



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 November 2022

by R Morgan BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 December 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/W/22/3293633

Land on the east side of 143 Hermon Hill, Woodford Green, Essex E18 1QE

- 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 A Gakhal against the decision of London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref 4357/21, dated 22 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is erection of two garages and extension of dropped kerb.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - i) Whether the proposed garages would be an appropriate use of land in this location; and
 - ii) The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Whether an appropriate use of land

3. The appeal site is a parcel of land fronting onto Charnwood Drive, which appears to have originally formed part of the rear garden of 143 Hermon Hill. The site has no direct access from the street, and when viewed from Charnwood Drive is indistinguishable from the adjacent garden. When I visited there was no indication of any commercial use of the site, or evidence of the four existing parking spaces which are referred to on the application form.
4. The proposed pair of double garages would occupy most of the site. The submitted site plan shows space would be retained at the side of the building, which could also be used for parking. Information about the number of spaces to be provided differs in the application form and appeal statement, but from the site plan, it appears that there could be space for 5 vehicles.
5. Within the submitted documents there are also discrepancies in relation to the proposed use of the garages. The application form describes the proposed use as sui generis, so not falling within any particular use class. However, according to the appeal statement, the garages would be for residential use.

6. Either way, the information provided does not explain who would use the proposed garages, or for what purpose. If the garages would be for domestic use, it is unclear which residents would use them, and how such use would be managed. Moreover, there is no clear justification for providing further residential parking here. The surrounding houses on Hermon Hill and Charnwood Drive already have off-street parking. Policy T6 of the London Plan 2021 seeks to reduce the dominance of vehicles on streets, including by restricting parking. The provision of additional spaces for use by local residents would conflict with this objective.
7. The appellant has suggested that there would be no impact on nearby properties, but this cannot be ascertained without further information about how the garages would be used. In particular, any use related to a business would need to be assessed in more detail, as there could be the potential for noise and disturbance to nearby residents associated with vehicle movements or other activities.
8. The intended use of the proposed garages is unclear, and there are questions about the practicality of the proposal too. The drawings show that the opening of one of the garages would not align with the proposed dropped kerb. This would make it awkward for vehicles to enter and exit. Furthermore, the position of the site on a bend in the road, and the presence of boundary fences, could restrict visibility for vehicles using the garages, and for pedestrians on the pavement. In this respect, I note that the Council's highways officer, and some local residents, have raised safety concerns about the scheme.
9. Overall, on the basis of the information provided, I am unable to conclude that the proposal would represent an appropriate use of land in this location. The proposed development would conflict with the objective of providing healthy streets with reduced car dominance, contained in policies T2 and T6 of the London Plan. Insufficient information has been provided to assess whether the proposal would result in air or noise pollution, which could jeopardise the quality of life of nearby residents. As such, the proposal fails to comply with Policy LP24 of the Redbridge Local Plan 2018.

Character and appearance

10. Charnwood Drive is formed of traditional semi-detached houses, set back from the road behind front gardens. Many of the houses have integral garages, but the proposed pair of long, double garages would be much larger, and would appear out of character in this suburban street. This would be exacerbated by the position of the proposed building, in front of the established building line, which would increase its prominence in the street scene.
11. The appellant has referred to the site as being empty and used for dumping rubbish, but when I visited the area, I saw no evidence of that. Rather, from the road, the site has the appearance of a domestic garden, and vegetation within the site provides welcome greenery in the streetscene.
12. The existing site makes a positive contribution to the street scene, but this would be lost as a result of the proposed development, which would be formed entirely of built development and hardstanding. The proposed development would result in a more urban appearance to the site, which is not justified by the need to keep the area clean and tidy.

13. The proposed crossover is very close to a street tree. Loss of, or harm to, the tree as a result of the access would further erode the green character of the area.
14. I conclude that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would conflict with Local Plan policy LP26 and London Plan policy D3, both of which seek good design which respects local character.

Conclusion

15. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and no other considerations outweigh this finding. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

R Morgan

INSPECTOR