
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 October 2020

by Baljit K Muston BA(Hons) PGDip MBA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 November 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/W/20/3250680

227 Wickham Lane, Plumstead, London SE2 0YB

- 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 Mark Sisson against the decision of the Council of the Royal Borough of Greenwich.
 - The application Ref 19/3235/HD, dated 28 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 13 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is a domestic crossover to allow the installation of a driveway.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:-
 - the effect of the proposed development on highway safety;
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - whether the proposed development would result in an unacceptable reduction in public parking.

Reasons

Highway safety

3. The Council refused the application on the basis that it would involve cars reversing onto Wickham Lane from the hardstanding in the front garden of the appeal site (or reversing out onto Wickham Lane), and that this would be more hazardous than pulling away from the parallel parking space outside the appeal site where the appellant currently parks. The consultation response from the Council's Transport and Highways Unit set out in the Council's Delegated Report states that "*there is no turning area on site*", which is why the reversing manoeuvres would be necessary.
4. The appellant has explained in detail in a statement accompanying his appeal that pulling out forwards into the traffic from his hardstanding would be safer than manoeuvring out of his existing parking space. However, the submitted plans do not show that it is possible to turn a car on site and, without a turning area, a car would have to be reversed either onto or from Wickham Lane. I

have sympathy with the appellant's view that leaving his hardstanding forwards would be less hazardous than pulling away from the existing parking space in the road, particularly if his car is parked facing oncoming traffic. However, I have no evidence before me to suggest that it would not be necessary for a manoeuvre into or out of the hardstanding to be undertaken in reverse.

5. The appeal site is on the north-eastern side of Wickham Lane, approximately in the centre of about 10 properties on a straight section of road before, in both directions, the road turns back in towards these houses. This configuration has the effect of reducing visibility along Wickham Lane, in both directions, of and from a vehicle emerging from the appeal site. This relative lack of visibility already exists and must affect vehicles pulling away from the parking space outside the house. However, the fact that one or other of the manoeuvres into or out of the hardstanding would have to be undertaken in reverse persuades me that this would be materially more hazardous than the current situation.
6. The appellant argues that cars pulling away from parallel spaces is a significant hazard facing cyclists. However, so are cars reversing onto or off the highway, and I have no evidence before me to suggest that this would result in less harm to highway safety than the current situation.
7. The appellant also points out the absence of other traffic calming measures along Wickham Lane and the existence of other crossovers further along the road. However, the lack of traffic calming does not mean that concerns in relation to highway safety should be set aside. In addition, each case must be determined on its own merits, and the existence of other examples is not a good reason to allow development that would harm highway safety.
8. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would have an unacceptable effect on highway safety, contrary to Policy 6.3 of the London Plan (2016), which requires development not to adversely affect safety on the transport network. I do not consider that, in relation to this main issue, the proposal conflicts with any of the other policies cited in the second reason for refusal. However, this does not outweigh my conclusions on this main issue.

Character and appearance

9. The Council's first reason for refusal alleges harm caused by the loss of the front garden to hardstanding. The hardstanding, consisting of a gravelled area and a path leading to the front door, has already been laid, and I agree with the appellant that this in itself is permitted development and does not require planning permission. I also noted on my site visit that other nearby front gardens have been at least partially paved, some without providing vehicular access to the highway. The work done on site does not appear out of keeping with the area and causes no material harm to the street scene.
10. Were I to allow this appeal, the provision of a crossover would allow at least one vehicle to be parked on the existing hardstanding. This would have an impact on the character of the area and would make the appeal site stand out from others in this part of Wickham Lane. However, there are examples to both the north and south of other hardstandings with cars parked on them, and a very large number in the wider area. In my opinion, the existence of hardstandings with vehicles parked on them is an established part of the character of the wider area. This, combined with the fact that the existing gravelled area at the appeal site does not require planning permission,

persuades me that the proposal would not cause material harm to the street scene.

11. I conclude that the proposed development would not have an unacceptably adverse effect on the character or appearance of the area, and would comply in this respect with Policies 7.4 and 7.6 of the London Plan (2016) and Policy DH1 of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (2014) (CS), which seek, amongst other things, development in keeping with an area's established layout and character, and which is appropriate to the public realm.

Parking

12. The Council state that, given the predominantly terraced housing and general lack of off-street parking, the premises in the vicinity are reliant on kerbside availability. It says that there is therefore a heavy demand for parking locally on street, and that, in order to balance the needs of resident parking and the need to prevent obstruction on the highway, the Council has allowed footway parking outside the premises in marked bays.
13. The Council also says that the existing bay outside the appeal site accommodates two cars but, in order to create sufficient manoeuvring there would be a need to remove the bay, thereby removing more parking opportunity than the proposal will create. The appellant considers that only one space would be lost on the road (immediately in front of No 227) and that two could be provided on site.
14. On my site visit, at mid-morning on a working day, I noted that there was a good deal of parking spaces available. I am sure that pressure for parking outside homes increases during evenings and weekends. However, the appellant says that he is nearly always able to park in the space directly outside his property and that parking is always readily available nearby.
15. I have not seen any evidence to suggest that this part of Wickham Lane is subject to a high level of demand for parking. In the circumstances, I do not consider that the removal of one or two public parking spaces (one of which is often occupied by the appellant's car), and their replacement with one or two private parking spaces (one of which would often be occupied by the appellant's car) would result in unacceptable 'parking stress'.
16. I conclude that the proposed development would not result in an unacceptable reduction in public parking. I do not consider that, in relation to this main issue, the proposal conflicts with any of the policies cited in the second reason for refusal.

Other matters

17. The appellant says that one of the motivations behind the appeal proposal is to allow him to charge an electric car, which is not possible with the current arrangements. This would then allow him to change to an electric car in the future. This is in line with Policy IM(c) of the CS, which, amongst other things, seeks the provision of electric charging points as part of any car parking provision. This weighs in favour of the appeal proposal.

Conclusions

18. I have concluded that the proposal would not have an unacceptably adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area and would not result in an unacceptable reduction in public parking. The fact that the proposal would allow an electric car to be charged is a factor in the scheme's favour. However, I consider that these factors are outweighed by my conclusion that the proposal would have an unacceptable effect on highway safety. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Baljit K Muston

INSPECTOR