
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 June 2022

by Les Greenwood MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27 June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/X0415/D/22/3291158

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/21/4410/FA, dated 15 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 January 2022.
 - The development proposed is a new flat roofed detached garage, with repositioned vehicular access, gates and railings as previously approved ref PL/21/2064/FA.
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Application for Costs

1. An application for costs was made by Mrs S Hussain against Buckinghamshire Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Decision

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

3. This appeal results from the refusal of an application for a flat roofed garage, following on from the dismissal of appeal APP/X0415/D/21/3270612 for a pitched roof garage in much the same position. Coincidentally, I was also the Inspector for that previous appeal. I take my previous decision into account, but have assessed this proposal based on its own merits and circumstances.

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, mainly detached houses in a leafy setting. Little Mead is a large detached house with a parking area to the front, behind a thick and tall evergreen hedge.
6. The proposal is to build a flat roofed double garage within the site frontage, moving the existing access a few metres over and providing new gates, gate

piers and railings. The only element of the appeal proposal that has not already been approved is the garage.

7. As a matter of clarification, application drawing 20/16/312A shows the proposed garage at up to 2.75m high, as indicated by the Council officers' report, not 2.1m as stated by the appellant. The drawing also indicates that the garage would be cut into the slope of the site. The footprint and siting of the proposed garage appears to be essentially the same as in the previous appeal proposal so the key change is the introduction of a flat, green roof instead of a pitched roof.
8. The Council refers to its 2017 Chiltern and South Bucks Townscape Character Study (the Study), which classifies Woodchester Park as a Green Suburban Road. As recorded in the previous appeal decision, the Study was prepared as part of the evidence base for a local plan which has not been adopted. It 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 its recommendations only limited weight.
9. Significantly more weight can be given to the Council's Residential Extensions and Householder Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), which says that care needs to be taken in the siting of garages, particularly in areas characterised by open frontages. Although many of the houses on Woodchester Park have garages in their front gardens, it is still necessary to take care in the siting of new garages to protect the spacious, leafy character of the street.
10. Little Mead sits on the outside of a bend so that the property, especially the proposed site for the garage, is a focal point in views both entering and leaving Woodchester Park. To the rear of the site there is a pitched roof garage at the neighbouring property, No 10, which sits on higher ground and is a prominent feature in views entering the neighbourhood.
11. The proposed flat roofed garage would have substantially less visual impact than the previously proposed pitched roof garage and is a distinct improvement in that respect. Its flat roofed design would, however, be out of character with this area where other buildings all appear to have pitched roofs. Whilst the flat roof might be acceptable in a less prominent position, the garage's location very close to the street and within the focal points of important views would mean that it would be an inappropriate position for such a structure.
12. On one hand, the garage could potentially be screened to a large extent by the existing evergreen hedge, if that hedge was retained and the gap for the existing driveway was infilled as indicated in the submitted plans. On the other hand, however, although the hedge's retention with new planting could reasonably be required by condition for the short term, the hedge could potentially become diseased, die or be removed in the longer term. The existence of landscape features like this is not normally sufficient reason to justify poorly sited or poorly designed development. Moreover, one corner of the new garage would be so close to the back of pavement that there would not be space for such a thick section of hedge there. As a result, it would be difficult to effectively screen that corner of the building.

13. On this basis I find that the proposed garage would look cramped and out of place on this frontage, in key views from both directions. It would visually add on to adjacent built development, detracting from the local street scene and the relatively spacious character of Woodchester Park.
14. Although the siting of garages forward of the houses is part of Woodchester Park's established character, other garages appear to be set back further from the street and are generally in more spacious frontages. The only examples I have seen of garages so near to the footway are associated with a block of flats, in a much different and less prominent situation. I note that the Council has recently granted permissions for new houses on Woodchester Park with garaging to the front. Some of these were under construction at the time of my site visit. It appears to remain the case that none of the other garages on Woodchester Park are in such a prominent location so close to the street.
15. This proposal is a significant improvement on the previous appeal proposal due to the reduction in the height of the garage. I nevertheless find that the proposed garage would be out of character with the local area and would cause harm due to its siting and design. I conclude that it would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of this part of Woodchester Park. The proposal conflicts with the aims of policies GC1, H13, H15 and H20 of the Chiltern District Local Plan (as altered and consolidated), the SPD and the National Planning Policy Framework, to ensure that development including ancillary outbuildings is designed to a high standard and does not adversely affect the street scene.
16. I have taken account of all other matters raised including the objections made by other interested parties. In particular, I note that this low garage would be set far enough away from other properties so that it would not have any significant effect on neighbours' living conditions.
17. 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