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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 February 2020

**by Guy Davies BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 18 March 2020**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/C1435/D/19/3242538**

**Little Chevin, Station Road, Mayfield TN20 6BW**

- 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 B J Bowden against the decision of Wealden District Council.
  - The application ref WD/2019/1545/F, dated 16 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 16 September 2019.
  - The development proposed is to erect a new oak framed double garage to front of property.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed garage would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Mayfield Conservation Area.

### Procedural Matter

3. The submission version of the Wealden Local Plan 2019 was withdrawn by Wealden District Council on 19 February 2020. Therefore, its policies no longer carry weight.

### Reasons

4. The Mayfield Conservation Area covers most of the village of Mayfield and an outlying area around Coggins Mill. The character and appearance of the Conservation Area differs throughout its extent reflecting the historic evolution of the village from its core around the High Street where buildings form a tight knit pattern of development, to later loose knit and lower density areas which display different layouts and building styles.
5. The area along Station Road is characterised by substantial detached houses of the late Victorian or Edwardian eras set within spacious plots. The gardens are of a size that accommodate a generous amount of planting and mature trees. Along the southern side of the road, hedges or low walls and fences allow views into and across the front gardens. Some infilling has taken place between the original houses, but in a form that maintains the position of buildings set back from the road frontage. Little Chevin is formed from the subdivision of one of the more traditional houses in the area, and together with its garden contributes positively to the character and appearance of the area.

6. The significance of this part of the Conservation Area lies not only in the scale and design of the buildings but also that they are set back from the road frontage, which together with the greenery and mature trees in the gardens creates a sense of space and openness. These elements are important in showing how the village developed in the context of the Conservation Area as a whole.
7. Erecting a garage in the front garden of Little Chevin would impinge on these significant elements of the Conservation Area. It would interrupt the open, verdant nature of the front garden, and detract from views of the main building, which is a characteristic feature of the area. The front boundary is currently screened by a tall hedge, but views of the garage would be gained across neighbouring gardens and of the roof above the hedge; and there is no certainty that the hedge would remain in the future.
8. In its reason for refusal, the Council also criticised the design of the proposed garage. A design and use of materials more closely related to the host building might have been preferable but I do not consider the timber frame design specifically would be harmful in this situation. Figure 8.3 of the Wealden Design Guide 2008 includes such a design and it advises that: *'a "cart lodge" approach may well be acceptable but needs to be both subordinate and of appropriate materials and detailing'*. While I do not raise any objection to the design or materials, that would not overcome the harm identified above with respect to its siting.
9. As a consequence of its position, the proposed garage would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Mayfield Conservation Area contrary to policies GD1, EN27 and HG10 of the Wealden Local Plan 1998, which require proposals to respect the character of adjoining development and promote local distinctiveness. The size and position of the garage would also run counter to the advice given in the Wealden Design Guide 2008, which states in part of paragraph 8.1: *'The siting of garages (particularly those of a large size) in front of the main house should be avoided where they would be likely to dominate the plot frontage'*.
10. Using the approach as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework<sup>1</sup>, the proposed garage would lead to less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area, although it would nevertheless cause harm to its character and appearance, to which I attach considerable importance and weight.
11. The appellant has suggested that if permission were to be granted for the appeal scheme it would be possible for the existing garage alongside Little Chevin to be demolished, which would enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area. Demolition of the existing garage does not form part of the proposal but even if it did, I do not consider that any public benefit accruing from its removal would outweigh the harm caused to the Conservation Area by the proposed garage.

## **Other Matters**

12. Attention has been drawn to other examples of garages in the Conservation Area, including a recent planning permission. I do not have full details of these

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<sup>1</sup> National Planning Policy Framework 2019, Section 16.

other examples, but from my assessment of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, I saw none that would lead me to a different conclusion on the main issue.

13. Whether there had previously been a garage sited in the front garden some decades ago carries little weight as the appeal is determined on the circumstances that appertain now.
14. The absence of a garage in the front garden would not, in my opinion, prevent the installation of electric vehicle charging points elsewhere on the property.

### **Conclusion**

15. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

*Guy Davies*

INSPECTOR