



# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 November 2007

by **G M Hollington MA, BPhil, MRTPI**

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

The Planning Inspectorate  
4/11 Eagle Wing  
Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Temple Quay  
Bristol BS1 6PN

☎ 0117 372 6372  
email: [enquiries@pins.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@pins.gsi.gov.uk)

Decision date:  
6 December 2007

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## Appeal Ref: APP/D1780/A/07/2052645

### Harcourt Mansions, 74 Whitworth Crescent, Southampton, SO18 1TP

- 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 Knightwood Homes Ltd against the decision of Southampton City Council.
- The application Ref. 07/00208/FUL, dated 14 February 2007, was refused by notice dated 19 June 2007.
- The development proposed is "Resubmission – 11 no. flats including demolition of existing building".

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## Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

## Procedural Matter

2. The appellant has submitted a section 106 unilateral undertaking which, in the event of planning permission being granted and implemented, would ensure the making of financial contributions in respect of highway works, public open space, playing fields, play space and any repair works identified in a post-development highway condition survey. In addition, each residential unit would be supplied with a sustainable travel voucher. These measures would overcome the sixth reason for which planning permission was refused.

## Main Issues

3. I consider the main issues in this appeal to be the effects of the proposed development on:
  - (a) the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
  - (b) the living conditions of the occupiers of adjoining properties, with particular reference to visual impact and noise and disturbance;
  - (c) on-street car parking; and
  - (d) energy/resource conservation.

## Reasons

- (a) Character & Appearance
4. The existing flats building fits in with the surrounding area's largely surviving Victorian and Edwardian character but is of no particular distinction – it is not
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listed as being of special architectural or historic importance and it is not in a conservation area. In principle, therefore, I have no objection to its replacement, and Government advice such as in Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 3: *Housing* encourages making better use of previously developed land.

5. However, this is qualified by the need not to compromise the quality of the local environment. Policies SDP 7 and SDP 9 of the City of Southampton Local Plan Review respectively expect buildings to enhance and respect their context and to be of a high quality of design, and the *Residential Design Guide* supplementary planning guidance (SPG) has similar aims.
6. The proposed flats would have a contemporary design which would not be objectionable in principle. However, the building's footprint would be considerably greater than that of the existing flats and, being 2-4 storeys in height and partly flat-roofed, its bulk would appear substantially greater. Furthermore, both street elevations would stand closer to their respective roads. While the Whitworth Crescent elevation would be set back more than the houses to the south, it would stand forward of its neighbours to the north. More pronounced would be the position of the Harcourt Road elevation, with 3 storeys less than 2m from the footway and balconies closer to the street.
7. Such a large building in such proximity to the road frontages would be unduly dominant in the street scene of this mostly traditional residential area and result in the loss of the current spacious appearance arising from the low proportion of the site occupied by buildings, opposite a largely open river frontage. Although taller buildings may be appropriate in principle at junctions to provide a visual focus, in this location a building of such mass and prominence would not adequately respect its context.
8. I therefore conclude on this issue that the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would not accord with the aims of Local Plan policies SDP 1, SDP 7 and SDP 9, the SPG and PPS3. This is sufficiently serious that it is not outweighed by my favourable views on the other main issues.

(b) Living Conditions

9. The proposed flats would stand significantly closer to Vala, Harcourt Road, than the existing flats but the nearest part would be only 2-storey and the 3-storey part, to the rear, would be about 9m from the boundary. In the side of Vala, the ground floor window faces an existing fence and the upper floor window does not appear to serve a habitable room. While the proposed building would affect the outlook from Vala and its garden and result in a loss of openness, I consider this would not be so dominant or oppressive as to be unacceptable.
10. Vehicular access and parking areas would adjoin the boundary with Vala, separated only by a fence and narrow planting strip. Occupiers of Vala would, therefore, be likely to be aware of associated activity, but I note that close to this boundary there are existing garages and areas which have been used for parking. Furthermore, residential development is generally regarded (as in Planning Policy Guidance note 24: *Planning and Noise*) as a noise-sensitive use rather than a source of noise. Consequently, I consider the likely volume of traffic and associated activity would not be sufficient to cause such noise and disturbance that it would result in material harm to living conditions.

11. The proposed 3-storey north elevation would be some 8m from the south elevation of 76 Whitworth Crescent, i.e. in a position similar to the upper parts of the existing flats. As the proposed 3<sup>rd</sup> floor would be considerably further back from the boundary, I consider the impact on the outlook from no. 76 would not be significant.
12. On this issue, therefore, I conclude that the proposed development would not result in unacceptable harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of adjoining properties, with particular reference to visual impact and noise and disturbance. It would not conflict with the aims of Local Plan Policy SDP 1.

(c) Car Parking

13. The Council acknowledges there is no highway authority objection to the proposed development, which would comply with its maximum parking standards (Local Plan Policy SDP 5 and Appendix 1). However, it draws attention to local residents' concerns about high levels of on-street parking and the likely generation of some additional parking on nearby roads. I saw that Whitworth Crescent northwards from about Harcourt Road, Harcourt Road and the nearer end of Macnaghten Road were all well used for car parking, and I would expect more cars to be parked overnight and at weekends (the appellants' parking survey results are of little assistance as they covered only one evening and do not present a clear picture of where cars were parked).
14. Nevertheless, there are no nearby waiting restrictions and there was ample space to park along Whitworth Crescent south of the Harcourt Road junction. Planning Policy Guidance note (PPG) 13: *Transport* points out that developers should not be required to provide more spaces than they themselves wish, other than in exceptional circumstances where there are significant implications for road safety.
15. Consequently, although any additional on-street parking could cause some residents to park less conveniently close to their own homes, my conclusion is that the proposed development would accord with the aims of Local Plan Policy SDP 3 and not have an unacceptable effect on on-street car parking.

(d) Energy/Resource Conservation

16. Local Plan Policy SDP 13 expects developments to be designed in a way which minimises their overall demand for resources, and the Council is concerned the submitted scheme fails to demonstrate that appropriate measures have been incorporated for energy/resource conservation.
17. However, a sustainability report was submitted with the planning application, indicating measures which would be incorporated in the development. These could be secured by condition and so I conclude that the proposed development would be acceptable in respect of energy/resource conservation and accord with the aims of Local Plan Policy SDP 13.

*G M Hollington*

INSPECTOR