
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 October 2020

by William Walton BA MSc Dip Env Law LLM CPE BVC MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12th November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H0738/W/20/3249667

Land adjacent to Sopwith House, Sopwith Close, Preston Farm Industrial Estate, Stockton-On-Tees TS18 3TT

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant full planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Harold Eddy against the decision of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/2652/REV, dated 9 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 3 February 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as the construction of a single-storey building containing garage / store with associated alterations to car parking arrangements.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. In the interests of brevity, the description of development has been shortened from that given in the Planning Application.

Main Issues

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal upon vehicle parking on Sopwith Close and the consequential implications for the safety of pedestrians and other highway users.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is an area of parking within Sopwith Park, a small business park which is part of the larger Preston Farm Industrial Estate in Stockton-on-Tees. The business park comprises 3 approximately equal sized 2-storey office blocks and associated car parking set within a secure fenced compound. Adjacent to the business park is Sopwith Close which has no parking restrictions along it.
5. The development proposal comprises the erection of a single-storey garage and storage building, to be used by the Cleveland Housing Trust (the CHT), and the associated rearrangement of parking provision to the front of Unit B at Sopwith Park. The single storey garage would occupy an area currently taken up by 4 parking spaces.
6. The CHT occupies the adjacent office block known as Sopwith House and also owns and has control over the rest of Sopwith Park. Currently the CHT uses a building known as Pragnell House adjacent to the business park for storage purposes, but this is to be sold.

7. Sopwith Park has 42 car parking spaces including 6 for disabled users. In addition to the 4 spaces that would be directly lost through the erection of the garage the development would generate the need for an extra space.
8. The Appellant proposes to release a small tarmacked area adjacent to one of the other 2 office blocks ('Unit B') currently denoted on plans as 'hardstanding' and mark it out instead for 3 additional regulatory-sized car parking spaces (see DWG 4316/22 – 25 July 2019).
9. During my visit I noted that this area of hardstanding was already marked out for the parking of 5 vehicles although was taped-off and so unavailable for use. However, the spaces were tightly configured within what is a rather confined corner of the business park. There was probably only room for 3 spaces as shown in the relevant drawing.
10. The addition of these 4 spaces would fail to provide sufficient parking provision to compensate for the development. Although the shortfall would only be by 1 space there is evidence that pressure for parking spaces from occupants of the business park is already leading to the overflow of cars on to the adjacent veterinary surgeon's car park. Given this, the development would probably exacerbate this pressure and lead to further overflow onto the adjacent Sopwith Close.
11. This road is not subject to any parking restrictions. However, the road is used by heavy lorries and further on-street parking would increase the possibility of an accident to an unacceptable degree.
12. Because the development proposal would fail to provide a sufficient level of compensatory parking on-site it would not accord with Policy SD8 (1f) of the Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan 2019 which requires that new development provide safe and satisfactory access and parking.
13. Furthermore, the proposal would fail to comport with the guidelines governing B1 use (office / financial and professional services) set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document No 3: Parking Provision for Development 2011 which requires, inter alia, sufficient operational and area parking for vehicle manoeuvring within the site.
14. Finally, since the proposal would have an adverse effect on highway safety it would not accord with the advice set out at Paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Conclusion

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

William Walton

INSPECTOR