

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 September 2023

by J Bell-Williamson MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th October 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/W1525/D/23/3325057

14 Grantham Drive, Chelmsford CM1 6DY

- 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 Jack Reeve against the decision of Chelmsford City Council.
 - The application Ref 23/00507/FUL, dated 27 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 19 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is partial garage conversion to create open plan kitchen dining living area at ground floor, retention of garage parking space, alteration of first floor lounge to create study and rear garden alteration to achieve 2 parking spaces.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal site and surrounding area.

Reasons

3. Grantham Drive is a residential road located within Beaulieu, a major development in the north-west of Chelmsford. The part of the road that includes the appeal property displays a strong degree of planned uniformity with three storey dwellings of similar design and appearance laid out in terraces, with planted front gardens. Parking is provided by tandem garages running the full depth of each property, as well as a space to the rear.
4. The proposal involves the partial conversion of No 14's garage to provide an enlarged kitchen/dining/living area. To maintain the requisite three parking spaces, one would be retained internally, with two tandem spaces provided parallel to the rear garden boundary. As No 14 is an end-of-terrace dwelling, access to the new spaces would be gained by removing part of the side garden boundary wall to the rear of the appeal property.
5. The outline permission for the Beaulieu development includes a condition that requires that the approved parking for dwellings shall not be used for any other

purpose. The reason is to ensure that parking provision is acceptably integrated within the development, avoiding car dominated spaces and to prevent on-street parking in the interests of highway safety and the amenities of the area¹.

6. Policy DM23 of the Chelmsford Local Plan (2020), concerning high quality and inclusive design, states that planning permission will be granted for development that respects the character and appearance of the area in which it is located. Development must be compatible with its surroundings having regard to, amongst other matters, boundary treatments and landscape.
7. The planned design of this part of the wider Beaulieu scheme is apparent from the uniform appearance and layout of properties, including boundary treatments and landscaping. As a corner plot, the appeal property has an attractive yellow brick wall to the side boundary, which ends adjacent to the driveway and garage of the two storey dwelling behind. This arrangement is mirrored in terms of the layout and appearance of the property on the opposite side of the junction. The boundary wall has a planted bed running along its length with a planted corner area at the point where the wall meets the neighbouring driveway. Given the extent of built development and hard surfacing, these planted areas make a positive contribution to the street scene.
8. The removal of part of the boundary wall would undermine the existing uniformity within the street scene, particularly when seen in the context of the remaining intact wall opposite. Moreover, it would open up views of the open parking to the rear of the property in an uncharacteristic location compared to the planned and consistent design and layout of off-street parking in the surrounding area. I accept that there are examples of parallel driveways within the wider surrounding area. However, these are part of the original planned layout and in many cases provide access to double-fronted or side-by-side garages. As such, they are not comparable with the appeal proposal, which would upset the character and appearance of the development as originally planned.
9. The associated loss of vegetation would harmfully effect the character and appearance of the street scene, given the important role this plays in softening the built forms and hard infrastructure. The vegetation that would remain along the boundary wall would mature in time and could be supplemented further as the appellant contends. However, this would not be sufficient to mitigate the effects of the loss of a substantive part of the wall, which would be readily apparent in the street scene and from properties opposite. The fact that planting might have been removed from other properties to create parking areas, particularly to the front, is not sufficient basis to overcome the combined effect of the loss of part of the boundary wall and associated planting.
10. I acknowledge the appellant's contention that resident parking may occur on Grantham Drive and other streets partly because the integral parking spaces are not in all instances being used for their intended purpose. However, the effects of removing a limited amount of on-street parking through the appeal

¹ Outline planning permission ref 09/01314/EIA.

proposal needs to be balanced with the materially harmful effects found above. Furthermore, I agree with the Council's concerns that the appeal proposal is likely to create a precedent for further similar proposals. While these could only occur to similar corner plots, which are limited in number, they would nonetheless serve to further undermine the character and appearance of the original design and layout of the development through their cumulative effect. For these reasons, the harm found above would not be outweighed by any limited reduction in on-street parking.

11. I have had regard to the example of a side access at No 8 John Eve Avenue referred to by the appellant. This, however, appears to be in the form of a pedestrian gated access, which is not comparable to the scale and effects of the vehicular access and related parking proposed in this case. As such, it cannot be considered as a precedent with regard to the current proposal.
12. Therefore, for these reasons, I conclude that the proposal would result in an unacceptably harmful effect on the character and appearance of the appeal site and surrounding area. As such, it is contrary to Policy DM23 of the Chelmsford Local Plan, described above. It is also contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, which promotes well-designed places. I accept the appellant's contention that in this case Policy DM17 of the Local Plan may be less directly relevant as it concerns 'natural' landscape features.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above it is concluded that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bell-Williamson

INSPECTOR