



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 March 2023

by H Miles BA(hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 March 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/W/21/3289820

Garages to the rear of Marefield Road, Marlow

- 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 Redkite Community Housing against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref 20/07701/FUL, dated 4 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 30 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing garage and the provision of 4 dwellings with associated access and landscape.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Applications for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Redkite Community Housing against Buckinghamshire Council. This application is the subject of a separate decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of existing occupiers with particular regard to whether there would be an overbearing effect.
 - Transport in respect of whether the proposed development would function well with regard to access to and from Marefield Road, and the living conditions of existing occupiers with particular regard to parking.
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Living Conditions - overbearing

4. The proposed side wall of the north easterly dwelling would be directly to the rear of the single storey bungalows at 17-19 Marefield Road. It would present a gable end wall resulting in a three storey appearance, up to 8m high. The elevation would span the whole plot at no 17 and the full width of both dwellings. It would be set back only around 11m from the end of their modest gardens.

5. The proposed height, width, and position directly to the rear of these dwellings would result in a harmfully dominant effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of these properties. Furthermore, due to the single storey nature of 17-19 Marefield Road, the three storey side wall would be experienced from ground floor only.
6. Therefore, the proposed height, directly to the rear of these dwellings and in close proximity, would have an overbearing effect on the occupiers of these dwellings.
7. As such the proposed development would be contrary to policy CP9 and DM35 of the Wycombe District Local Plan (2019) (LP) which require that development prevents significant adverse impacts on the amenities of neighbouring land and property, and high quality design that makes places better for people, amongst other things.

Transport

8. Marefield Road is quite narrow, with space for two vehicles to pass. It is not in a controlled parking zone and few of the houses have off street parking spaces. It is heavily parked along one side, leaving a single lane for traffic. Representations indicate that this causes significant inconvenience to residents in finding a parking space close to their home.
9. The appeal site was most recently used as privately owned lock up garages until the site was closed in March 2020. I understand that previously the units were let to local residents and this reduced on street parking nearby. However, I am not aware of any requirement that the garages must only be used for parking by occupiers of neighbouring properties. Indeed, it appears that the site has been used as a compound for contractors completing work nearby. Furthermore, the highways department points out that the garages are small for modern cars. Therefore, the site does not currently provide parking for nearby residents and I find that there is not a real prospect of it doing so in the future.

Access

10. I am provided with swept path diagrams for a fire appliance which is said to be the largest vehicle that would be required to access the site. These show that it would be able to turn within the site. However, it does not show the cars parked along one side of the road when indicating how vehicles would turn into or exit the site from Marefield Road and it appears that parked cars are likely to cause an obstruction.
11. Although access in an emergency would be an infrequent occurrence, the detailed evidence shows that delivery vehicles would arrive and depart once per day. I am not provided with swept path diagrams for transit type vehicles. Therefore, based on the evidence before me regarding larger vehicles, this does not satisfy me that with cars parked safely on the roadside, delivery vehicles would be able to safely turn into or exit the site. This would lead to a situation where vehicles may need to manoeuvre on Marefield Road, obstructing the highway, or drive across the pavement. This would be harmful to pedestrian safety and the free flow of traffic on a daily basis.
12. The number of vehicles coming and going would be lower than if the site were used as 34 residential garages. On this basis, the highways officer concludes

that the development would lead to a reduction in vehicle movements and so they have no objection to the access arrangements. However, for the reasons above, I find that the use of the site for this purpose is unlikely to resume. As such, I do not have evidence that satisfies me that there would be a reduction in the number of vehicle movements from this site. Consequently the introduction of the frequency and type of vehicles required for the proposed residential development to function well would be harmful for the reasons described above.

13. The swept path diagrams show a car could enter or exit the site in a forward gear and it appears that this could occur with cars parked opposite the entrance. Refuse collection would be from Marefield Road, which occurs at present, and a refuse vehicle would not need to enter or exit the site.
14. Nevertheless, for the reasons set out above, the development would not provide suitable access to service vehicles and consequently would not function well, leading to harm to the free flow of traffic and highway safety.
15. The proposed development would not function well with regard to access to and from Marefield Road. Therefore, in this regard, the proposed development would be contrary to Policies CP9 and DM35 of the LP. Together these require that development improves the way the area functions, balances the functions of a street including access and parking, demonstrates high quality design including with regard to the spaces around development and contributes positively to making places better for people.

Living Conditions - Parking

16. As set out above, the site is not currently used for residents parking and I find that this use is unlikely to resume. Consequently, the proposed development would not result in displacement parking in the surrounding streets as a result of the loss of the existing use.
17. The Council states that, in accordance with the Buckinghamshire Countywide Parking Guidance the proposed development would require a total of 8 car parking spaces. A total of 9 car parking spaces are proposed. As such the parking associated with the 4 proposed dwellings would be accommodated on the site and overspill parking would be very unlikely.
18. Although there appears to be high parking stress on the surrounding roads, the appeal scheme would not add to it. As such the proposed development would not be harmful in this respect.
19. Consequently, there would be an acceptable effect on the living conditions of existing occupiers with particular regard to parking. As such, in this regard, the proposed development would be in accordance with Policies DM33 and DM35 of the LP which require that the development provides sufficient parking and prevents significant adverse impacts on the amenities of neighbouring land.

Character and Appearance

20. The through roads in this area including Marefield Road, York Road and Queens Road form a grid pattern with houses fronting the street. However, there are a number of cul de sacs such as Tilecotes Close, Eton Place and the footpath at Cresswell Row which include two storey housing and single storey garages behind these perimeter blocks. Therefore, the pattern of development in this

area includes both traditional rows of houses fronting main roads, as well as residential dwellings behind these. The existing garages are modest in size and scale, in keeping with the pattern of development and the residential use in this area. As such they are appropriate to the character and appearance of this area.

21. The appeal scheme would follow the pattern of development, introducing housing to the rear of the Marefield Road/Queens Road/York Road dwellings. The proposed dwellings would result in an increase in scale and size compared to the garages. However, this would be in keeping with the existing character and appearance of this area, as described above. As such, the appeal scheme would not be overdevelopment in this regard.
22. Therefore the proposed development would not be harmful to the character and appearance of this area and, in this respect, would be in accordance with Policies CP9 and DM35 of the LP which together set criteria to achieve high quality design and sense of place.

Other Matters

23. The proposed development would deliver the social and economic benefits associated with the provision of 4 family homes on previously developed land in an accessible location close to a town centre. Albeit given the scale of the development the benefits in this regard are modest. The development would also introduce some planting to a site that is currently hardstanding and there would be a small improvement to biodiversity in this regard.
24. As set out above, the use of the site as 34 garages for parking is not currently in operation and I find that it is unlikely to resume. Therefore, there would not be any associated reduction in noise and disturbance as a result of this development. I also acknowledge that there would not be any harm to the character and appearance of the area. However, these are neutral factors that do not weigh in favour of the development.
25. Conversely, the proposed development is harmful with regard to the fact that the development would not function well nor add to the overall quality of the area with respect to access as well as causing harm to the living conditions of existing occupiers. Taking these multiple effects together, this results in considerable harm which is not outweighed by the modest benefits identified above.

Conclusion

26. The proposal would not accord with the development plan and there are no other considerations to indicate that the appeal should be determined otherwise. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

H Miles

INSPECTOR