



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19th May 2022

by Megan Thomas Q.C. Barrister-at-Law

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

Decision date: 17th June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/D/20/3250289

296 Wickham Lane, Plumstead SE2 0NY

- 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 Bashkim Ruci against the decision of the Royal Borough of Greenwich Council.
 - The application Ref.19/3593/HD, dated 16 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 23 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is alterations to front garden and landscaping to provide front drive for car parking to include a drop kerb.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in the appeal are the effect of the proposed front drive on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and the effect of the proposal on the safety of users of the public pavement and highway.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is a two storey, three-bedroomed semi-detached dwelling situated on the south western side of Wickham Lane in Plumstead. Its semi-pair is no.298 which is a corner property on the junction of Wickham Lane and Verdun Road. The properties to the north west of the appeal site in its immediate vicinity are also semi-detached and fairly uniform in design and style. They are situated on higher ground with steps giving access to and egress from the dwellings and high retaining walls at the back of the public pavement. There are front gardens/amenity areas on a level with the ground floors of the dwellings.
4. Wickham Lane is a busy classified road (A209) and has a 30mph speed limit outside the site. It is a bus route and there is a bus stop on the pavement very close to the site. There is a mature tree in front of the appeal site within the pavement. Parking is available on nearby side roads including Verdun Road.

5. The proposal is to remove the existing front retaining wall and excavate earth in order to provide off street parking. A new retaining wall would be constructed at the rear of the new forecourt area and it would have permeable or porous surfacing. A dropped kerb would be installed over part of the frontage. The area would allow for bin or bike storage but it would not allow for a vehicle to be manoeuvred into a forward/road facing position if it had been driven forwards into the forecourt area. The proposed development would facilitate easy charging of an electric car, which is currently not possible.
6. The appeal site sits in a row of dwellings that are characterised by their positioning at a significantly higher level than street level. The excavation of the front garden at no.296 and replacement with a parking forecourt would appear odd and out of place in the streetscene given the considerable extent of the excavation proposed and the general uniformity of the semi-detached dwellings in the immediate vicinity. The frontage pattern along this element of Wickham Lane (south-west side) is characterised by high walls and interfering with that rhythm to the extent proposed would be harmful.
7. On this issue I conclude that the proposed development would unduly harm the character and appearance of the area and would be contrary to policy DH1 of the Royal Borough of Greenwich Core Strategy with Detailed Policies, and the Council's Residential Extensions, Basements and Conversions Supplementary Planning Document (December 2018).

Highway Safety

8. The lack of ability to manoeuvre a vehicle round within the private forecourt area so that it exited in a forward gear would lead to some reversing manoeuvres out of the private space over the public pavement and onto the public highway. It would not be easy for the driver to see pedestrians on the pavement because of the retaining walls belonging to the neighbouring dwellings. The street tree also would obscure sight lines into the road, as might people congregating at the bus stop. There is also the potential for vehicles using the crossover to block or delay the bus pulling up at the bus stop. Similarly, pedestrians, cyclists and vehicle drivers would find it difficult to see a vehicle reversing or moving forwards out of the forecourt in time to take safe evasive action.
9. Reversing into the new forecourt from Wickham Lane would also be a hazardous manoeuvre given the location of the bus stop, the tree and the likelihood of interfering with the free flow of traffic along Wickham Lane.
10. The appellant has highlighted a number of off-street parking forecourts serving dwellings on Wickham Lane which have been excavated and/or are near trees and bus stops. I noted some when on my site visit. However, I have determined this appeal on its own merits and the extent of excavation and/or particular hazards and obstacles at the appeal site make this proposal in this location unacceptable. Whilst there would be fewer vehicles parked on the surrounding side roads, less inconvenience to a vehicle-owning occupant of no.296 and an advantage for any occupant running an electric vehicle, these factors do not outweigh the proposal's harm in this case.

11. On the second main issue, I conclude that there would be unacceptable potential safety risks to general highway users contrary to policies IM4 and IM(b)(iv) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (2014).

Conclusion

12. Having taken into account all representations made, for the reasons given above, I dismiss the appeal.

Megan Thomas Q.C.

INSPECTOR