
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 July 2020

by Robert Parker BSc (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 July 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/B1740/W/20/3246926

Walton Court, Renda Road, Holbury SO45 2LZ

- 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 Mr C Wingfield against the decision of New Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref 19/10942, dated 23 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 29 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is residential development; associated parking; cycle and bin storage; access from Waltons Avenue.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of development in the banner heading above is taken from the application form. However, the proposal would be more accurately described as the erection of a single 2-bedroom dwelling attached to Walton Court.
3. The Council made its decision prior to the adoption of the New Forest District Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning Strategy (NFDLP). Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy referenced on the decision notice has been superseded by NFDLP Policy ENV3 and this policy has full weight as part of the development plan. The parties have been able to comment on the implications of the altered policy context.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - a) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - b) whether the proposal would provide adequate car parking and cycle storage space, and the effect of any parking shortfall on highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. Walton Court is prominently located at the corner of Waltons Avenue and Renda Road. The block is subdivided into four self-contained flats, with areas to the front and side dedicated to garden space and land at the rear used informally for parking. The surrounding area is predominantly residential, with the majority of properties in this part of Holbury comprising bungalows set back from the road behind landscaped front gardens. Walton Court and the almost

identical Waltons Grange on the opposite corner are unusual in being two-storey; together they frame the entrance to Waltons Avenue. Both buildings are set back from the junction and respect the established building line of bungalows in Waltons Avenue. There is a prevailing sense of spaciousness, a feeling which is reinforced by the low-rise nature of the surrounding bungalows and the public open space on the corner of Renda Road and Watton Road.

6. The proposal follows the dismissal of an appeal¹ for a scheme of two flats on the site. The latest plans show an extension of simpler form and reduced mass, flush with the front and rear walls of the host building and with a matching pitched roof and gable end. The development would sit further from Waltons Avenue in comparison to the previous scheme, but it would nonetheless breach the strong building line which is a distinctive feature of the road. There can be no certainty that the existing roadside hedging would be retained in the long term, but even if this could be guaranteed the hedging would not disguise the height of the extension or its proximity to the pavement. The structure would be unduly prominent in the street scene of Waltons Avenue and it would intrude on the spaciousness of the junction by creating a visual pinch point.
7. The appellant has drawn my attention to the development at 2 Oakley Close where a two-storey dwelling abuts the back edge of the public footpath. I do not know the background to that scheme, or the policies under which it was considered, but that site does not have the prominence of the appeal site, or the same spacious setting. It does not weigh in favour of allowing the appeal.
8. Notwithstanding any improvements over the previous scheme, I conclude that the proposal would cause material harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policy ENV3 of the NFDLP and Policies D1 and D3 of the Hythe and Dibden Neighbourhood Plan, insofar as these policies seek high quality design which responds to local character and context.

Parking and cycle storage

9. The plans show that the proposed dwelling would be provided with 2 parking spaces within the open area to the rear of the building. This would accord with the recommendations of the Council's Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (2012) (SPD).
10. There would be room on the land for a further 4 parking spaces to serve existing residents. One space is already allocated to a flat which has been purchased, leaving a further 3 spaces to be shared between 3 flats. It is unclear, on the evidence provided, how many bedrooms are in those flats, but based on my observations it is reasonable to expect that they are either 1-bed or 2-bed units. The SPD requirement would be between 4.2 and 4.5 spaces, and therefore there would be a shortfall against the standards.
11. Although on-street parking was available at the time of my visit, there is no evidence before me to demonstrate that there would be capacity at times of peak demand such as evenings and weekends. The carriageways are modest in width and kerbside parking in some locations would make manoeuvring out of driveways difficult. Parking in the vicinity of the crossroads would present an obstruction to visibility and create a hazard. For these reasons, I do not consider that it would be appropriate to accept parking below the SPD standard.

¹ APP/B1740/W/18/3211941

12. The unsurfaced nature of the present parking area provides flexibility over vehicle placement and manoeuvring. However, under the proposed arrangements drivers would need to park closer together in a more formal way. The northernmost spaces do not provide an aisle width of 6.0 m as recommended within Manual for Streets and there is no tracking diagram to demonstrate that vehicles would be able to enter and exit the site in forward gear. This weighs against the proposal.
13. The Council contends that there would be inadequate provision for cycle storage. However, the plans show a cycle store which would meet the SPD standard for a 2-bed dwelling. It is unreasonable to insist upon provision for the existing flats in order to rectify a pre-existing deficiency.
14. I have not been directed to any development plan policies on the subject of parking. Nevertheless, I conclude that the car parking arrangements would be inadequate and in conflict with the Council's SPD.

Other Matters

15. The appeal site lies within the buffer zone of several European protected sites². The appellant does not dispute the need to make a contribution towards measures which will mitigate the adverse impact that residential development may have upon these designations. It is proposed to deal with this by means of a negatively worded Grampian condition. Had I been minded to allow the appeal I would have needed to consider whether a condition would comply with the exceptional circumstances test set out within the Planning Practice Guidance³. However, since I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons this is not a matter which needs to be addressed in my decision.

Conclusion and Planning Balance

16. The Report on the Examination of the NFDLP concluded that it was not absolutely clear whether or not there would be a five-year supply of housing sites when the Local Plan is adopted. However, the Inspectors felt that on balance, it is likely that there would be. The appellant has not provided any substantive evidence on this matter and therefore I consider that the tilted balance set out in the paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework should not apply. Even in the scenario that it did, the adverse impacts arising from the harm to the character and appearance of the area and the deficiency in car parking provision would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the very modest social and economic benefits of delivering a single dwelling in a location which is within walking distance of shops, services and public transport.
17. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Parker

INSPECTOR

² New Forest SAC/SPA/Ramsar site

³ Reference ID: 21a-010-20190723