
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 October 2020

by J Gibson BUEP MPIA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/D0121/W/20/3256135

69 Beach Road, Weston-Super-Mare BS23 4BG

- 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 Beach (WSM) Properties Ltd against the decision of North Somerset Council.
 - The application Ref 20/P/0444/FUL, dated 18 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 11 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is for the "creation of a vehicular access on to a classified road, including partial demolition of front boundary wall and pier, and erection of new entrance pier".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The above description of development has been taken from the submitted application form. I note that the proposal also involves the creation of a new car parking area and associated hardstanding within the front garden of the site. I have determined the appeal on this basis.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, with particular regard for the Great Weston Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

4. Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that special attention be given to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. The appeal site forms part of the Great Weston CA and is located within the Marine Parade Sub-area of the Seafront Character Area (SCA). The SCA is characterised by the long sweep of Weston Bay and the built form along Beach Road facing the Bristol Channel across an expanse of lawns. The historic interest of the SCA stems from the traces of the early town and its expressed growth over time to become a resort town. The traditional stone boundary walls lining the frontage of properties along Beach Road are identified as an important feature which positively contributes to the significance of the CA¹.

¹ Great Weston Conservation Area: Seafront Character Area Appraisal and Management Plan (adopted December 2018)

5. The appeal site currently comprises a centrally located residential building which has been subdivided into three self-contained flats. The area to the front of the dwelling is split between four car parking spaces located off of the existing driveway, and a small garden area with some lawn and modest plantings. The frontage of the property is lined by a traditional low stone boundary wall and entrance piers on either side of the existing pedestrian access, located on the left side of the property, and the existing driveway, located to the right.
6. The partial demolition of this front boundary wall would erode the positive contribution this feature currently makes towards the overall significance of the CA. This combined with the loss of the remaining front garden area to the proposed car parking area would harm the overall character and appearance of the CA. The identified harm would amount to less than substantial harm and as such is required to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal in accordance with Paragraph 196 of the Framework. In accordance with Paragraph 193 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) any harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset attracts great weight.
7. The appellant suggests that the provision of additional on-site parking space would be of public benefit given the demand for on-street parking within close proximity to the beach and seafront. They also note that the additional on-site parking space would contribute towards addressing a parking shortfall for the existing residential flats based on the Council's parking standards. However, given the minor scale of this suggested benefit, continued shortfall of the required parking standards, and lack of identified harm to highway safety as a result of the existing shortfall, I am not satisfied that it would outweigh the harm to the CA identified.
8. I note the appellant's contention that the loss of front boundary walls is not currently identified as an existing issue within the Marine Parade Sub-area and that the "issue could be monitored". Nevertheless, the Council's SCA Appraisal and Management Plan (adopted December 2018) makes clear that the loss of stone boundary walls, along with front garden areas to parking, are a negative feature within the area. The managing principles for the Marine Parade Sub-area in particular aim to retain stone walls, gateposts and encourage the reinstatement of front gardens to respect the character of the area.
9. The appellant suggests landscape conditions could acceptably offset the loss of front garden area. However, I am not satisfied this would overcome the harm identified given the resulting prevalence of hardstanding and parking to the front of the appeal site and the limited space available for appropriate landscape planting to occur.
10. I note the examples of other sites along Beach Road which benefit from two access driveways. However, it is my view that these examples are not comparable to the appeal before me in that they are notably wider properties, which result in more functional parking and manoeuvring arrangements than would result from the appeal proposal. Nevertheless, it does not follow that such arrangements should continue to be replicated within this Sub-area, or the SCA more broadly, given the identified importance of these stone boundary walls to the significance of the CA.

11. Accordingly, the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, with particular regard for the Great Weston CA. It therefore conflicts with Policy CS4 of the North Somerset Core Strategy (adopted January 2017), Policies DM3, DM32 and DM38 of the North Somerset Sites and Policies Plan Part 1 (adopted July 2016), guidance within the Great Weston CA: SCA Appraisal and Management Plan, and Section 16 of the Framework.
12. Collectively these policies and guidance seek, amongst other things, to ensure development achieves high quality design that retains and where possible enhances the special characteristics which contribute to the significance of the CA. The provisions of the Framework similarly reflect these objectives.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Gibson

INSPECTOR