
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 July 2021

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/X0415/D/21/3270612

Little Mead, 12 Woodchester Park, Knotty Green HP9 2TU

- 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 Mrs S Hussain against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref PL/20/2858/FA, dated 28 August 2020, was refused by notice dated 18 December 2020.
 - The development proposed is a new detached garage and entrance gates for pedestrian and vehicular access with a repositioned crossover.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. On 15 July 2021 the Council granted a separate planning permission for a repositioned vehicular access, new boundary brick piers and railings. I take this new permission into account.
3. A new version of the National Planning Policy Framework was published on 20 July 2021. Having considered the role and content of the Framework in relation to this case, I see no need to re-consult the main parties about this change in national policy.

Main issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of this part of Woodchester Park.

Reasons

5. Woodchester Park is a suburban residential street characterised by a reasonably spacious development of modern detached houses in a leafy setting. Little Mead is a large detached house sitting on the outside of a bend, with access to a parking area at the front of the house, behind an evergreen roadside hedge. The proposal is to build a new double garage within the frontage area and to move the existing access a few metres over, providing timber boarded gates and new brick gate piers plus short lengths of brick wall.

6. The Council refers to its 2017 Chiltern and South Bucks Townscape Character Study (the Study), which classifies Woodchester Park as a *Green Suburban Road*. The Study makes recommendations for this type of street including that garages should continue to be placed behind building lines and that high boundary treatments that would obscure buildings from the road should be avoided. As pointed out by the appellant, the Study was prepared as part of the evidence base for a local plan which has not been adopted. The Study was based on stakeholder consultation but does not appear to have been the subject of general public consultation or adopted as a supplementary planning document. I therefore treat the Study as informal guidance and give it limited weight.
7. The Council's Residential Extensions and Householder Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) does, however, similarly advise that care needs to be taken in the siting of garages and that gates and walls should respond to local character.
8. The proposed garage would be a substantial feature with a high roof, sitting very close to the street and acting as a focal point in views along the street in both directions. On the approach from the main road, it would be seen partly in the context of a similar garage at No 10 next door, which is set on much higher ground. The new garage would be much closer to the street though, and would combine with the existing garage to create an expanse of brick walling in this view, closing off the visual gap between buildings and detracting from the verdant character of the area.
9. The appellant suggests that the garage would be fundamentally hidden in views from the other direction, but I am satisfied from the plans and from my site visit that it would also be in prominent in views along the street on this approach, crowding the street and sitting partially in front of the house. The garage would to some extent be screened in these views by an evergreen hedge at No 10, but this appears to be outside of the control of the appellant and could be reduced or lost in the future.
10. The appellant has drawn my attention to a number of other garages in front of houses at Woodchester Park. All of these, however, appear to be either set back further from the street or much lower in height. None are in such a prominent location on the entrance to Woodchester Park. I therefore find that, although garaging to the front of properties is an established part of local character, this particular garage would be out of character with the area and would cause harm due to its siting, bulk and height.
11. The new planning permission allows for the access drive to be moved to the same location, also with brick gate piers but with open railings on the gates and side enclosures which would allow views through. It appears likely that this alternative permission would be implemented, so I give it weight as a fall-back position.
12. The new access position would cause no harm to the local street scene in any case. The proposed timber boarded gates, piers and short lengths of side wall would close off views to some extent, but they would be set back from the street and would only take up a small section of the frontage, with the house remaining visible behind. The brick piers and walls are similar to those seen on

other local properties so are not out of character with the area. I find no harm to local character or appearance from these minor aspects of the proposal.

13. I conclude that while the proposed access, gates, gate piers and side walls could be acceptable on their own, the proposed garage would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of this part of Woodchester Park. The proposal therefore conflicts with the aims of policies GC1, H13, H15 and H20 of the adopted Chiltern District Local Plan (as altered and consolidated) and the SPD, to ensure that development including ancillary outbuildings is designed to a high standard and does not adversely affect the street scene.
14. I have taken account of all other matters raised including the objections made by other interested parties. In particular, I note that the proposed garage would not block driver visibility, would be set well away from neighbouring properties and has been sited to minimise harm to a neighbouring tree.
15. I find nothing to override or add to my findings in relation to the main issue. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the appeal should not succeed.

Les Greenwood

INSPECTOR