



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 August 2022

by S Brook BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/D/22/3301886

9 Chelford Road, Somerford CW12 4QD

- 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 Graham Gillespie against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref 22/0353C, dated 31 January 2022, was refused by notice dated 16 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Addition of detached 3 Bay Oak garage/car port. This will require a rectangular concrete base for vehicles and a 3 row dwarf wall to lift the oak pillars off the ground. It is proposed that the roof be slate (or something similar). The entire structure will be almost completely concealed to both sides and the rear by yew hedging and hornbeam pleaching which is already in place and reaches the same height as the ridge. The eaves height of the proposed structure is 2.1 meters and the ridge height is 3.85 meters'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

3. The proposed development relates to a detached dwelling, set back from Chelford Road within a generously sized plot. The property frontage has been altered to provide access to further development at the rear. Beyond this access, hedging and trees combine to provide some screening of the dwelling from the road. Other properties to this side of Chelford Road are similarly detached, set in spacious plots, with varying degrees of set back but all fronting onto Chelford Road. Trees and hedging are prevalent to most frontages, albeit most allow some filtered views through to the dwellings. These physical features combine to provide a spacious and verdant character to the area. Whilst a new housing development has been constructed opposite, mature trees and hedgerow has been retained along the road frontage, as such, this sense of space and verdant character is retained.
4. Having considered the context of the site, I have no concerns with the specific style of the garage, or the materials proposed, including the use of timber and oak. However, the proposed garage would be substantial in size. Further, it would sit centrally within the plot, forward of, and directly to the front of the host dwelling, with the rear elevation of the garage facing towards the road.

Consequently, its positioning and orientation would not integrate well with the prevailing pattern of surrounding development, which is generally defined by dwellings themselves fronting onto the road, whilst parking and garaging sits subserviently to the side or rear. In this case, the rear elevation of the garage would become the dominant built form within the plot frontage, harming the quality of the street scene, and failing to respond positively to the character of the area. Whilst I appreciate that the garage would not be any closer to the road than some of the neighbouring dwellings, nevertheless, this does not address my concerns with respect to its position in relation to the host dwelling and its orientation. The blank rear elevation of the proposed garage would not present a positive aspect to the street, whilst houses that presently front onto the road do achieve a positive and active frontage.

5. Existing hedging and tree planting within the front garden combine to create screening to this plot. However, this is not impenetrable and views of the garage through and over this hedging would be possible. I have no expert evidence to help me understand what level of cover the trees would provide during the winter months. Therefore, I am not convinced from the information available, that the screening provided by this planting would be sufficient to overcome the harm resulting from the positioning and orientation of the proposed garage.
6. Even if the hedging did provide sufficient screening, its retention cannot be guaranteed. I note the present owner's commitment to retaining the planting and I have considered the imposition of a condition to this effect. However, a hedge is a living thing, which grows and can die, or become diseased, for reasons outside of the landowner's control or influence. A planning condition to secure the retention of a living hedge, could not ensure its protection for the lifetime of the development and would not address the fundamental impacts for the longer term. It would not therefore guarantee the retention of the hedging and the subsequent screening of the proposal.
7. At my site visit, I noted the garage at 5a Chelford Road. This garage does share some similarities to the appeal proposal in terms of its location forward of the host dwelling. However, there are some differences also, such as its size and positioning towards the side of the plot, rather than directly in front of the host dwelling. The bungalow at No 5a is set further back than neighbouring houses in a narrower plot, which reduces its contribution to the street scene. I have not been provided with the Council's consideration of this garage at the planning application stage, including the policy context at that time. As noted above, garaging within the area is generally provided in a subservient manner at the side or rear of dwellings. This is not the case at No 5a, where the garage holds a prominent position within the plot frontage, and so it does not integrate with the built form as successfully as other existing garages in the area. That example doesn't have an overriding influence upon the general character and appearance of the area. As a result of its larger size, orientation and central plot position, the proposed garage to No 9, would integrate poorly with existing development and result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, the presence of the garage at No 5a does not provide sufficient justification for this scheme.
8. A comparison is made between the timber panelled rear elevation of the proposed garage that would face onto the street, with wooden garden fencing within the area. Wooden fencing is not a common feature of property

frontages within this area. Even if it were, I need to consider the proposal on the basis of what exists now. Furthermore, the visual impacts of a fence would not be directly comparable to the proposal, which is a building of substantial size and scale. Even though the proposed garage would not be very noticeable from neighbouring properties, for the reasons set out above, it would become the dominant built form within this frontage, integrating poorly with the prevailing pattern of development.

9. To conclude on this main issue, the proposed garage would harm the character and appearance of the area. The development does not therefore comply with Policies SE1 and SD2 of the Cheshire East Local Plan, Local Plan Strategy 2010-2030, July 2017, saved Policy PS6 of the Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review Adopted 27th January 2005, and Policies D1 and H2 of the Somerford Neighbourhood Plan 2015 – 2030 Referendum Version January 2018. Collectively, and amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure a high standard of design that contributes to, and complements the character and distinctiveness of an area, with consideration given to the relationship of new development to neighbouring properties and the street scene, providing active frontages to public streets and spaces, and integrating car parking so as not to dominate the street. Nor does it meet the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in terms of achieving high quality buildings and places that are sympathetic to local character.

Other Matters

10. No objections have been made to the proposal from the Parish Council or any other parties. Locally sourced oak may be an advantage over other material although I have little detail about the overall environmental credentials of this. However, the use of local craftsman would be a benefit. However, these matters do not outweigh my conclusion on the main issue.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons outlined above, having had regard to the development plan as a whole and all other matters raised, the appeal should be dismissed.

S Brook

INSPECTOR