
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 October 2025

by N Armstrong BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th November 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/H0738/D/25/3373231

131 Bishopton Road West, Fairfield, Stockton-on-Tees, Durham TS19 7HD

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Christopher Parker against the decision of Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/0150/FUL.
 - The development proposed is new access to front.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal has been submitted under the Householder Appeal Service, although the appeal site also includes land outside of the curtilage of the property. The Council's questionnaire indicates they agree this procedure is appropriate for the appeal. From the evidence before me, I am satisfied that no parties would be prejudiced if the appeal is determined on this basis.
3. The description of development used in the banner heading above is taken from the Council's decision notice and is used by the appellant on the appeal form. This is a more succinct description than that used on the application form, which includes comments on the objectives for the proposed development. I have had regard to these comments, but I consider no injustice would be caused by basing my assessment on the description of development in the header.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

5. The appeal site comprises the appeal property, sections of highway, verge and pavement located to the southern side of Bishopton Road West in a predominantly residential area. The appeal property is a mid-terraced dwelling within an attractive and architecturally distinctive group of similar terraced blocks to the southern side of Bishopton Road West. Front boundary treatments to the southern side comprise a mix of fences, hedgerow and other planting, with a mature hedge to the front of the smaller group in which the appeal property sits, contributing to a more verdant character. There are no properties within this group with a vehicular access from the highway or parking within the front garden areas.

6. A hardstanding parking area runs parallel to the southern side of the highway with a section of grassed verge either side of the pavement in front of the appeal property and the immediately adjacent dwellings. A disabled parking bay adjoins the highway close to the appeal site. A similar parking arrangement along the road continues to the east of the appeal property, which is slightly raised in sections and delineated from the pavement by a kerb. Whilst there is no grassed verge adjoining the highway further east of the site, the grassed area adjoining the front boundaries of the properties continues, interspersed with shared paths providing pedestrian access to them, which limits the extent of hard surfaced crossings in this area. The highway is a two-way road with a 30mph speed limit, with road signs indicating a reduction to 20mph at times related to a nearby school. At the time of my visit there was a steady flow of traffic using the road in both directions and cars were parked along its southern side.
7. The proposal would result in a modest loss of grassed area, although such space is more limited in the immediate area of the site, with this increasing in size to its western side. Alongside the existing hedgerow, these green spaces make a small, albeit positive, contribution to the character and appearance of the street scene in this area, which is particularly evident when walking along the pavement. The introduction of a wider vehicular access across this space would also introduce a more notable hardscaped feature in comparison to the existing pedestrian routes crossing the green spaces. Despite its small scale and the more limited views from the highway and opposite the site when cars are parked, the development would have an adverse visual impact. In the absence of other similar development to this side of the highway, it would diminish the softer landscaped character and appearance in this area and the attractive street scene to the frontage of this distinctive and cohesive group of properties.
8. There are other examples of accesses and parking to the front of properties in the area, including on Fairfield Road and to the properties to the northern side of Bishopton Road West. However, I observed these to be in areas and groups where similar parking provision was prevalent, and I do not have full details of previous works. In any event, I do not find that these are directly comparable to the appeal scheme given the notable layout and form of the properties and the predominant nature of the parking to the southern side of the highway. There are also other features within grassed areas in the vicinity, which include provision for parking, pedestrian crossings, a bus stop and other street furniture, although these are established features associated with infrastructure and wider public use. A vehicular access separating the terraces to the west also serves land and buildings to the rear of properties on Bishopton Road West and a public footpath. The presence of these does not justify the harm that I have identified.
9. I conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore conflict with Policies SD1 and SD8 of the Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Local Plan (2019). Amongst other things, these policies aim to secure development that improves the environmental conditions in the area, ensure development will be designed to the highest possible standard taking into account the context of the surrounding area, and that it responds positively to the character of the public realm. It would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework, which requires proposals to be sympathetic to local character. I attach significant weight to this conflict.

Other Matters

10. I have had regard to the appellant's objectives and the suggested benefits of the development to allow for electric vehicle charging and to provide a safer parking space off the main highway. Whilst a charging point would be in line with sustainability principles and Government aims of mitigating and adapting to climate change, any benefits from the scheme would be limited and would not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area.
11. The purpose of the proposal would also be to provide a safe parking space for visiting grandchildren. I have therefore had due regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty contained in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, which requires me to consider the need to eliminate unlawful discrimination, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it. Protected characteristics in this instance include age and disability.
12. At the time of my visit, albeit for a limited time of the day, I did not observe any notable issues with regard to traffic levels or parking pressure. The existing arrangements allow for parking adjacent to, but off the main carriageway, and transfer to and from vehicles directly onto the grassed verge or pavement areas. However, I have not been provided with sufficient or detailed evidence to demonstrate why the existing arrangements are unsuitable for the appellant and their visiting family members, or why there are overriding highway safety issues to justify the proposal. Consequently, I must afford this matter limited weight.
13. Where the proposal has been found to be acceptable in other respects, for example highway safety and the living conditions of neighbouring residents, these are neutral matters and do not weigh in favour of the development. In addition, the lack of any objection from other parties does not equate to a lack of harm.
14. Drawing all of the above together, and on the basis of the information before me, the benefits of the proposal, either individually or collectively, would not outweigh the harm that I have found.

Conclusion

15. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

N Armstrong

INSPECTOR