



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 January 2023

by Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 February 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/J2373/D/22/3304520

23 Ackroyd Place, Blackpool, FY4 4ZD

- 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 Carla Mcknight against the decision of Blackpool Council.
 - The application Ref 22/0432, dated 23 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 28 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as conversion of existing integral garage into family play room.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal property is part of a recent residential development (planning permission Ref 15/0420) that includes the erection of 118 dwellings with associated garages, landscaping, highway works and new access off Preston Road. Planning conditions were imposed on the permission to ensure that the garages remain available for the parking of a car and to secure landscaping.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. No 23 is a detached 2 storey dwelling with an integral garage. It sits towards the end of a residential cul-de-sac in a row of similar properties facing across Ackroyd Place towards mature landscaping on the opposite side of the road. Frontages are open with landscaping comprising mown grass with trees and shrubs and off street parking for 2 vehicles. The similar styles of properties and the consistent frontage treatments result in a harmonious street scene.
5. As part of the proposal, the garage door would be replaced with a uPVC window above a brickwork wall. The style and proportions of the window and the brick would match the existing property. The Council has no concerns in relation to the appearance of the front elevation and I see no reason to disagree.
6. The garage measures about 4.9m x 2.4m with an entrance width of 2.28m. I understand this is smaller than the 6m x 3m garage parking space specified in the Council's Extending Your Home Supplementary Planning Document (2007). However, while the garage may be below current space standards for larger modern vehicles, there is little evidence that it could not accommodate a

- smaller car. Irrespective of how the appellant uses the garage, it has not been robustly demonstrated that it could not be used for parking. Consequently, the conversion of the garage would result in the loss of a parking space.
7. The existing 2 frontage parking spaces are adequate for a 3 bed dwelling. However, the Council's parking standards require 3 spaces for 4 bed properties. As built, No 23 has 4 bedrooms and I understand it was illustrated as such in the earlier refused application (Ref 22/0127). The appeal scheme has been amended to illustrate 3 bedrooms by the conversion of 1 into a dressing room. The appellant points out that the fourth bedroom in any case falls slightly short of the space standards in the Council's New Homes from Old Places, Residential Conversions and Sub-division Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) Adopted March 2011 and the National Technical Housing Standards. However, there is little evidence that the SPD is directly relevant to the appeal and the National Standards are relevant only to new dwellings. Irrespective of the way the appellant uses the internal space or the size of the bedrooms, there would be little to prevent No 23 being occupied as a 4 bed dwelling in the future. Consequently, 3 parking spaces are required.
 8. Plans have been submitted to illustrate the existing parking arrangements and to show how the driveway could be widened to accommodate 3 vehicles. The width of hardstanding for 3 cars would be roughly 55% of the kerbside frontage. However, the tapering plot is wider than the dwelling and the proposed parking would extend across much of the front elevation, including the playroom window and about half of the living room window. The extensive hardstanding frontage parking would be visually dominant and unsympathetic to the dwelling. Taking into account the length of the driveway and the projecting bay window to the living room, larger cars would likely need to park close to the windows to avoid protruding into the road and they would obscure much of the ground floor habitable room windows. Consequently, increased frontage parking would not be well related to the dwelling but rather it would be a discordant, awkward and visually obtrusive arrangement.
 9. The plans suggest that the additional frontage parking could be provided with little loss of landscaped frontage. However, there would be a marked increase in hardstanding and an associated loss of green space. The proposal would not be softened or screened and it would not be integrated into its surroundings by planting. No 23 is towards the end of a private cul-de-sac, but there is pedestrian access along Ackroyd Place from Marples Drive and the proposal would be prominently sited to the front of the property adjacent to the carriageway. The increase in the hard built environment and the reduction in green infrastructure would not add to the overall quality of the area. The proposal would not make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness or sense of place.
 10. The Council considers that the proposal would set a precedent for similar schemes to come forward that would cumulatively result in harm to visual amenity. Properties in the area tend to be closely spaced with relatively small frontages, generally with a greater proportion of hardstanding than soft landscaping. Incremental increases in hardstanding frontage parking at the expense of soft landscaping would result in cumulative adverse effects on the character and appearance of the area. In this regard, I note that 8 other properties nearby have converted their garages into living space without planning permission, and 3 are the subject of planning enforcement

investigation. Consequently, I find there is a reasonable prospect of similar development coming forward in this area if the appeal was allowed. Although each scheme must be considered on its own merits, in the absence of any exceptional circumstances or compelling justification for the appeal scheme, it would be difficult for the Council to resist similar applications. As such, the proposal would be likely to result in cumulative visual harm.

11. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the appeal property and the area. It would conflict with Policies CS6 and CS7 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 Adopted January 2016 and saved Policies LQ1, LQ6 and AS1 of the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016 Adopted June 2006 (saved LP). It would also conflict with Policies DM17, DM21 and DM41 of the emerging Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies, which can be afforded significant weight due to the advanced stage of preparation of the plan. These require, among other things, that proposals incorporate well integrated car parking, green spaces and landscaping to screen and soften hard surfaced areas; that it should not be dominated by car parking; and that it contributes positively to the quality of the area, creating attractive and distinctive neighbourhoods. It would also conflict with the design aims of the National Planning Policy Framework including in relation to development that adds to the quality of the area, is visually attractive and sympathetic to its surroundings. However, I have not found conflict with saved LP policy BH3 because the proposal would not harm residential amenity.

Other Matters

12. The appellant considers that there is no requirement to retain the landscaping and that additional hardstanding could be constructed using permitted development rights. However, there is little substantive evidence to demonstrate that, if the appeal should fail, she would remove the landscaping and extend the hardstanding parking across the principal elevation of the dwelling. The theoretical exercise of permitted development rights does not provide a justification for the appeal.
13. While the proposal would not harm the highway network, the Council considers that similar development would cumulatively result in congestion, vehicle conflicts and harm to highway safety. However, as there is little substantive evidence to demonstrate that off street parking would compromise the safe operation of the highway, I have not found harm in this regard.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations that would outweigh that conflict.
15. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR