
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 February 2020

by Matthew Woodward BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26th February 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/K0235/D/19/3241620
6 Brambling Gardens, Wixams MK42 6BN

- 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 Wiles against the decision of Bedford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01925/FUL, dated 3 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 30 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is a single storey side and rear extension to adjoin existing garage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a single storey side and rear extension to adjoin existing garage at 6 Brambling Gardens, Wixams MK42 6BN in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 19/01925/FUL, dated 30 October 2019, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 19-076-01, 19-076-02, 19-076-03, 19-076-04, 19-076-05.

Procedural Matter

2. Since the Council refused planning permission the Council has adopted the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 (January 2020) (the adopted Local Plan). The Council have provided me with a copy of the relevant adopted Local Plan policies which replace those in the decision notice relating to a previous local plan¹. Both main parties have had an opportunity to comment on the implications of the adopted Local Plan on the proposal as part of this appeal. I have determined this appeal on the basis of the adopted Local Plan.

¹ Policies BE30 and T15 of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2002 as referred to in the Council's decision notice replaced with Policies 29 and 31 of the adopted Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 respectively

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether the proposal would adversely affect off-street parking provision at the appeal property and the effect of any lack of provision on highway safety.

Reasons

4. The appeal property comprises a semi-detached dwelling located on a cul-de-sac which is fronted by relatively modern properties with a similar design. The proposed single-storey extension would occupy part of the driveway located in between the existing garage and the cul-de-sac.
5. As no additional bedrooms would be created by the proposal, any increase in car ownership directly related to the extension would be unlikely. Moreover, there is no dispute between the main parties that the existing garage is deficient in terms of width, so it does not constitute a car parking space for the purposes of the Council's Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document² (SPD). Therefore, whilst the proposed extension would prevent vehicular access to the garage, it would not result in the loss of a formal garage parking space.
6. The Council contends that the proposed extension would reduce the amount of driveway space to the side of the appeal dwelling so as to displace at least one vehicle onto the street. According to the submitted drawings, this existing space is approximately 3.1m wide, a measurement not disputed by the Council, but one which falls short of the minimum standards for the width of driveway spaces set out in the SPD. This reinforces the narrowness of the rearmost part of the driveway I observed on my site visit which is constrained due to the presence of a detached garage associated with the neighbouring property, and the walls of the appeal dwelling. To my mind this narrow space reduces the ability of occupants of the appeal property to open car doors and access any vehicle parked there, restricting its use as an accessible parking space. Consequently, the proposal would not lead to the loss of a usable car parking space and no additional pressure would be placed on the surrounding streets to accommodate an extra vehicle.
7. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the street is laid out as a shared surface, with no kerb to demark the pedestrian margin from the carriageway. This is likely to reduce the speed at which vehicles are travelling along it and equalise the priority between cars and pedestrians using the highway. There was nothing on my site visit to suggest that this part of Brambling Gardens suffers significantly from parking stress. Whilst my site visit took place during the morning when people may have been at work, only a few cars were parked on-street close to the appeal site in a manner which allowed vehicles and pedestrians to pass safely.
8. Moreover, the position of the appeal site close to the end of the cul-de-sac means that vehicles using the highway are more likely to be familiar with the area, further reducing the opportunities for conflict between road users. Consequently, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, I am not satisfied that the area suffers from parking stress so as to unduly affect the ability of vehicles and pedestrians to safely use the street close to the appeal site.

² Bedford Parking Standards for Sustainable Communities: Design & Good Practice Interim Policy and Supplementary planning Document 2014

Therefore, even if I was to accept the Council's assertion that the driveway space in front of the existing garage could reasonably be used as a parking space, thus the extension would potentially displace a single vehicle associated with the appeal property onto the highway, I am not persuaded that this would lead to unacceptable highway safety impacts.

9. With regards to overall parking provision within the appeal property, the proposed extension would project slightly forwards of the neighbouring garage. On my site visit I was able to see a transit type van parked on the neighbouring drive in front of the garage, parallel to the driveway space that would remain in front of the proposed extension. The vehicle was parked within the neighbouring plot boundary and set back some distance from the main carriageway. Consequently, as the proposal would retain a space only slightly shorter in length than the driveway at the adjacent property, I am satisfied that a single usable space for the parking of a vehicle within the appeal site would be retained, leaving sufficient space for bins to be stored away from the street.
10. Therefore, I conclude that the development would not adversely affect off-street parking provision at the appeal property, nor would it be detrimental to highway safety. It would align with Policies 29 and 31 of the Local Plan which require, amongst other matters, that development respects the character of the locality and has regard to highway capacity, parking provision and safety. The proposal would not conflict with the aims of the SPD by ensuring cars are accommodated 'at home'. In accordance with paragraph 109 of the National Planning Policy Framework, there would be no unacceptable impact on highway safety.

Conditions

11. Conditions should be imposed to require the use of matching materials in the interests of appearance and to list the plans and the standard time limit for implementation in the interests of certainty.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, the appeal is allowed.

Matthew Woodward

INSPECTOR