
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 January 2017

by Alison Partington BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 6th February 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/J2373/W/16/3160954

Mar Ray House, 56 Springfield Road, Blackpool FY1 2BA

- 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 Robin Lewis against the decision of Blackpool Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/0388, dated 27 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 23 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as "to demolish existing left hand front garden wall and install dropped kerb to provide access for owner's vehicle parking on existing tarmac surface".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in the appeal are the effect of the proposal on:
 - The character and appearance of the area; and
 - Highway and pedestrian safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal property is a 3 storey mid terrace guest house. It is located towards the edge of the town centre with the surrounding area comprising a mix of commercial uses, guest houses, and residential uses. The latter two uses generally occupy 3 storey terraced buildings similar to the appeal property. These all have small front gardens surrounded by a low front boundary wall. These are a very distinctive feature, which create a strong sense of unity to the area, as well as enclosure to the buildings.
 4. The proposal would result in the loss of the front wall to the left of the central pedestrian access. The removal of part of this distinctive feature would detract from, and would fail to respect, the character and appearance of the area. Moreover, it would result in the front of the host property having an unbalanced appearance, and the more open nature it would create would be out of keeping. As such the property would appear as a discordant feature that would not integrate appropriately with its surroundings.
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5. Therefore, I consider the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly it conflicts with Policy CS7 of the *Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy (2012 – 2027) (adopted January 2016)* and Policies LQ1 and LQ14 of the *Blackpool Local Plan 2001 – 2016 (adopted June 2006)* (BLP) which requires that developments should enhance the character and appearance of the local area, and make a positive contribution to the quality of the surrounding environment.

Highway and Pedestrian Safety

6. Springfield Road is a busy vehicular and pedestrian route that serves both the train station and the town centre. The appeal property is located close to the point where the road forks and part of it becomes a one way road towards the train station, whilst the rest continues as a two way road.
7. The Council have indicated that their guidelines are that access points should be single width and perpendicular to the highway, and that sufficient space should be provided to manoeuvre within the site to allow a vehicle to both enter and exit in forward gear.
8. The area in front of the appeal building is of a very limited depth. As such, and contrary to the guidelines, it would not be possible for a car to enter, or park, at 90 degrees to the highway. In addition there would be very little space to comfortably manoeuvre within the site. I note the appellant indicates that the space would be for his own "small" car, and that he considers that, as a result of its limited dimensions, it would be able to enter and exit in forward gear. However, there is no guarantee that this size of car would be the only type ever to use the space, and I consider that a condition to this end would not be reasonable.
9. In any case, no tracking diagrams have been provided in support of the appellant's claim, whereas the Council's tracking diagrams show that to manoeuvre a car into and out of the space would require significant use of the pavement. Consequently, having regard to the configuration of the site, I am not persuaded that sufficient space would be created to ensure that, in practice, the parking space can be used without reversing and manoeuvring over the pavement and onto the highway.
10. Therefore, I consider that the proposal would be detrimental to both pedestrian and highway safety. As such, it would not accord with Policy AS1 of the BLP which seeks to ensure that developments provide safe and appropriate access to the road network.

Other Matters

11. In support of the appeal my attention was drawn to other properties within the vicinity that have dropped kerbs and parking areas where cars have to reverse either in, or out, of the parking space. However, I observed that properties with such parking areas in the locality are very much in the minority. I do not know the circumstances of these cases, or the policies that applied at the time of their consideration, although I note that the Council have indicated that they have no records of any applications for vehicle crossings in the area. In any event, those I saw confirmed that such parking areas are both detrimental to the character and appearance of the area and to highway and pedestrian

safety, and so do not set a precedent that should be followed. Thus they do not justify allowing the appeal scheme.

12. I note the personal circumstances of the appellant, the high demand for on-street parking in the area, and the inability to park on, or outside, the appeal property itself. However, there is no indication that there has been any recent change in the parking situation in the area. I am satisfied that I have been provided with sufficient information to assess the relevance of the matter in this case, and it is clear that the provision of an off road parking space on the site would be beneficial to the appellant.

Conclusion

13. To conclude: the proposal would be detrimental to both the character and appearance of the area and to highway and pedestrian safety. As such it would not accord with the development plan. In its favour, the scheme would provide a convenient off-road parking space for the appellant. However, on balance, I consider that this benefit would not outweigh the harm I have identified would be caused by the proposal.
14. For the reasons set out above, I conclude the appeal should be dismissed.

Alison Partington

INSPECTOR