

ITEM 5.5

4/01345/13/FUL - ELEVEN PARKING BAYS

AMENITY GREEN OPPOSITE 8, MIDDLEKNIGHTS HILL, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, HP1 3NA

APPLICANT: DACORUM BOROUGH COUNCIL - MRS G BARBER

[Case Officer - Philip Stanley]

[Grid Ref - TL 04133 08544]

Summary

The application is recommended for approval.

This application is the subject of a two year process ('The Verge Hardening Project') that has highlighted and prioritised the areas of extreme parking stress in the Borough, checked the feasibility and cost effectiveness of parking schemes in those areas, and undergone a pre-application process to determine the most appropriate areas and methods to deliver the needed additional parking.

The application site is considered a priority in this Project. There is a clear need for additional off-street parking in the area. This application provides 11 additional parking bays and this would be achieved in a way that has the appearance of extending the highway, but protecting the majority of the amenity land concerned. It is considered that an appropriate balance has been struck between meeting the parking requirements of the area and protecting the visual amenity of the neighbourhood. The application therefore complies with Policy 11 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan and Policies CS11 and CS12 of the Core Strategy (Pre-submission with Modifications January 2013).

Site Description

The application site comprises an amenity green opposite Nos.4-10 Middleknights Hill. The road slopes slightly downhill from west to east. The surrounding area is characterised by runs of terraced housing often with little or no provision (or possibility) of providing on-site parking. The amenity green subject to this application is framed by footpaths on all four sides.

There is an existing run of 10 spaces on red block paving to the west of the site (at the top of this amenity green). The site concerns the bottom half of the front of the amenity green and it is already badly rutted in this area due to the parked vehicles straddling the amenity green. There is a medium-sized tree at the bottom end of the site.

Proposal

It is proposed to construct 11 new parking bays on the northern edge of the eastern section of the green open space opposite Nos.2-10 Middleknights Hill.

The new parking bays would be placed at right angles to the road and the kerb would be dropped along the entire length of the new parking. The new parking bays would be laid in dense bituminous macadam. The proposals have been amended

from that originally submitted in two ways. Originally it was proposed to construct a line of 12 parking spaces which would have connected directly to the existing run of 10 spaces. It is now proposed to construct 11 spaces which would allow a gap of 2.5 metres between the two runs of parking spaces, in which it is proposed to plant a new tree.

Referral to Committee

The application is referred to the Development Control Committee as the applicant is the Borough Council.

Planning History

None.

Policies

National Policy Guidance

NPPF
Circular 11/95

Dacorum Borough Local Plan

Policies 1, 2, 9, 11, 13, 57, 59 and 116
Appendices 1 and 5

Dacorum Borough Core Strategy - Pre-submission with Modifications (January 2013)

CS1, CS4, CS10, CS11, CS12, CS26 and CS29

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Environmental Guidelines
Residential Character Area HCA 6: Gadebridge
Water Conservation & Sustainable Drainage
Accessibility Zones for the Application of Parking Standards

Representations

Hertfordshire Highways

The parking provision will formalise off-street parking by removing any on-street parking. No doubt this arrangement will help the free and safe flow of traffic. The highway authority does not wish to restrict the grant of consent. However, the proposals include drop kerbs which may require the applicant entering in to a S278 agreement with the highway authority to carry out the works.

Trees & Woodlands

We have no objections to the proposal. The planting of a new tree compensates for the loss of the existing tree provided it is a suitable species and size.

Response to Neighbour Notification / Site Notice / Newspaper Advertisement

One response was received from No.6 Whitestone Walk in support of the development for the following reasons:

This would be a massive addition to the area, as a parent with a toddler cars currently park up on the pavements which means we have to walk in the road, with the addition of these parking bays it would mean we could walk to the local shops safely. It will make the whole area a lot safer, as well as looking tidy, no more cars churning up the grass and making pavements unsafe. My husband often works very late and when he gets in there is no where in the area to park. I fully support this application and seeing other green's that have had parking put in recently it makes the whole area look so much better as well as safer and easier to park.

Furthermore, local residents were also asked for their views by the Council at the pre-application stage. There were 7 returned consultations, of which 6 were for the scheme and only one against (but did not state a reason for objecting).

Considerations

Policy and Principle

The proposed development would take place in an urban area of Hemel Hempstead and would therefore be acceptable in principle in accordance with Policy 11 of the DBLP and Policy CS4 of the Core Strategy.

In accordance with Policy 11 of the DBLP any scheme is expected to respect the general character of the area, avoid harm to neighbouring residential amenities and not compromise highway safety. Furthermore Policy 116 of the DBLP seeks the protection of open land in Towns from inappropriate development. In particular the location, scale and use of the new development must be well related to the character of existing development, its use and its open land setting, while the integrity and future of the wider area of open land in which the new development is set must not be compromised. Appendix 5 of the DBLP states that, "*Achievement of parking provision at the expense of the environment and good design will not be acceptable. Large unbroken expanses of parking..are undesirable. All parking must be adequately screened and landscaped*".

The Core Strategy follows the above themes with Policy CS10 (f) emphasising the need to preserve and enhance green gateways, Policy CS11 (f) stating that new development should avoid large areas dominated by car parking, and Policy CS12 seeking to ensure that all development is in keeping with the area and stating the importance of planting of trees and shrubs to help assimilate development.

Finally, the application site is located within the residential area of Gadebridge (HCA 6). In this area there may be opportunities for the conversion of parts of amenity areas to communal car parking where the character and appearance of the area is

not unduly harmed through its visual impact and effect on established landscaping.

Impact on Street Scene

The creation of a 11 new parking spaces at the edge of an amenity green would result in a change to the appearance of the area. In particular the use of tarmac would create a slightly harsher feel to the locality.

However, there are several factors in support of this application:

- The character of this particular amenity green is already characterised by parking at its side adjacent to the road in two ways. Firstly, there is an existing run of 10 spaces to the west of the site. Secondly, cars already park in the position of the proposed bays and this has eroded the land in these locations, which diminish the visual amenity of the area.
- A large section of the amenity green would remain untouched by these parking proposals, as well as the amenity green at the inside corner of Middleknights Hill and Plantation Walk. The unaffected areas contain the largest trees and are the most valuable sections of green space in the street scene.
- The proposed application has been amended to split up the existing and proposed parking bays. This would allow soft landscaping between the runs of parking bays, which would help to soften the development.
- The construction of the parking bays would prevent cars from bumping up the kerb, driving across the amenity green to reach the set back terrace of Nos.3-9 Middleknights Hill, thereby protecting the remainder of the greenspace.

Therefore, on balance, it is considered that the proposed application represents the most appropriate way of achieving the parking spaces that are in very short supply in this locality. In addition it is considered that the provision of these spaces would not unduly harm the character and appearance of the area and as such the proposals comply with Policies 11 and HCA6 of the DBLP.

Impact on Trees and Landscaping

The proposed scheme would see the loss of a medium sized tree at the bottom end of the amenity green. While the loss of this tree is not ideal it is recognised that the proposals include a replacement tree to be provided between the two runs of parking spaces. This position would help to soften the parking areas to a greater extent than the existing tree. It is also noted that the Trees & Woodlands department have raised no objection to the proposals. Furthermore, it is noted that the amenity green contains much larger, mature specimens at its western and eastern edges. These trees have considerable amenity value and therefore it is important to note that the proposals would not affect these trees.

At this stage no details have been provided regarding the new trees. It is expected that the new tree would be the same size and species as that recently agreed between the runs of parking spaces at Ritcroft Close, however confirmation of the exact details would need to be secure through a landscaping condition.

Impact on Neighbours

It is not considered that the proposed parking bays would cause significant harm to the amenity of neighbouring properties, in particular those opposite the site at Nos. 2-10 Middleknights Hill. It is appreciated that these properties would experience a greater degree of noise and disturbance from cars using the new parking spaces, however they are separated from the site by their own front gardens (some of which have now been converted to provide their own off-street parking) as well as the road. The proposed situation is also no different to the dwellings opposite the existing run of parking spaces.

It is also noted that no objections have been received to this planning application, while a pre-application consultation process indicated broad support for the proposals.

As such it is not considered that any harm caused to neighbouring residential amenities would be so significant to warrant refusing this application.

Highway Safety

It is considered that these proposals would improve highway safety in the street. At the moment cars are parked straddling the pavement, thereby reducing the width of both the road and the pavement. The proposed scheme would prevent such nuisance parking and as such will help the free and safe flow of traffic.

Conclusions

The proposed parking spaces would provide much needed local parking, but would be achieved in a way that does not compromise the visual amenity of the area. In particular the amendments made to the proposed development would ensure that soft landscaping would be introduced to break up the runs of parking spaces.

RECOMMENDATION – That planning permission be **GRANTED** for the reasons referred to above and subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.**

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 (1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 The development shall be carried out in accordance with the Schedule of Materials in section 9 of the application form submitted with this application signed and dated 10/07/13.**

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development in accordance with Policy 11 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991 - 2011 and Policy CS12 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (Pre-Submission with Modifications January 2013).

- 3 **No development shall take place until full details of the proposed tree(s) (noting the proposed location for the tree(s), species, plant sizes and proposed planting timetable) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved tree planting shall be carried out in the first planting season after the first use of the development hereby permitted.**

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development and to safeguard the visual character of the immediate area in accordance with Policy 11 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991 - 2011 and Policy CS12 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (Pre-Submission with Modifications January 2013).

- 4 **Any tree or shrub which forms part of the approved landscaping scheme which within a period of five years from planting fails to become established, becomes seriously damaged or diseased, dies or for any reason is removed shall be replaced in the next planting season by a tree or shrub of a species, size and maturity to be approved by the local planning authority.**

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development and to safeguard the visual character of the immediate area in accordance with Policy 11 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991 - 2011 and Policy CS12 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (Pre-Submission with Modifications January 2013).

- 5 **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:**

**Site Location Plan 1:1250
DBC/015**

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

ARTICLE 31 STATEMENT:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant during the determination process which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2012.

HERTFORDSHIRE HIGHWAYS INFORMATIVE

The proposals include drop kerbs which may require the applicant entering in to a S278 agreement with the highway authority to carry out the works.

Please contact Hertfordshire Highways on 01992 55555 for further information on this matter.