harm to the CA as a whole would be less than substantial, this

harm would not be outweighed by the public benefits. Therefore, I consider that the proposal is contrary to the development plan taken as a whole.

19. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Tim Crouch

INSPECTOR