
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 June 2021

By Terrence Kemmann-Lane JP DipTP FRTPI MCMI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/D1590/W/20/3260593

121-213 Crowstone Road, Westcliff-on-Sea, SS0 8LH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by BESB Contracts Ltd against the decision of the Southend-on-Sea Borough Council.
 - The application Ref. 20/00546/OUT dated 26 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 22 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is to demolish existing buildings, erect 4 three storey buildings comprising of 8 dwelling houses, layout parking, hard and soft landscaping and alter existing vehicular access on to Crosby Road.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. The application is in outline, but the only matter reserved for later consideration is landscaping.
3. The description of the proposed development given above is more comprehensive than that shown on the application form which simply described the development as '8 No new family homes'. It was amended by the council when validating the application, and was used by the appellant on the appeal form. It should also be noted that the site address given in the heading, as shown on the application form, does not indicate that the site includes frontage development to Crosby Road, and includes the curtilage of No. 6 Crosby Road.
4. There is another appeal (Ref. APP/D1590/W/20/3257162) that is currently being decided, also for housing development, that includes part of the curtilage of No.6 Crosby Road and the point of access on this proposal. That appeal relates to land at the rear of No. 6 Crosby Road. It is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issues

5. The main issues in the case are: i) the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area, in respect of its size, scale, bulk, form, siting, detailed design and existing planted verges and street trees; and ii) the effect of the proposed vehicular crossovers on highway and pedestrian safety.

Reasons

The character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area

6. The site, at the junction of Crowstone Road with Crosby Road, currently includes a detached dwelling at No.6 Crosby Road, but the remainder of the site is open where school buildings have been demolished. The frontage to Crowstone Road is proposed to have a terrace of 4 houses, staggered in pairs. On the frontage to Crosby Road, there is proposed to be a terrace of 3 houses, and then a well separated single detached house. All the houses are 3 storey, having the same tall and relatively narrow appearance with near identical fenestration and doorways. The roofs are tall and steeply pitched, and in the form of a crown (flat topped). They have rear gardens, with the frontages given over to parking and paved areas, although since landscaping is reserved for further consideration, the detailed treatment is not settled. The exception to the frontage treatment is the house at the corner, where soft landscaping is indicated, the parking provision being accessed from Crosby Road.
7. The immediate area consists mainly of circa 1900's - 1930's large family homes. The immediate locality is of a green character, with verges laid to grass, and trees and shrubs lining the public footpaths. Low level brick walls, with tree and shrub planting make up the majority of private frontage boundary treatments. The immediate vernacular is large-mid scale with wide pedestrian paths, roads and deep private plots with properties mainly of 2 storeys, some with accommodation within roof areas. There are a few apartment buildings, a prominent feature being the 'mansion' apartment block on the corner of Crowstone Road and Crosby Road which has strong horizontal red brick banding and a strong rhythm of fenestration with a vertical emphasis.
8. The appeal proposals are very much at odds with this local character, due to their largely terrace form, their repetitive high narrow frontages, steep flat topped roofs, and hardstanding parking and paved areas behind the public footway. The reserved matter of landscaping could bring some relief to this, but could not reconcile the disparity with the frontage, scale and treatment of most of the houses in the area. The detached house proposed on the site of No. 6 Crosby Road would be particularly mis-matched with the character of the area because it stands alone without the buttressing of others in a terrace. Furthermore, the frontage to Crosby Road would have 45m of almost continuous parking/footpath crossovers that, apart from their hard-surfaced appearance, would inevitably result in the loss of kerbside trees and shrubs. Whilst landscaping is a reserved matter, the space available for any significant planting is extremely limited.
9. I conclude that the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the site and the surrounding area, in respect of its size, scale, bulk, form, siting, detailed design and loss of planted verges and street trees would be harmful to an unacceptable extent that would conflict with policies KP2 and CP4 of the Core Strategy (2007), Policies DM1 and DM3 of the Development Management Document (2015) and the advice contained within the Design and Townscape Guide (2009).

Highway and pedestrian safety

10. The proposal makes provision for 2 parking spaces per dwelling, which is in accordance with Policy DM15. However, the development would result in a

large number of new vehicular crossovers to Crowstone Road and Crosby Road which would result in wide expanses of dropped kerbs. Aside from the design issues considered above, it is necessary to consider whether this would result in material harm to highway safety. The Vehicle Crossing Policy Application Guidance provides a maximum width for vehicle crossovers of 4.8m and states *"Standard widths have been set to help ensure road safety is not compromised, to retain sufficient kerbside space for all highway users and to ensure amenity value is not adversely affected"*. As an indication of the extent of the crossovers in the appeal proposal, the block of 4 serving the houses lettered C and D on the layout and the 4 serving those lettered F and G, each measure about 9m along the kerb, and the entrance to the rear of House A together with the crossover for house B measures some 10m.

11. Clearly the length of dropped kerbs would limit available kerbside parking, but since this would result from an adequate on-site provision of car parking space, this is not a matter of significant importance. The fact that the site is set around the junction is all the more reason for thinking that kerb-side parking is not to be encouraged. However, the extent of vehicle crossovers to serve the parking spaces brings potential conflict with vehicles entering and egressing the Crosby Road/Crowstone Road junction. Added to this is the length that pedestrians must cross where there could be conflict with arriving/departing vehicles. Neighbours' objections have included reference to the amount of traffic on these roads, which I could not verify at my site visit. Nevertheless, the extent of footpath crossovers, especially in the vicinity of a junction, would present a potential for vehicular/pedestrian conflict which would put the safety of highway users at risk.

Conclusion

12. The appeal site is within a long established sustainable residential area that is entirely suitable for residential development. Much of the site is 'previously developed land' or 'brownfield land' which it is government policy to prioritise for redevelopment, and additional homes would be a welcome contribution to increasing the supply of dwellings, particularly as these would be family sized. Nevertheless, for the reasons that I have set out above, the proposed development would be very much at odds with, and be harmful, to the established character and appearance of the surrounding area. To this is added the extent to which the vehicular crossovers would lead to potential conflict with pedestrians and vehicles at the junction around which the development is proposed to take place. For these reasons I have decided that the appeal should be dismissed.

Terrence Kemmann-Lane

INSPECTOR