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# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 January 2022

**by Alison Partington BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 24<sup>th</sup> January 2022**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/J2373/W/21/3278414**

**7-11 Bond Street, Blackpool, FY4 1BQ**

- 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 R H Management against the decision of Blackpool Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 20/0033, dated 9 January 2020, was refused by notice dated 19 April 2021.
  - The development proposed is the use of the land as a 40 space car park following demolition of the building.
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## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Procedural Matter

2. The application was amended prior to its determination by the Council. This revised the layout of the car park so that the access points were on Waterloo Road rather than Bath Street. It also reduced the number of spaces on the car park from 43 to 40 as described in the banner heading above. No party would be prejudiced by my determining the appeal on the basis of the amended application.

## Main Issues

3. The main issues in the appeal are the effect of the proposal on:
  - the character and appearance of the area including its effect on various non-designated heritage assets; and
  - highway safety.

## Reasons

### *Character and appearance*

4. The appeal building is a large 2-storey retail unit located on the corner of Bond Street and Waterloo Road. It is currently vacant and in a dilapidated state. The site is within South Shore district centre. The surrounding area has a dense urban form and comprises a mix of retail and other commercial uses, hotels and residential properties.
5. The building is one of a number of locally listed buildings in the area. With its curved plate glass windows and recessed entrances on the ground floor, it was clearly an attractive example of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century department store which

was occupied by Woolworths for many years. Occupying a large prominent corner plot within a local retail centre that originally would have served the day to day needs of the population in the immediate vicinity, it would have been a shop used by many local people. Its significance is thus derived mainly from these aesthetic, communal and historical attributes.

6. However, the building is now in very poor condition. The Structural Appraisal Report shows the building would require significant work, including structural repairs, to bring it back to a reusable condition. The appellant's Financial Viability Statement shows that the cost of demolishing the building is considerably less than the cost of the necessary repairs to it. As such, it is uneconomic to repair the building. These figures have not been disputed by the Council, nor have they produced any evidence of their own to counter them.
7. Whilst I have not been provided with full details of the marketing of the site, the appellant's evidence indicates that it had commenced prior to the former tenant vacating the premises. During the marketing period it is stated that there was no interest shown by any retailers. The agents view being that this reflects the contraction being seen in the retail sector, with the building being too large for modern retail use, especially in this type of centre. I noted that a number of other retail units in the vicinity are vacant and/or are in a poor state of repair.
8. Notwithstanding the fact that the building is locally listed, given the lack of demand for the building, and the fact that it is uneconomic to repair, I consider that although unfortunate, the demolition of the building is the only viable option.
9. It is proposed to create a surface car park on the site with the only structure being a small payment building in one corner. Although there is some on-street parking within the area, and a small car park on Bolton Street, given the site's location within a local shopping centre, as well as close to the sea-front, the car park would no doubt be beneficial for both customers and visitors, particularly in peak season.
10. It is stated that the car park would be fully electric charging, although the plans only show some of the spaces being equipped with charging points. Nonetheless, given the Council acknowledge there is a need for such facilities, the provision of even some electric charging points would also be a benefit.
11. However, the open nature of the proposed use on what is a prominent corner, marked by two storey buildings, would be contrary to the strong sense of enclosure that characterises the junction and the area more generally. Moreover, the large gap that would be created in the urban form, would have an adverse visual impact on the area. As such, it would impact negatively on the setting of the other locally listed buildings in the locality.
12. I note that it is proposed to integrate landscaping into the car park, and this could be secured by condition. Nevertheless, even if well-designed I am not persuaded that this would overcome the visual harm created by the proposal.
13. Furthermore, although I accept that the re-use of the existing building is unviable, there is no evidence to show that a car park is the only viable use of the site. The site could therefore potentially be developed in other ways that would be more consistent with the character of the area.

14. It has been argued that the provision of the car park would be beneficial in providing additional parking for a new hotel that has been granted permission opposite the site, and which only has 6 dedicated parking spaces. Be that as it may, in that permission for this was granted it was clearly considered that the existing parking in the area, which includes the significant area of parking around the station, would be adequate for the demand it would generate. As a result, I give this little weight.
15. All in all, whilst I have given weight to the benefits of the proposal, I do not consider that they would outweigh the adverse visual impact it would cause. Consequently, the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, it would be contrary to Policy CS7 of the *Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 (adopted Jan 2016)* (BCS) and Policies LQ1 and LQ2 of the *Blackpool Local Plan 2001 – 2016 (adopted June 2006)* (BLP) which require developments to have a high standard of design that responds to, and enhances, the character and appearance of the area.

#### *Highway Safety*

16. The Council have indicated that although in principle the access on to Waterloo Road is acceptable, the entrance into the car park is too close to the junction of Bath Street and Waterloo Road. It is stated that to ensure the safe movement of traffic on the highway, the access point should be a minimum of 5m from this junction. In order to accommodate this, it is likely that the layout of the car park would need to be reconfigured.
17. In the light of this, and in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, I consider that the proposal would be detrimental to highway safety. Therefore, it would be contrary to Policy CS7 of the BCS and Policy AS1 of the BLP which require that developments have a high quality of design that provide safe and appropriate access to the road network.

#### **Conclusion**

18. For the reasons set out above, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

*Alison Partington*

INSPECTOR