



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 February 2023

by D J Barnes MBA BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 8th March 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/H0520/D/22/3309386

34 Squires Court, Eaton Socon, Cambridgeshire PE19 8PB

- 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 Belongian Limited (Mr Ian Sheppard) against the decision of Huntingdonshire District Council.
 - The application Ref 22/01028/HHFUL, dated 6 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 10 August 2022.
 - The development is to convert an integral garage to bedroom.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted to convert an integral garage to bedroom at 34 Squires Court, Eaton Socon, Cambridgeshire PE19 8PB in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 22/01028/HHFUL, dated 6 May 2022, subject to the following condition:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Location Plan and SF22 014.1.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of development stated on the appeal form has been agreed between the Council and the appellant and has therefore been adopted. The development has been undertaken.

Main Issues

3. It is considered that the main issues are the effects of the development on (a) the character and appearance of the host property and the streetscene and (b) the safety of other highway users.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The development comprises the replacement of a garage door by black horizontal boarding with a window to create an additional bedroom within an end of terrace 3-storey dwelling. The other dwellings within the terrace have retained their integral garages and their doors are predominantly black vertical boarding creating solid features in the streetscene. The property is located within a primarily residential area comprising mainly 2-storey terraced dwellings which do not have integral garages.

5. The rhythm, character and appearance of the ground floor frontage of the terrace is not materially disrupted by the appeal scheme because the property still retains a large area of solid black boarding echoing the garages doors. The design, materials and colour of the infilling of the property's garage replicate those of the other garage doors. The window is sited below the first floor window and is of a similar height to the window sited on the opposite side of the front door. Accordingly, the window echoes the fenestration of the property.
6. When viewed from Squires Court, the appeal scheme is not so conspicuous so as to result in an incongruous form of development which fails to respond positively to the context, character and appearance of the streetscene or the wider residential area. Matters of highway safety are assessed separately but any additional vehicles parked on-street, if this occurred, would not materially alter the character and appearance of the streetscene. There are already parked vehicles along the roads and in parking areas visible from these roads.
7. For the reasons given, it is concluded that the development does not cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the host property and the streetscene and, as such, it does not conflict with Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 (LP) and Policy A3 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Amongst other matters, these policies refer to proposals being supported where they demonstrate that they respond positively to their context and draw inspiration from the key characteristics of the surroundings, including the built environment, and positively contributes to the character and identity of an area. Securing high quality design based on an understanding of an area is also sought by the Council's *Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Guidance* (SPG) and the National Design Guide.

Highway Safety

8. From what was observed during the site visit, the practicable concerns raised by the appellant about the ability to use the former garage for parking are reasonable. The width of the opening and the internal width of the former garage would have made both access into the claimed internal parking space and the ability of drivers to enter or exit their parked vehicle difficult.
9. The garage did not accord with the minimum sizes identified in the SPG and was not large enough to be used to park a car comfortably. For these reasons, there has been no loss of a realistic off-street parking space but it may have been suitable for a small vehicle and, as such, the appeal scheme has assessed the highway safety implications of a potential additional vehicle being parked on-street.
10. Although of a modest size, the surface front garden of the property could accommodate a small vehicle being parked off-street but a larger vehicle will potentially overhang the public highway. However, it was observed during the morning site visit that because of the depth of the front gardens of the dwellings and the lack of any garaging there were vehicles parked along the roads and within dedicated parking areas. This parking did not obstruct moving vehicles nor inhibit pedestrians walking through the area. The appellant has provided some evidence that there has been no history of accidents within the local area to indicate there is a particular highway safety concern, including any accidents attributable to on-street parking.

11. Although the concerns of local residents have been carefully noted, it was observed during the morning site visit that there were spaces on-street for vehicle parking. The potential for the occupiers of the property to park within dedicated parking areas has been given little weight because the local residents claim these spaces are unavailable to them.
12. For these reasons, it is concluded that there is the potential for on-street vehicle parking which does not prejudice highway safety and, as such, the development does not conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework concerning development being prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety. LP Policy LP17 and NP Policy PT2 address parking within new developments rather than the need to retain parking spaces for residential properties.

Other Matters

13. The use of the property as a House in Multiple Occupation has been raised as a concern by local residents but it is not a matter which is the subject of this appeal. Although the Council indicated in the Questionnaire that the property is include within the St Neots Conservation Area, this does not appear to be the case based upon the map provided.

Conditions

14. The Council has suggested several conditions in the event this appeal succeeds which have been assessed against the tests in the National Planning Policy Framework and the Planning Practice Guidance. A condition is necessary to refer to the approved drawings to provide clarity about what has been approved but a condition is unnecessary concerning external material because the development has already been undertaken. Accordingly, it is concluded that this appeal should be allowed.

D J Barnes

INSPECTOR