
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 January 2021

by Martin Small BA (Hons) BPI DipCM MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/V1260/W/20/3262184
496 Blandford Road, Poole, BH16 5BN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a failure to give notice within the prescribed period of a decision on an application for planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Pressland against Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council.
 - The application, Ref APP/20/00492/F, is dated 5 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is to remove existing roof and replace with a new roof and raise roof height to provide an additional floor for storage uses, upgrade existing front offices and create new offices on new floor level.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed and planning permission is refused to remove existing roof and replace with a new roof and raise roof height to provide an additional floor for storage uses, upgrade existing front offices and create new offices on new floor level at 496 Blandford Road, Poole, BH16 5BN in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref APP/20/00492/F, dated 5 May 2020, and the plans submitted with it.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Pressland against Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Procedural Matters

3. During the appeal process the Council adopted a new Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). The Council has provided me with a copy and I have had regard to it in my decision.
4. Whilst the appellant indicates that the intended use of the storage area is for a private car collection, the application refers to unspecified 'storage uses'. I have therefore determined the appeal on the latter basis.
5. The floorspace figures for the proposed development shown on the application form and on the submitted plans and the figure cited by the appellant in his appeal statement are not consistent. However, as it is the submitted plans that would be approved were planning permission to be granted, I have determined this appeal on the basis of the figures annotated on the plans.

Main Issues

6. The Council has not indicated what, had it been in a position to determine the application, its decision would have been. However, from the evidence before me and my observations during my site visit I consider the main issues to be:
 - i) the effect of the proposal on highway safety, with particular regard to parking;
 - ii) whether the appeal site is an appropriate location for the proposal with regard to local policies for employment uses; and
 - iii) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Highway safety

7. Policy PP35 of the Poole Local Plan 2018 (the Local Plan) requires proposals for new development to, amongst other things, accord with the Council's Parking & Highway Layout in New Development SPD, now superseded by the Parking Standards SPD. This sets out parking requirements for different use classes on a zonal basis principally reflecting accessibility and, being recently adopted, I accord it significant weight. Policy PP27 also requires parking and bicycle storage in accordance with the relevant standards.
8. The appeal property is within Zone C, for which the SPD sets out a parking requirement of 2 spaces for staff and visitor cars per 100 m² of office floorspace. All zones have a parking requirement of 0.5 car spaces per 100 m² for B8 uses. In addition, the SPD requires one HGV parking space both per 500 m² of office floorspace and per 250 m² of B8 use.
9. The submitted plans indicate the total office and total storage floorspaces proposed to be 155 m² and 588 m² respectively. I acknowledge that these are likely to be internal measurements but they indicate that the proposals would give rise to a requirement for, in total, 7 car parking spaces and 4 HGV spaces with rounding up.
10. The existing premises have 5 parking spaces and no additional parking spaces are proposed. Consequently, the proposals would result in a shortfall of 2 car and 4 HGV parking spaces. The appellant calculates a shortfall of 1.62 spaces based on the increase in office floorspace but does not acknowledge the SPD's requirement for HGV parking spaces. I consider this shortfall to be significant.
11. The access to the appeal unit and other units in the larger building is narrow and I observed during my site visit that the associated parking spaces were in demand. Accordingly, the shortfall could lead to parking pressure on the surrounding roads. Whilst Allens Lane to the rear of the building has some on-street parking, this was fully occupied at the time of my site visit. The lack of parking for service vehicles could lead to vehicles parking or waiting on Blandford Road or reversing onto it if the access is blocked. I have no robust evidence from the appellant that the shortfall in parking provision would not have an unacceptable effect on highway safety which could allow a variation in parking standards under the SPD.
12. I acknowledge that Blandford Road is a bus route and has dedicated cycle lanes. A bus stop is within a short walk of the site and the proposals include a

covered bicycle store which could be secured by condition were planning permission to be granted. However, whilst buses or bicycles could be used by staff and visitors, neither would be appropriate for deliveries and collections.

13. I therefore conclude that the proposals would have an unacceptable effect on highway safety and that the proposals would conflict with Policies PP27 and PP35 of the Local Plan.

Location

14. Policies PP2 and PP34 of the Local Plan seek to direct new development to the most accessible locations, including 'employment areas' as identified in the Local Plan. The appeal property is within such an employment area. Policy PP16 of the Local Plan seeks to safeguard land and premises within existing employment areas for uses that generate employment and are appropriate to the location for one or more of four specified reasons. These include where the principal activity falls within Use Classes B1 (now Class E), B2 or B8. Moreover, proposals should not compromise the activities and vitality of the employment area.
15. The evidence before me indicates that the property is currently or was last used for a car repair business with ancillary office space and car sales. The proposals are to increase the office floorspace at the front of the building with a storage area over two floors behind. The proposed uses fall within the Use Classes specified in Policy PP16 as acceptable within existing employment areas. The proposed additional office space would create employment opportunities and I have no evidence that the proposals would compromise the existing activities and vitality of the area.
16. I therefore conclude that the appeal site is an appropriate location for the proposals. Accordingly, in this respect, I find no conflict with Policies PP2, PP16 or PP34 of the Local Plan.

Character and appearance

17. In the vicinity of the appeal site Blandford Road predominantly comprises a variety of residential and commercial properties. The appeal property has 2-storey commercial properties to both sides. These properties are set back from the footway with the frontages used for parking and display.
18. The appeal property is part of a larger brick building with a single-storey flat-roofed element to the front and a 'saw-toothed' roof form to the rear accommodating a number of commercial premises,. It is set back from Blandford Road with a small open area at the front separated from a car sales display area by a metal palisade fence. The older and rather tired front elevation of the appeal property is at odds with the properties to either side, both of which are of contemporary appearance.
19. The proposals include the forward extension of the office element at the front of the building with a second storey above set back, both with flat roofs. The front elevation would be extensively glazed. Two of the 'saw-tooth' sections of the existing roof would be replaced by three sections of similar roof form, with new windows inserted at first floor level in the storage area.
20. The proposals would therefore result in an increase in the overall bulk of the appeal building. However, the eaves height of the proposed office element

would be similar to that of the buildings to either side and the set back of the first floor would reduce the visual effect of the increased bulk. The resulting building would therefore not be excessive in the context of the other large buildings in its vicinity.

21. Whilst the resulting building would project slightly forward of the commercial building to one side, it would not project forward of the car showroom to the other. The resulting building would acknowledge the original roof form of the existing building with a contemporary design, raising the design quality of the existing building.
22. I therefore conclude that the proposals would not have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, in this respect, I find no conflict with Policy PP27 of the Local Plan which expects a good standard of design in all new developments, including in respect of height, scale, bulk, massing, materials and detailing.

Other Matters

Dorset Heathlands and Poole Harbour

23. The appeal property is within 5 km of the Dorset Heathlands, which comprise the Dorset Heathlands Special Protection Area and Ramsar site, the Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation and the Dorset Heaths (Purbeck and Wareham) and Studland Dunes Special Area of Conservation. The site is also within the 'Poole Harbour Recreation Zone'. Poole Harbour is a Special Protection Area and Ramsar site.
24. Residential development within these zones is known to give rise to potential adverse effects on these designated habitats sites through additional human activity, including recreation. In addition, nitrogen generated through sewage from new housing in the catchment of Poole Harbour is having an adverse effect on the biodiversity interest of the Harbour.
25. However, the proposal is not for new residential development and would not lead to an increase in population within the zones of influence of these designated habitats sites. I am therefore satisfied that there is no pathway for the proposal to have a likely significant effect on the Dorset Heathlands or Poole Harbour designated habitats sites.

Other considerations

26. As there are no dwellings adjacent to the appeal property I am satisfied that the proposal would not cause harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of any residential properties.

Conclusion

27. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, I consider that the compliance of the proposals with the policies of the Local Plan relating to the location of development and design do not outweigh the conflict in respect of a significant parking shortfall. I therefore conclude that, for the reasons given above, and having regard to the other matters, the appeal should be dismissed.

Martin Small INSPECTOR