



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 January 2008

by **Brian G Meardon** BA DipTP MRTPI

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

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Decision date:
28 February 2008

Appeal Ref: APP/D1780/A/07/2057604
301-305 Wimpson Lane, Southampton SO16 4PY

- 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 Laishley Developments Ltd against the decision of Southampton City Council.
- The application Ref 07/00782/FUL, dated 22 May 2007, was refused by notice dated 14 August 2007.
- The development proposed is redevelopment of the site, following demolition of the existing dwellings, by 24 flats with associated works and amenity areas.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, whether it would provide satisfactory living conditions for occupiers in terms of amenity space, and whether acceptable provision is made in relation to securing affordable housing, open space and sustainable transportation.

Reasons

3. The proposed flats would replace a bungalow and a pair of semi-detached houses at the corner of Wimpson Lane and Crabwood Road. The surrounding residential area is of mixed character; while single and two storey dwellings predominate on this side of Wimpson Lane, a series of blocks of four storey local authority flats on the opposite side are integral to the street scene.
4. In recognition of the site's sustainable location, the Council has waived on-site car parking provision; the high density scheme would therefore make an efficient use of the land. The 24 flats consist of a mix of one and two bedroom units which I understand are to be developed with a Registered Social Landlord to provide 25% affordable housing.
5. The building would take an L shaped form so as to have facades to both its road frontages. Designed in contemporary style, I consider that the proposal would add positively to the locality where existing buildings are architecturally undistinguished. Presenting three storeys to Wimpson Lane, the building would be part flat roofed and part mansard; the articulation of the facade and varied

- use of materials would have the effect of reducing the perceived mass of the flats.
6. Wimpson Lane is on slight gradient as it passes the site. Seen in relation to the framing development on this frontage, the flats building would be of comparable height to the semi detached houses on the opposite side of the Crabwood Road corner; in the other direction the stepping down of the building's façade by the incorporation of the mansard roof would ensure that the flats have an acceptable relationship with the neighbouring pair of shops.
 7. On Crabwood Road, the height of the proposed building reduces to two storeys, with a traditional pitched roof. In this way, the proposal would acceptably relate to the scale of the existing dwellings along this road and complement the street scene. The corner is presently defined by very tall, dense evergreen hedging which gives the junction an enclosed appearance. The proposal would largely replicate this situation by building close to the Crabwood Road footpath. The development would however retain a sufficient separation from the house across the road so as not to be oppressive in the vicinity of the junction.
 8. The building would be stepped back from Wimpson Lane, enabling landscaping along this frontage to enhance the setting of the flats. Taking all these considerations into account, I do not share the Council's perception that the proposal would be an overdevelopment of the site. On the contrary, I consider that the proposed flats would not be out of character with the area and the building would respond to its corner location in a manner which would be compatible with the local street scene. I therefore conclude that the proposal would not conflict with policies SDP7 and SDP9, which effectively amplify policy SDP1 of the City's Local Plan Review, nor would be inconsistent with its policy H7.
 9. The building would enclose an amenity area at the rear of around 320sqm as calculated by the appellants. Assessed as comprising around 250sqm by the Council, this would represent about 11sqm per flat which the authority indicate would be below the 20sqm figure which I understand derives from the Council's Residential Design Guide (SPG). In addition to the space at the rear of the flats, the scheme also provides for amenity land sheltered by the landscaping in front of the building, raising the overall provision of amenity space to around 520sqm. While I accept that the latter would be less usable than the more private space that would be shielded by the building, the overall provision of space would exceed the guideline to which reference has been made.
 10. The mix of accommodation is weighted towards one bedroom units, with flats offering two bedrooms in the minority. As only the latter would potentially be occupied by families with children, for whom the availability of outside space would be desirable, I consider that the proposals make sufficient provision and are therefore acceptable in terms of the living conditions of occupiers. In the context of the Council's SPG and policy SDP1, I conclude that the proposed development is acceptable.
 11. Policies H9, CLT5, CLT6, SDP2 and SDP3 respectively are geared to ensuring appropriate provision of affordable housing, open space and children's play areas, and the integration of new development with the city's transport

infrastructure. The policies allow for contribution to off-site measures where appropriate. While the appellants have submitted a draft S106 Unilateral Undertaking which seeks to address these matters, I have not been provided with a completed Undertaking although I appreciate that the appellants have sought to progress such a document.

12. In the circumstances, I find that no acceptable response has been made in relation to the objectives of the City Council's adopted policies. In the absence of an appropriate Undertaking, the third issue remains unresolved. The consequent conflict with the objectives of the relevant policies leads me to conclude that the appeal should be dismissed, notwithstanding that I find the proposal to be otherwise satisfactory.
13. I am aware that, among other matters raised, local residents are concerned that the proposed flats would increase parking pressures on the locality. I note that double yellow lines operate on Wimpson Lane in the vicinity and also apply at the junction with Crabwood Road. On-street parking further along the latter is not precluded. At the time of my visit, there was little evidence of parking on this road but I have no reason to doubt that more intensive parking may occur at other times. The proposed flats have been designed as a car-free scheme with the agreement of the Council as planning and highway authority as a means of encouraging less reliance on private car usage in favour of other modes, including walking, cycling, and public transport. In these circumstances, I do not find the lack of parking provision in the scheme would be grounds for refusing permission.
14. That consideration does not however affect the decision which flows from my conclusion in relation to the third issue.

Brian G Meardon

Inspector