



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 May 2021

by H Lock BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 June 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/V2255/D/20/3266146

30 Grove Park Avenue, Borden, SITTINGBOURNE, ME10 1YH

- 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 Peter Tucker & Mrs Michelle Tucker against the decision of Swale Borough Council.
 - The application Ref. 20/505403/FULL, dated 13 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 24 December 2020.
 - The development proposed is single storey front, side and rear extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for single storey front, side and rear extension at 30 Grove Park Avenue, Borden, SITTINGBOURNE, ME10 1YH, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref. 20/505403/FULL, dated 13 November 2020, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 1:1250 scale site plan; and 20/3063/2.
 - 3) 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.

Main Issues

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on (1) parking provision and the convenience of other road users in the vicinity; and (2) the appearance of the streetscene.

Reasons

Parking

3. The appeal property has a side garage and parking space in front, with the remainder of the frontage being soft landscaped. This is an arrangement found throughout the cul-de-sac of Grove Park Avenue, although some properties have paved front gardens providing extra parking. At the time of the mid-week, mid-day appeal site visit, some on-street parking was evident.

4. Paragraph 56 of the Swale Borough Council Parking Standards, May 2020 (PS) advises that in areas without on-street controls, many residents do not use garages for parking, and therefore garages are unlikely to be counted as part of the parking provision in these locations. The minimum dimensions to constitute a usable garage space given in section 7 of that document are 7.0m in length by 3.6m in width.
5. The existing garage at the appeal site is significantly below these dimensions, with an internal wall-to-wall width of less than 2.4m. This is significantly below the width necessary to be classed as a garage space in the PS. As a result, the dwelling is currently served by only one usable on-site space, and the loss of the existing garage would not alter this. Even without the garage in place, the space between the side wall of the house and the boundary would be too narrow to constitute an open parking space to the Council's standards; Table 7 in section 7 of the PS would require a minimum width of 2.9m as there would be 'hard' boundaries on each side of the space.
6. The current standards set out in Appendix A to the PS recommend 2 to 3 parking spaces for a 3-bedroom house, but the dwelling already has only one usable space, and there is sufficient depth and width to ensure that it would not overhang the footway. As the proposal would not increase occupancy at the property, I do not consider that the removal of the sub-standard garage would materially alter the availability of parking at the site, or the potential for additional on-street parking. In this context, it is not evident that this would result in additional inconvenience for other road users.
7. The Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance document 'Designing an Extension: A Guide for Householders' (SPG) advises that an extension should not take away parking without a suitable alternative area being made available, and that the Council will seek to ensure that at least one retained space is suitable for the building of a garage if one does not already exist. However, whilst the aims of the guidance are noted, in this case the proposal would not remove a usable garage space, or indeed a space that would have sufficient width to enable a usable garage for modern vehicles to be built.
8. Whilst I have had regard to the SPG, in light of the above I conclude that the proposal would not undermine parking provision, or harm the convenience of other road users in the vicinity. The reason for refusal does not cite any conflict with development plan policy, but I conclude that the proposal would ensure an efficient parking layout in accordance with Policy DM 7 of 'Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan' 2017 (LP) referred to in the Council's report, a copy of which was provided with its questionnaire.

Appearance of Streetscene

9. The Council's SPG seeks to discourage extensions that would increase on-street parking or result in the provision of all car parking in front gardens, on the basis that the position is unlikely to be suitable for a garage and will create a poor appearance in the streetscene. However, there is a mix of frontage treatment in the vicinity, some of which are fully surfaced for vehicle parking, and some a mix of parking and soft and/or hard landscaping. Whilst I acknowledge that any future creation of a second frontage space has the potential to result in loss of some landscaping, I do not find that this would diminish the appearance of the streetscene given the mixed treatment of frontages in the vicinity.

10. Although I note the aims of the SPG, I conclude that the proposal would not result in the loss of soft landscaping that would harm the appearance of the streetscene. Although not referenced in the reason for refusal, the Council's report cites LP Policy DM 14 and a copy was included with the questionnaire; I find that the proposal would cause no significant harm to amenity and other sensitive uses or areas as sought by that policy.

Conditions

11. In addition to the standard time limit, I have attached a condition specifying the approved drawings as this provides certainty. It is also appropriate to control materials to match the existing dwelling, in order to safeguard the character and appearance of the development and the area.

Conclusion

12. For the above reasons, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

H Lock

INSPECTOR