

Parish and Application No Inspectorate's Ref	Location and Appellant	Proposal	Officer Rec.	Decision
GREENHAM 17/01444/FUL PINS Ref 3187255	Marketing Suite Racecourse Road Newbury David Wilson Homes Southern	Alteration and side and rear two storey extension.	Del Refusal	Allowed 8.5.18

Preliminary Matters

The marketing suite mentioned in the Council's decision notice has been removed and, with reference to the original application form, the Inspector amended the site address, accordingly.

The strip of land on which the parking spaces, the subject of this appeal, are accommodated is not marked out to denote individual parking bays. The application form and the submitted drawing No 7140 PL 101A refers to 6 parking spaces whereas the Council considers that there are 7 spaces. In the circumstances, the Inspector has referred only to the 'parking area' and the permission granted requires for the bays to be properly marked out.

Main Issue

The main issue is the proposal's effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

The area where the parking is occurring is that which was used for such in connection with the marketing suite which lied adjacent but has since been removed. The marketing suite, in connection with the surrounding housing development was granted planning permission, first under ref 12/03188/FUL and then retained for a further period by way of permission ref 15/03441/FUL. The Inspector noted the Council's comment in its case report that it had understood that once the marketing suite had been removed the use for parking would be discontinued with the strip being landscaped. However, neither planning permission specifically required for the parking area's removal with no condition imposed to this effect.

When the original planning permission was granted for the new housing at the racecourse only 557 parking spaces were provided for 421 dwellings. This was later revised with a subsequent planning permission (ref 13/02087) which approved a total of 616 spaces. However, the Council says in its Statement that this still falls significantly short of current car parking standards and indicates that if current standards had been in effect in 2011, when the relevant reserved matters were approved, the number of dwellings permitted might have been fewer. Indeed, it would appear from a number of letters of representation from interested parties, responding to the appellant's consultation exercise, that the amount of parking spaces, and those for residents' visitors, is a concern.

The Council's main objection is that the parking strip is close to the access road and it considers that this area performs an important visual corridor into the racecourse. However, at the entrance spur off the roundabout the strip cannot be readily seen as the access road curves slightly and it is recessed behind a small area of landscaping. To be properly aware of its presence one would have to drive a short distance into the site.

Policy CS19 of the Council's Core Strategy (CS) seeks to ensure that development proposals do not adversely impact on the natural, cultural and functional components of the surrounding area's characteristics and, given his findings, these components would be preserved. Also, given the small scale nature of the development relative to its contextual setting, and the existence of the grassed areas immediately beyond, the importance of green infrastructure, as is highlighted under CS Policy CS18, would not be compromised.

In the above connection the Inspector was also aware that the site lies within the Stroud Green Conservation Area. Neither main party has, though, raised this as a particular issue and, due to the strip's limited size, he considered the significance of this location would not be harmed and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be preserved.

The Inspector noted the Council's view that the parking spaces involved would make little difference to the wider site's overall parking ratio. That may be the case but, in the absence of any significant visual harm, there are no compelling reasons to refuse planning permission for the continuation of use. Allowing this appeal would not make it difficult for the Council to resist any future proposals for additional parking on the wider site as each individual case has to be determined on its own particular merits or impacts. Permitting the appeal scheme would not set a precedent in this regard.

The Inspector had had regard to the letters of objection from interested parties and the grounds raised. Nonetheless, from his findings he concluded that the proposal would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and there would be no material conflict with CS Policy CS19. In terms of conditions, he had imposed one requiring that the bays be marked out and the other requiring that the strip be landscaped by way of a scheme to be submitted to the Council for subsequent approval in writing. In the circumstances, both these conditions are necessary and reasonable. The Council has suggested that a condition be imposed requiring that the parking spaces be retained for visitor use. However, such wording is imprecise and, moreover, a condition to this effect would be unenforceable, and would not meet the advice set out in the government's planning practice guidance.

For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, the appeal succeeds.

Decision

The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted to retain the resin bound parking bays that run perpendicular to the access road which formerly served as DWH customer parking for people visiting the Marketing Suite accessed from Stroud Green and the private gated access road at land off Teeton Mill Place, site of former marketing suite, Racecourse Road, Newbury, Berkshire RG14 7NU, in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 17/01444, dated 19 May 2017, subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Within 3 months of the date of this decision letter the appellant / owner shall submit a suitable landscaping plan for approval in writing by the local planning authority. Pursuant to the plan's written approval it shall be fully implemented in the first available planting season, and shall be maintained to the satisfaction of the local planning authority for a minimum period of 5 years thereafter. The landscaping shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.
- 2) Within 3 months of the date of this decision letter the parking area hereby approved shall be marked out into individual bays to accord with recognised standards and shall be retained for such use thereafter.

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