The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 28 March 2017

by Alex Hutson MATP CMLI MArborA

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

Decision date: 4 April 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/D1590/W/16/3165018
Garage Site, South Side of Grand Parade, Opposite No 11 Grand Parade, Leigh on Sea, Essex SS9 1EA

- 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 Mr Christopher Bailey against the decision of Southend-on-sea Borough Council.
- The application Ref 16/01593/FUL, dated 22 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 4 November 2016.
- The development proposed is "An additional garage where there are already 5 garages to replace an existing parking space to provide better security for that parked car".

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; and whether adequate provision for parking would be made and if not, the effect of this on highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is located on the southern side of Grand Parade within a predominantly residential area. It contains a row of 5 garage structures, orientated at right angles to the road, and a parking space. The land slopes away steeply beyond the garages to the large rear gardens of dwellings along Undercliff Gardens. Garage structures along this side of the road are a frequent occurrence. However, they tend to be set at a lower level to the level of the road or partially screened from view by boundary treatment such as fencing. As such, they do not appear as particularly prominent features in the streetscape. This contributes positively to a sense of space and openness in the area.

4. The garage structures within the appeal site, whilst of no particular architectural merit, are sited within the lower part of the appeal site and their roof level broadly matches the height of a fence along the frontage with Grand Parade. The front elevations of the garage structures, which are visible from along Grand Parade to the east, appear to be constructed from timber which reflects the fence materials. They therefore appear to be well assimilated

within the streetscape, conform to the prevailing pattern of development along this side of Grand Parade and contribute to the spatial qualities of the area.

5. The proposal would introduce a detached garage structure onto the appeal site on the area of the car parking space. The car parking space is sited within a more elevated part of the appeal site. The garage would be constructed from reinforced concrete panels with a spar aggregate finish and would have a galvanised metal door.

6. Whilst garage structures are a typical feature of the area, the proposed garage structure, given its siting within the more elevated part of the appeal site, would appear overly prominent within the streetscape. This would be most notable in views from along Grand Parade to the east. In addition, whilst some of the garage structures within the appeal site use spar aggregate, this material tends to be on elevations which are not particularly visible in views from along Grand Parade. Moreover, I observed that other garage structures along this side of the road tend to display an attractive white rendered finish. As such, the proposed spar aggregate finish, which would be clearly visible on the east and west elevations of the proposed garage structure, would appear out of keeping in this context and would increase its prominence within the streetscape.

7. Thus, the siting, materials and visual prominence of the proposed garage structure would erode considerably the spatial qualities of the appeal site and area and would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the streetscape and area.

8. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies KP2- Development Principles and CP4- The Environment and Urban Renaissance, of the Southend on Sea Core Strategy Development Plan Document One (Core Strategy); and Policies DM1- Design Quality and DM3- The Efficient and Effective Use of Land, of the Southend on Sea Development Management Document 2015 (DMD). These policies require, amongst other things, development to maintain and enhance the character of areas, to secure improvements to the urban environment through quality design, to respond positively to local context and to enhance the distinctiveness of a place. These policies are consistent with the broad aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework which seek planning to secure high quality design and to take account of the different roles and character of different areas.

9. The proposal would also be contrary to the guidance of the Southend on Sea Townscape and Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 1 2009 which advises that development must have a positive relationship to its context, reinforce local distinctiveness and seek to enhance the character of an area.

Parking provision and highway safety

10. The Council sets out that its Adopted Parking Standards require that a garage space should have internal dimensions of at least 3 metres (m) by 7m in order for it to be considered a parking space. Whilst I do not appear to have been provided with a copy of these parking standards, I note that these measurements are reflected within the supporting text of Policy DM15- Sustainable Transport Management, of the DMD. Submitted plan PL1 indicates that the proposed garage would have internal dimensions of 2.438m by 4.801m and would therefore fall short of the Council's requirements.

11. The appellant considers that the required internal dimensions to be excessively large and that the internal dimensions of the proposed garage could adequately accommodate a normal car. Whilst the proposed garage may be able to accommodate a normal car, the supporting text of Policy DM15 states that garages need to be large enough to accommodate some storage also, hence the required internal dimensions. On this basis, the required dimensions seem to me to be reasonable.

12. The appellant suggests that the garage could be increased in width. However, I must consider the appeal on the basis of the submitted plans. In addition, this would not overcome the shortfall in length. I note the appellant's suggestion that a condition could be imposed to require the garage to be used for the parking of a vehicle only. However, such a condition would be difficult for the Council to enforce. Moreover, the Council would have no control over any private rental agreement which might stipulate this requirement.

13. The part of Grand Parade in the vicinity of the appeal site is subject to parking restrictions. I observed that other parts of this road and other roads in the area where restrictions do not apply were heavily parked and therefore offer little opportunity for any additional on-street parking requirements. Given the inadequate internal dimensions of the proposed garage, it is likely to result in the loss of an existing parking space and would therefore generate addition on-street parking demand in an area already under considerable parking stress. This would result in an additional vehicle trawling the surrounding streets in search of a parking space to the detriment of the free flow of traffic and highway safety.

14. The proposal would therefore be contrary to Policy CP3- Transport and Accessibility, of the Core Strategy; and Policies DM3 and DM15, of the DMD. These policies require, amongst other things, development to improve road safety, not to lead to undue stress on transport capacity and to demonstrate that there will be capacity to accommodate any traffic generated in a safe manner.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters, including access to other garages and whether they have planning permission, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Alex Hutson

INSPECTOR