



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 September 2022

by Robert Parker BSc (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 07 October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/V1260/W/22/3295945

2 West Cliff Road, Bournemouth BH2 5EY

- 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 Gerry Wilton against the decision of Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council.
 - The application Ref 7-2021-1036-M, dated 31 July 2021, was refused by notice dated 24 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing single storey extension and erect new extension to hotel to provide additional bedrooms.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - a) whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the West Cliff and Poole Hill Conservation Area; and
 - b) the effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of the occupiers of 4 West Cliff Road, with particular reference to outlook.

Reasons

Conservation area

3. The West Cliff and Poole Hill Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAA) exists only in draft form, but it provides a useful starting point when analysing the character and appearance of the conservation area. The guidance explains that the area developed as a fashionable residential suburb on the level plateau above the Bourne valley to the east and Durley Chine to the west. Much of the conservation area comprises large Victorian villas, many of which have been converted to hotels. The block of development south of West Cliff Road is now almost entirely given over to the hospitality industry.
4. No 2 West Cliff Road, or The Chocolate Box Hotel as it is known commercially, is located at the junction of West Cliff Road and Kerley Road. The main façade addresses Kerley Road, but in reality there are three prominent public elevations which include the side and rear. This distinctive Victorian villa is characterised by its vertical proportions, steep roof pitches and narrow intersecting gables with generous roof overhangs. The building archaeology is unclear from the evidence before me, but much of it looks original. The only

exception is a single storey extension at the rear. This later addition is not consistent with the prevailing Victorian architecture but its subordinate scale and simple design makes it innocuous, despite being visible from the street.

5. The building is recognised within the emerging CAA as making a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the area. I concur with this assessment; the property is attractive and it is a significant feature in local views, including on the approach along Tregonwell Road. That the building survives in somewhere approaching its original form is a consideration of some weight. Guidance within the CAA states that the loss of subservience of an original building to inappropriately scaled or designed extensions is a key issue within the conservation area. As demonstrated by other buildings in the locality, unsympathetic alterations have the potential to incrementally erode the significance of the conservation area as a designated heritage asset.
6. The proposal is to replace the single storey extension with a new three storey extension. There has been some attempt within the design to reflect the existing building through the inclusion of gables and bay windows. However, the extension would be out of scale with the host building. The addition of a large mass to the rear elevation with sections of full height eaves and flat roof would fundamentally alter the form and shape of the hotel. Furthermore, the development would obscure the gables on the west elevation, features which currently add visual interest.
7. The Council is concerned by the fact that the proposed extension would extend to the western boundary of the site. Some parts of the conservation area are distinguished by large villas on spacious plots, but the character of this part of West Cliff Road is different. I saw various examples of buildings having been extended to the side plot boundary. The loss of the gap to 4 West Cliff Road is not a concern in townscape terms; the problem with the scheme is more to do with the design and scale of the extension, its lack of visual subservience and the resultant impact on the character and appearance of the host building.
8. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the West Cliff and Poole Hill Conservation Area. There would be conflict with Policies CS39 and CS41 of the Bournemouth Local Plan: Core Strategy (2012) (CS) and Policy 4.4 of the Bournemouth District Wide Local Plan (2002). These policies seek to protect heritage assets and promote high quality design within conservation areas, taking account of such matters as scale, form, massing and vertical emphasis together with the character of the principal building.

Living conditions

9. The proposed extension would directly adjoin the boundary with 4 West Cliff Road. This building has a restaurant at ground floor level with residential uses above. The Council has supplied an internal layout plan for the end of the building nearest the site. This shows the upper floors subdivided into flats. The units at first floor level have windows facing towards the appeal site. The occupant of the flat at the front of the building would suffer some reduction in outlook as a result of the development but views towards West Cliff Road would be maintained. The greatest impact would be upon the first floor studio apartment at the rear. This property has a bay window which is the only source of light and outlook to the dwelling. The panes of glass are set at an angle to the boundary and this would facilitate a partial view beyond the proposed

extension. However, the main outlook from within the room itself would be onto a solid masonry wall at a distance of approximately 3 metres. The height and proximity of built form would make the development oppressive and there would be a significant loss of outlook relative to the current situation.

10. I therefore conclude that the proposal would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the living conditions of adjoining occupiers. There would be conflict with CS Policy CS41 which requires new development to enhance the amenities of neighbouring residents.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

11. The proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the West Cliff and Poole Hill Conservation Area and it would cause less than substantial harm to this designated heritage asset. Paragraph 202 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('the Framework') states that in such circumstances the harm should be weighed against the public benefits. There would be some modest benefits to the local economy arising from the provision of additional hotel bedrooms (a net increase of three rooms, including two bedroom 'suites'). The development would improve the hotel restaurant and the installation of a lift would enhance accessibility.
12. The above benefits accord with the general thrust of CS Policy CS28 to support tourism and they weigh in favour of the scheme. However, the Framework makes clear that when considering the impact of any proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of an asset should require clear and convincing justification. Applying the balance within Framework paragraph 202, I find that the public benefits do not outweigh the identified heritage harm.
13. The appeal scheme conflicts with the development plan as a whole in respect of its impact on heritage assets and the living conditions of neighbours. There are no material considerations of such strength or significance as to justify a decision otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.
14. For the reasons given above and having taken account of all other matters raised, including the representation of support from the Bournemouth Civic Society, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Parker

INSPECTOR