
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 April 2022

by J L Cheesley BA(Hons) DIPTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 April 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W1525/D/22/3294084

Bechers, Watchhouse Road, Galleywood, Chelmsford, Essex CM2 8NE

- 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 Michelle Lucas-Jones against the decision of Chelmsford City Council.
 - The application Ref 21/02197/FUL was refused by notice dated 20 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is front driveway redesign and associated landscaping and dropped kerb.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. I consider the main issues to be:

the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding streetscene; and

the effect of the proposal on highway safety.

Reasons

3. The appeal property, whilst facing Watchhouse Road, lies within a group of dwellings where vehicular access is obtained via Barn Mead. The proposal would allow for direct access onto Watchhouse Road, with an access and parking area over what is currently a grassed front area with a low white picket fence. This part of Watchhouse Road provides a soft landscaped edge to Galleywood. The frontage of the appeal site makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, due to its open soft landscaped appearance, which is similar in appearance to that of the frontage of the adjoining property.
 4. The proposal would include hedging to the front of the property, which would have some softening appearance. Nevertheless, due to the design of the proposal and proposed use for parking, the open soft landscaped appearance would be lost. This would be to the detriment of the character and appearance of the surrounding streetscene.
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5. Watchhouse Road is classified as a Secondary Distributor Road. The proposed hedges would obstruct both pedestrian and driver visibility in both directions from the proposed vehicular access. There is a strong probability that this would lead to increased pedestrian and vehicular conflict, resulting in an unacceptable degree of hazard detrimental to the safety of both pedestrians and drivers. This would be to the detriment of highway safety.
6. I note that the appellant would be prepared to accept the imposition of conditions relating to the submission of landscaping and boundary details. However, for the reasons stated above, I do not consider that any such conditions would alleviate my concerns.

For the reasons stated above and having taken into consideration all matters raised, I conclude that the proposal would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding streetscene and on highway safety. Thus, the proposal would be contrary to Policy DM23 in the Chelmsford Local Plan (2020), where it seeks to ensure that new development respects the character and appearance of the surrounding area. I consider Policy DM23 to be broadly consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework, especially where the Framework seeks to ensure good design. In addition, the proposal would be contrary to the Framework where it seeks to ensure that development proposals do not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

7. It must be acknowledged that at the heart of the Framework is the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It sets out the three overarching objectives which are interdependent.
8. Turning to the economic objective, some very small benefit would accrue in relation to the construction of the proposal. In terms of the social objective, the proposal would not create a well-designed safe built environment. I now turn to the environmental objective. For the reasons stated above, I have found that the proposal would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the surrounding streetscene. The harm I have identified is so significant in terms of both the social and environmental objectives that taking the three overarching objectives together, the proposal would not constitute sustainable development.

J L Cheesley

INSPECTOR