
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 22 January 2021

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 12 February 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/K1935/D/20/3257631

86 Marlborough Road, Stevenage SG2 9HL

- 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 Michael Colwell against the decision of Stevenage Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00175/FPH, dated 25 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 21 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is the construction of a domestic garage to the front of the property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. The main issues are the effects of the proposal on:
 - i) The character and appearance of the local area; and
 - ii) The safety of pedestrians using the public highway.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. Marlborough Road is a modern cul-de-sac of mainly detached houses with an area of open space at the end. No 86 sits near to the end of the street, next to the turning head. The proposal is to build a single garage at the front of the property, near to the footway.
4. The houses on Marlborough Road are set back from the street to allow for frontage parking, with front boundaries generally open or enclosed only by low fences, shrubs or hedges. The proposed garage would be a functional, plain building sitting well forward of any other significant structures where it would be an incongruous and intrusive feature. The appellant argues that it would enhance local character by alleviating the regimented layout and blandness of the street. The street does, however, already benefit from variations in building design, frontage treatments and landscape planting. The proposed garage would be unsympathetically sited and would detract from the open, pleasant street scene.

5. I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the local area. It therefore conflicts with the aims of Stevenage Borough Local Plan 2011-2031 (LP) Policies GD1 and SP8, the Stevenage Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), to ensure high quality development that respects and makes a positive contribution to its location.

Highway safety

6. The proposed garage would not be long enough to easily accommodate cars and for this reason would be too small to count as a parking space, in line with the Council's Parking Provision Supplementary Planning Document (PPSPD) and Government guidance in Manual for Streets. Although there would still be enough parking space in front of the house to meet the standards set out in the PPSPD, the garage is designed and intended for a car and would likely be used for that purpose.
7. The garage would sit parallel to the street, with its door opening close to the footway where it bends around the cul-de-sac's turning head. As a result, drivers exiting the garage would not have an adequate view of pedestrians on the footway, creating a potentially dangerous situation.
8. Furthermore, the lack of private driveway space directly in front of the garage would encourage cars to stop or park in a position which would block the footway, potentially forcing pedestrians to move into the roadway. Although light traffic and slow speeds can be expected here, this would still add a further element of danger to what would in any case be an unsatisfactory situation.
9. The Council has referred to another appeal¹ for a different site where the size of the garage and the frontage parking area was also in question. The circumstances in that appeal were much different and are not directly relevant to the particular circumstances of this case.
10. I conclude that the proposal would unacceptably prejudice the safety of pedestrians using the public highway. It therefore conflicts with the shared aims of LP Policy IT5, Roads in Hertfordshire – A Design Guide 3rd Edition, the PPSPD, the Framework and Manual for Streets, to make safe provision for pedestrians.

Conclusion

11. The applicant confirms that the proposal is to meet personal (not business) needs, but has not put forward any need of sufficient importance to override my concerns about the impacts of the proposed development. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR

¹ APP/K1935/W/16/3164393