



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 February 2023

by Nick Davies BSc(Hons) BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16th February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/V1260/W/22/3293020

19 Churchfield Crescent, Poole BH15 2QS

- 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 Mr P & Mrs L Crocker against the decision of Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole Council.
 - The application Ref APP/20/01119/P, dated 3 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 1 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is replacement of chalet bungalow with a pair of semi-detached houses and garages.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal has been made in outline, with appearance and landscaping reserved for future consideration. Plans that accompanied the application included elevational drawings, but these are labelled as illustrative. As appearance is a reserved matter, I have considered them solely on the basis that they show the scale of the development, rather than its appearance.
3. The Council's second and third reasons for refusal were based on harm to the Dorset Heathland Special Protection Area (SPA), the Dorset Heaths Special Area of Conservation, and the Poole Harbour SPA. The decision notice indicated that these reasons could be overcome by a financial contribution to Strategic Access, Management and Monitoring (SAMM) measures to mitigate the harm. During the appeal, the appellants submitted an Undertaking under Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 and made the necessary financial contribution towards SAMM measures. The Council has confirmed that the Undertaking and payment overcome the second and third reasons for refusal.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. 19 Churchfield Crescent is located within a residential area comprising largely of detached houses. Whilst there is a significant degree of architectural variety in the wider area, the site lies in a row of properties that share a number of common characteristics. The dwellings are all detached, and set on a similar building line on higher ground towards the rear of long narrow plots. The sloping gardens have open frontages, with car-parking areas and garages at a

lower level, near to the road. Nos 13-19 are, essentially, hipped roofed bungalows with dormers of various sizes in their front-facing roof slopes, whereas Nos 21-27 are two-storey houses. However, the houses have front-facing gables, and the roofs slope down to eaves levels that are only a little above ground floor ceiling height. As a result, there is a consistency in eaves and ridge levels along the entire row, and regular gaps between the buildings above ground floor level. This gives the street scene a pleasing rhythm, and a spacious and coherent character, which is accentuated by the lack of buildings on the land to the rear.

6. It is proposed to divide the plot lengthways, demolish the existing dwelling, replace it with a pair of semi-detached houses in a similar location, and construct a pair of garages centrally at the lower level. The plot is somewhat wider than most of those along the row, and each plot would only be a little narrower than those of the houses to the east. The proposed semi-detached dwellings could also be designed to appear as a single building, so that the plot severance was less apparent. Furthermore, the lengthways subdivision would also be hidden to some degree by the proposed garage building near the frontage. Consequently, the plot could be divided in a manner that was sympathetic with the prevailing layout of development in the immediate locality.
7. Scale, however, is not a reserved matter. The proposals show a three-storey flat-roofed building spanning most of the site. I am mindful that the ground floor would be only a little lower than the base of the retaining wall of the existing dwelling. However, the necessary excavation to achieve this accommodation, and the provision of entrance doors and windows to serve it, would, visually, result in the provision of an additional storey. The retention of existing ground levels to the side and rear would not reduce the visual impact from the front, which is where the building would primarily be seen from. As the proposed second floor would extend across almost the full width of the building, the overall structure would have an undeniably three-storey appearance from the road. It would, therefore, appear incongruous in a row of buildings that comprises bungalows with dormers, and two-storey houses with low eaves lines.
8. Although the building would occupy a similar position, and have a comparable footprint to the existing dwelling, its flat-roofed form means that it would be considerably bulkier. The parapet level of the first-floor accommodation would be significantly higher than the eaves of the existing bungalow, and the second-floor accommodation would extend much closer to both side boundaries than the existing roof slope. As a result, although the overall height of the building would be lower than the ridge of the existing dwelling, the built form would intrude into the characteristic gaps that currently exist between the buildings above eaves height all the way along the row. This would disrupt the rhythm of the street scene and fail to preserve or enhance its spacious and coherent character.
9. The double garage would be similar in design and siting to those serving the houses to the east. Its separation from the houses, both in distance and level, means that it would not visually add to the apparent bulk of the proposed houses. The hardstanding on the road frontage would be characteristic of the surrounding development, and would not be significantly greater in extent than

already exists. Consequently, I find that these elements of the proposal would reflect the local pattern of development.

10. However, the three-storey appearance of the building, and its flat-roofed form, means that its scale, bulk, and massing, and its visual impact would be incongruous, and harmful to the character and appearance of the street scene. The proposal would, therefore, be contrary to Policies PP27 and PP28 of the Poole Local Plan (2018), which seek to ensure that all development, including plot severances, reflect or enhance local patterns of development and neighbouring buildings.
11. In coming to this conclusion, I have considered the somewhat larger buildings to the west, at Nos 9 and 11. However, the pattern of development at the western end of Churchfield Crescent provides a different context. There is a greater variety of building designs, and a more varied alignment. Furthermore, there are much larger buildings behind. Consequently, this part of the Crescent does not display the same coherence, spaciousness, and rhythm in the street scene that is apparent in the row of dwellings containing the appeal site. The presence of these buildings does not, therefore, alter my conclusions. I have also had regard to the photograph that has been provided of a dwelling under construction at another site in Poole. However, I have not been provided with sufficient information relating to that development to draw any reliable comparison with the case before me.

Planning Balance

12. Paragraph 60 of the Framework seeks to significantly boost the supply of homes. The development would provide an additional dwelling, which would assist with this aim, and would be a benefit of the proposal. There would also be benefits to the economy associated with the construction phase of the development, and the future spend by occupants in the local area. However, due to the small scale of the development, these benefits would be modest, so the weight I give them is limited.
13. The Framework makes it clear at paragraph 12, that the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not change the statutory status of the development plan, and that where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan, permission should not usually be granted. I have found that the proposal would conflict with policies of the development plan that protect the character and appearance of the surrounding area. The relatively small scale of the benefits does not outweigh this conflict.

Conclusion

14. There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nick Davies

INSPECTOR