

Eastern Area Planning Committee - 10 February 2021
Revised Minute

173. 6/2020/0281 - To erect single storey extensions with pitched roofs and insert three rooflights within the north east elevation and install a rainwater harvest tank at 5 Ballard Estate, Swanage

The Committee considered an application - 6/2020/0281 - proposing alterations to an existing dwelling at 5 Ballard Estate, Swanage, to erect single storey extensions with pitched roofs and insert three rooflights within the north east elevation and install a rainwater harvest tank.

The presenting officer provided the following update to the Committee - ' the application was advertised appropriately by site notice dated 27 July and by letters to adjoining neighbours. During the course of the application amended plans were received by the Council. Re-consultation with the parish and neighbours was carried out in October. Other subsequent amendments were minor and not judged to necessitate further re-consultation'.

With the aid of a visual presentation the presenting officer then explained the proposed development and highlighted the main planning considerations set out in the officer report.

Members were advised that the application site lay in the town of Swanage in the former Purbeck area and within the Dorset AONB. The Swanage Local Plan applied to the Swanage Parish and it formed part of the Development Plan for Purbeck against which applications were to be determined. Ballard Down, which included the Ballard Estate was identified as an area of distinctive local character by policy STCD of the Swanage Local Plan. Members were advised that the Ballard Estate was identified as an area of distinctive local character by policy STCD of the Swanage Local Plan and was characterised by a historic bungalow development initiated by its historic origins as army barracks. Policy STCD required that new development should protect and enhance the distinct local characteristics of the area; for the Ballard Estate, the area should continue to support single storey development only. Further detail was provided by the Swanage Townscape Character Assessment dated 2012.

Plans and photographs provided an illustration of the location, dimensions – form, bulk, size and mass - and appearance of the extension, along with ground floor plans, layout and elevations; comparisons between the existing dwelling and that proposed; the materials to be used; the topography of the site; its relationship with the highway network; the characteristics of the site; its relationship with other adjacent residential development; and the impact on amenity, environmental and planning designations relating to its setting within Swanage. Views into and around the application site and the wider Ballard Estate were shown, to assist in Member's understanding of what the application entailed.

Members were advised that Swanage Town Council had objected to the application on the grounds of its bulk and form, considering that the extensions would create a two storey property that would be detrimental to the street scene, have an adverse impact on the character of the area and neighbouring amenity. Representations received from neighbouring residents, also objecting, raised concerns about the design and dimensions of the extension, with its height and mass giving rise to

Eastern Area Planning Committee - 10 February 2021 Revised Minute

concerns of overbearance: being not in keeping with the character of the area. It was not seen to accord with restricted covenants and conditions emplaced on the estate – particularly that all dwellings on the estate should be single storey.

Notwithstanding these objections, officers had judged the development to be acceptable in terms of scale, height, design and layout and in terms of impact on local character and neighbouring properties and, on balance, the recommendation was to approve.

The Committee were then notified of four written submissions received and officers read these direct to the Committee.

The Committee heard directly from the two Ward members for Swanage, Councillor Gary Suttle spoke against the application on behalf of local residents who had contacted him about the application. He expressed regret that a site visit was not possible as that would have allowed the Committee to fully appreciate the impact this development would have on the surrounding area. He stated that elevations showed a height increase which demonstrated the impact and enormity of the proposal, akin to a rebuild. The site was a WW1 Army camp comprising primarily wooden or barrack type huts used for housing on small plots. with very narrow roads suitable for traffic in the 1900s. Over the last 50 years each has been made into brick or other build bungalows recognised by the former Swanage Urban District Council to be a site of special interest and to be preserved as one storey only. Purbeck District Council had maintained the historic mantle of protection for this area, granting permission for single storey dwellings only. The enormity of the roof extension plus rooflights gave the impression of a two-storey building. The Councillor referred to the Swanage Local Plan, AONB and Swanage Townscape character assessment Purbeck Local Plan and the emerging Purbeck Local Plan. The application was of a design, bulk and height that was unacceptable in this position and did not adhere to planning policies long held as sacrosanct.

Councillor Bill Trite – on this occasion speaking solely as a Ward member - agreed with the views of those objecting and the Town Council. He expressed concern that the submitted plans were deficient and the application was contrary to policy going against the protection that had been in place for decades limiting development to single storey dwellings. He thought the proposal was out of scale with nearby dwellings and that it included what was described as a loft, but the loft space proposed was far higher and more spacious than a loft was expected to be, leading to the conclusion that this was intended to be turned into living accommodation and should not be supported. Councillor Trite referred to previous applications at the site which had been refused. He raised concerns that granting permission would become the trigger for today's harmony to become a ruinous scramble for upward development in the future. He asked for a site visit to assess the proposal in context and asked the Committee to pay particular attention to the concerns expressed by local residents, the Town Council and ward members. In conclusion, Councillor Trite drew distinction between the development in the immediate vicinity of the application site and that at Ballard Lea.

The Council's Solicitor had previously outlined the guidance from the Planning Advisory Service and the LGA that, in the current circumstances, site visits were not

Eastern Area Planning Committee - 10 February 2021
Revised Minute

appropriate at this time and could not necessarily accord with social distancing measures. The Chairman, in accepting this advice, felt that it was unnecessary to visit the site as the Committee had all the information they needed before them.

The opportunity was given for members, to ask questions of the officers to seek clarification of the proposal. In particular, reference was made to the height and mass of the extension and to the necessity of the roof light windows. Officers said that other properties had rooflights and the question was whether rooflights here would be out of character. Officers considered that a condition requiring the rooflights to be fixed and obscured could make the development acceptable in relation to neighbouring amenity.

Officers recognised the perception that the extension was not typical of the form of the original estate - extending closer to the highway and having a larger roof than other dwellings – but explained there were a number of other properties in that part of the estate that had similarly extended their footprint in varied configurations. Windows in other property roofs were also readily apparent, in the street scene. Officers confirmed that as there were no internal stairs on the proposed floorplans, but that future use for the first floor would not require planning permission. Officers also confirmed that there was no policy to govern the comparative volume of any extension; i.e. there was no means for proportionality to be calculated and that the proposed installation of roof lights could be achieved under permitted development in any event. On this basis they considered that there would be no demonstrable harm from what was being proposed.

The Vice-Chairman considered the application to be acceptable on the basis that he felt the estate had evolved into a varying size and appearance of properties and, in that context, this proposal was not considered to be out of keeping. He proposed to move the recommendation in the officer's report and this was seconded by the Chairman, in the absence of any other member doing so. On being put to the vote this proposal was lost.

Other Members remained concerned that what was being proposed could be seen to constitute a two-storey dwelling that would compromise the amenity and character of that part of the Ballard Estate and, if approved, could well set a precedent for similar applications to be made on those grounds and, similarly, be successful, eroding the special character of the area. They expressed particular concern at the bulk of the extension in proportion to not only the current dwelling, but neighbouring ones too and could not see the need for the roof windows if these were not to benefit a second storey. They felt that what was being proposed would have a significant adverse effect on the character of not only that dwelling, but local amenity too. Members recognised the strength of feeling locally about the form of the development and could see no other option than to refuse permission.

Having had the opportunity to discuss the merits of the application, having understood what was being proposed and the reasoning for this; having taken into account the officer's report and presentation; the written representations; what they had heard at the meeting; and the views of Councillors Bill Trite and Gary Suttle, the Committee were satisfied in their understanding of what the proposal entailed and the reasoning for this. The Committee considered that, notwithstanding

Eastern Area Planning Committee - 10 February 2021
Revised Minute

the assessments made by officers that the proposal should be granted permission, with Councillor David Tooke proposing and Councillor Alex Brenton seconding refusal, on being put to the vote - 8:2 - the Committee did not agree to what was being recommended by reason of the bulk of the roof, in having a harmful impact on the local character of the Ballard Down area contrary to policy STCD of the Swanage Local Plan (2017) and policies LHH and D of the Purbeck Local Plan (2012), and accordingly, the application should be refused.

Resolved

That planning application 6/2020/0281 be refused.

Reason for Decision

The proposal would, by reason of the bulk of the roof, have a harmful impact on the local character of the Ballard Down area contrary to policy STCD of the Swanage Local Plan (2017) and policies LHH and D of the Purbeck Local Plan (2012).