



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 April 2022

by J Reid BA(Hons) BArch(Hons) RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 April 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/P1425/W/22/3290196

6 Steyne Road, Seaford BN25 1HA

- 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 Mr Ian Poulsum of Southdown Homes Ltd against the decision of Lewes District Council.
 - The application Ref LW/19/0656, dated 11 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 12 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is erection of 14 apartments arranged over first, second and third floors with ground floor podium car parking and associated landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr Ian Poulsum of Southdown Homes Ltd against Lewes District Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Preliminary Matters

3. During the application process relevant plans were revised to show the number of apartments (flats) reduced from 14 to 13. The Council's decision was made on the basis of the revised plans showing a fourth floor and 13 flats.
4. During the appeal process, the appellant submitted an alternative scheme, which includes 13 flats but omits the fourth floor, and plans showing a comparison between the proposal and the approved scheme, ref LW/12/0693, for Demolition of existing building and erection of 6 x 3 bedroom houses with parking and associated landscaping. These plans have been available to interested parties during the appeal process, and as I do not consider anyone's interests would be prejudiced, I shall consider them.

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect that the proposed development would have on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, which includes the nearby part of the Seaford Town Centre Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings.

Reasons

6. The appeal site is situated on the corner where the south east side of St John's Road meets Steyne Road. The cleared site is largely enclosed by hoardings and fences. The surrounding mainly residential area includes houses and flats of

different ages, sizes, and styles. Despite their diversity, the nearby buildings are mostly characterised by their simple but robust mainly pitched and flat roofed forms, and features that reflect their seaside setting including bay windows and balconies. The development to roughly south of Steyne Road has a more open character than that to roughly north.

7. Most buildings on the roughly south side of Steyne Road increase in height towards the seafront in line with the gently rising landform. The 3 storey mostly hipped roofed Kings Well Court buildings in The Causeway lie to roughly south east, the 4 storey M-roofed Rayford Court lies to roughly south west, and the mainly single storey pitched roofed Seaford Little Theatre lies on the opposite corner of St John's Road, with the 3 and 4 storey plus basement flat roofed West View Court in Steyne Road beyond it.
8. On the roughly north side of Steyne Road, the nearby part of the Conservation Area is mainly characterised by its narrow streets and mostly smaller scale historic buildings. The Seaford Town Conservation Area Appraisal explains that Steyne Road marks the old boundary of the town, first circumscribed by the river, then the shingle bank that took its place. Nearby listed buildings in Steyne Road include West House by the east side of Pelham Road, the modest 2 storey terraced cottages at 5, 5a, 7 and 9 Steyne Road, and the elegant 1 to 4 Marine Terrace, all of which can be seen from the site. The historic street pattern and the listed and historic buildings in the old town are important to the character of the Conservation Area. The styles, forms and features of the buildings and the use of traditional building materials are important to its appearance. Together, they contribute positively to the significance of the Conservation Area as a historic riverside port.
9. Due in part to flood risk, the proposal would include a ground floor entrance hall and parking, and one, 2 and 3 bedroom flats on the 4 upper floors. The entrance to the flats would be in Steyne Road, and the vehicle accesses in St John's Road and Steyne Road would leave room for a strip of planting edged by a wall. All flats would include a balcony and/or terrace, but there would be no useable communal garden.
10. The ground floor of the proposal would be set back a little from Steyne Road and St John's Road. Its third and fourth floors would be set in from the floors below. However, the slab-sided block-like cantilevered and set back upper floors over voids and columns on the ground floor would have a discordant top-heavy appearance. Moreover, because of its height, and because the considerable mass of the first and second floors would extend across almost all of the width and most of the depth of the site, the proposal would be unacceptably overbearing and bulky. So, the proposal would harmfully intrude into views in both directions along St John's Road, towards the seafront and towards the old town, and it would be unacceptably dominant and obtrusive in the sinuous Steyne Road street scene. Thus, the proposal would be harmfully at odds with its townscape setting, it would erode the important openness within the setting of the Conservation Area, and it would detract from the settings of the nearby listed buildings.
11. The omission of the fourth floor would not be sufficient to overcome this harm. It also seems that part of the north east elevation of both proposals has been omitted in error from the comparisons between the approved and proposed schemes, so they provide little support for the proposals. Whilst it predates

current policy, the inset balconies at West View Court reflect its seaside context and its scale respects the adjoining building in West View. So, the assertion that a contemporary approach could not be supported attracts little weight.

12. Therefore, I consider that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, which includes the nearby part of the Conservation Area and nearby listed buildings. It would be contrary to Policy DM25 of the Lewes District Local Plan Part 2 Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (LP) and Policy SEA2 of the Seaford Neighbourhood Plan 2017-2030 (NP) which seek high quality design and respect for context, LP Policy DM33 which aims for the settings of heritage assets to be taken into account, and NP Policy SEA3 which aims to conserve or enhance conservation areas and their settings, as well as guideline SF01 of the Seaford Design Guidelines which aims to preserve visual links between the seaside and the rest of the town, and for development to blend well with the existing environment. It would also be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) which seeks to achieve well-designed places, and for development to be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

Planning balance and other matter

13. The Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year supply of deliverable land for housing so the Framework's presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged. The proposal would reuse previously developed land within the urban area, and its benefits would include welcome new homes, employment during construction, and future occupiers' likely support for local shops and services. However, because the harm identified in the main issue would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies of the Framework taken as a whole, planning permission should not be granted.
14. The appellant accepts that a planning obligation to secure affordable housing and a Traffic Regulation Order contribution would be necessary to satisfy Development Plan policy, but no obligation for the proposal or the alternative scheme has been put to me. However, as the appeal should be dismissed for other reasons, I have not pursued this matter further with the parties.

Conclusion

15. I have found that the proposed development would be contrary to the Development Plan when taken as a whole. The other considerations in this case, including the Framework, do not outweigh that conflict.
16. For the reasons given, the appeal should be dismissed.

J Reid

INSPECTOR