
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 July 2022

by S Leonard BA (Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/B1740/W/22/3292869

Corbay, Wiltshire Road, Bransgore BH23 8BH

- 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 C Ellison against the decision of New Forest District Council.
 - The application Ref 21/11400, dated 6 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 26 January 2022.
 - The development proposed is erection of 1no. dwelling to replace dwelling destroyed by fire.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located to the west of Wiltshire Road, in an established residential area within the designated settlement boundary of Bransgore. The site was previously occupied by a detached, Grade II Listed two-storey, thatched cottage. The building was positioned near the rear of the site, and it was destroyed by fire in January 2021.
4. The site currently contains a timber-clad, single storey pitched roof building, which comprised a later, side kitchenette extension to the original dwelling, and has been refurbished following the fire. There is also a flat-roofed double garage near the front of the site. In addition, single storey timber structures in the rear garden provide temporary living accommodation, pending development of the site with a replacement dwelling.
5. The former building comprised an 18th Century detached cottage with white rendered walls under a steeply hipped thatched roof. Although two-storey in height, the information before me is that the first floor accommodation was limited, and was only readily apparent on the south elevation of the building, where three first-floor windows were sited in close proximity to the roof eaves. As such, the previous building, albeit having a ridge height of around twice that of the kitchenette extension that remains, had a predominantly single storey character.

6. The previous cottage pre-dated the more modern, late 20th Century residential development which has since developed within the appeal site vicinity and now comprises part of the built settlement of Bransgore. Moreover, its traditional thatched roof design and modest scale were appropriate to the edge-of-settlement location of the site, and the proximity of the building to open countryside which lies to the west.
7. As such, the former cottage in this location was appropriate at the time of construction, having regard to the historic context of residential development within the area and the rural nature and design merit of the previous Listed building. However, the appeal scheme must be considered within the current, altered, context of the appeal site, whereby only the single storey addition to the previous building exists, the property has been de-listed, and the site is surrounded by bungalows.
8. Notwithstanding that the ridge height of the proposed dwelling, would not be significantly greater than that of the former cottage, with a difference of around 0.5m, the proposed eaves height would be notably higher, and the building would incorporate full two-storey walls on all elevations. This, combined with a strong vertical design emphasis to the proposed ground and first floor windows, and a large number of proposed windows on the south elevation, would exaggerate the perceived height of the new building. This would be particularly evident in relation to the existing kitchenette structure within close proximity of which the building would be positioned, and in relation to the surrounding single storey dwellings.
9. Moreover, the larger first floor element of accommodation within the proposal in comparison with the previous building, would contribute to a perceptibly larger scale building than that which previously existed, and would contribute to the resulting incongruity of the proposal in relation to the surrounding bungalows.
10. In terms of its appearance, its proposed shallow roof form would result in the proportions of roof depth to building wall height of the new dwelling being unsympathetic to that which generally prevails within the surrounding single-storey built development, where roofs are generally deeper and sit above a single storey wall height. This would add to the perceived discordant nature of the appeal scheme.
11. On my site visit, I saw that the existing kitchenette structure is visible from the public realm of the street through the site vehicular access. As such, whilst set back from the site frontage, due to the juxtaposition of the proposed dwelling in relation to the site vehicular access and its two-storey height, the proposed dwelling would be discernible in some views from the street by passing vehicle occupants and pedestrian road users on the footpath on the opposite side of the road.
12. I do not consider that it could reasonably be completely screened from the road, even taking account of the appellant's proposed additional planting, which in any event, could not be guaranteed to be implemented and/or thereafter permanently retained.
13. Whilst such views from the public realm would be limited, the development would also be evident in views from the rear of a number of neighbouring buildings and gardens within Wiltshire Road, the nearest of which it would be

within close proximity of, due to the tapering nature of the site. From these locations, the new building would be seen as a discordantly high and large-scale building within the rear of the appeal property, to the detriment of the visual amenities of the wider area.

14. I acknowledge that there are a mix of housing designs and heights within the wider residential area, including two storey dwellings in West Road, Wiltshire Gardens and Merryfield Close. However, the immediate context within which the proposed dwelling would be located comprises single storey bungalows. These include the neighbouring properties which bound the appeal site, and properties along both sides of Wiltshire Road, which is characterised by detached modest bungalows.
15. An exception is a small cluster of Georgian-style two-storey properties enclosed by Wiltshire Road and West Lane, which include Wiltshire Lodge and Wiltshire House. These are higher and more visually imposing than the bungalows within Wiltshire Road. However, their juxtaposition in relation to the surrounding lower height development is not directly comparable to that of the appeal proposal, since they comprise a distinctly separate group from the prevailing bungalow development, being sited within a small enclave which is surrounded by Wiltshire Road and West Lane. Also, their proximity to West Road is such that they also fall within the context of the more mixed form of built development which is characteristic of that street. As such, they do not justify approval of the appeal scheme.
16. For the above reasons, I therefore conclude that the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. As such, the appeal scheme would be contrary to Policy ENV3 of the *New Forest District Council Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy (2020)*. This Policy, amongst other things, seeks to ensure that all development achieves a high-quality design that contributes positively to local distinctiveness, and creates buildings, streets and places which are sympathetic to their context in terms of, inter alia, scale, height, appearance and relationship to adjoining buildings and spaces.
17. For similar reasons, the proposal would also be contrary to Chapter 12 of the *National Planning Policy Framework 2021*, which seeks to ensure well-designed places.

Other Matters

18. I have noted that alterations that were made to the scheme during the course of the determination of the application in response to Officer feedback, including a reduction in the depth of the northeast side of the building, and alterations to the design of the first-floor windows. However, this does not alter my findings in respect of the appeal scheme, which I must consider on the merits of the development before me.
19. Neither are my conclusions altered by the fact that the Officer Committee Report recommended approval, since the Council's decision is one which is a matter of judgement. The Council Members in this case were entitled not to accept the professional advice of Officers, so long as a case could be made for the contrary view.

20. The appellant has also drawn my attention to other procedural matters in respect of the process by which the Council determined the planning application. These are not matters for my consideration as part of the determination of this appeal.
21. I have noted the proposed incorporation of elements of sustainable construction within the proposal. However, this does not justify or outweigh my above concerns in respect of the main issue.
22. The Council has raised no objection in respect of matters including the principle of a replacement house, the impact on neighbouring living conditions, on-site biodiversity and highway safety. This does not affect my aforementioned concerns with regard to the impact on the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

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

S Leonard

INSPECTOR