



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 January 2024

by B J Sims BSc (Hons) CEng MICE MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6 February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/D1835/D/23/3330216

8 Viewfields, Worcester, WR5 1SJ.

- 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 Mark Richards against the decision of Worcester City Council.
 - The application Ref 23/00441/HP, dated 26 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 10 August 2023.
 - The development proposed is a garage conversion and extension to form an annexe with a glazed link and the erection of a replacement detached garage.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The original plans were revised to correct the indicated extent of the appeal site with respect to the highway boundary but this made no difference to the layout or appearance of the proposed built development and this appeal can safely be determined on the basis of these revised plans.
3. Reference is made in the written representations to pre-application advice provided by the Council and to an earlier withdrawn proposal. These matters are not strictly relevant to this appeal, which is decided on a fresh assessment of the scheme actually refused by the Council.

Reasons

Issues

4. I consider the main planning issue to be the effect that the development, and the proposed replacement garage in particular, would have on the character and appearance of the host property, the street scene of Viewfields and the relationship between the appeal site and an adjacent designated open space.
5. It is also appropriate to consider other material matters of neighbouring amenity, highway safety and personal circumstances.

Character and Appearance

6. Viewfields is a relatively modern, residential development with an informal, open-frontage layout and no distinct building line. The street scene is characterised by a number of forward-standing, garage or other ancillary buildings, but these generally stand close to their host properties, match them in style and finish, and are visually associated with them.

7. No8, the appeal property, is no exception and, in this case, the house and a double garage in front of the main elevation are set down at a relatively low level, reducing their prominence in views along the street.
8. The proposed garage extension would be built between the garage and the front of the house. Together with the proposed link, it would remain subordinate to, and closely associated with the main house. I find no planning objection to these parts of the proposed works, with respect to their character, appearance and effect on the street scene.
9. The proposed replacement double garage would make use of an area of garden forming part of the appeal curtilage at the end of the cul-de-sac. This area is raised significantly above the level of the main house and existing garage. As a result, the proposed replacement garage would be significantly more prominent than any other such ancillary structure in Viewfields, being visibly elevated and detached from its host. It would therefore dominate the view on entering the cul-de-sac and appear markedly out of harmony with the main dwelling at No8, as extended to incorporate the existing garage, and it would be significantly out of keeping with all other comparable structures within the street scene throughout Viewfields.
10. In my judgement, this places the proposed development, as a whole, into unacceptable conflict with Policy SWDP21 of the adopted South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP). This, consistent with national policy, requires that new development should be of high design quality, visually attractive and should integrate effectively with its surroundings and reinforce local distinctiveness. These provisions are supported by the advice of the South Worcestershire Design Guide (SWDG), including that extensions should be subordinate and relate to their setting.
11. In this case, another aspect of character and appearance relates to an adjacent designated area of open space just to the north of the appeal site, protected by Policy SWDP38 of the SWDP. The northern end of Viewfields and the land on which the replacement garage would stand enjoy a slight but real visual relationship with this open land, being separated from it only by boundary vegetation. This relationship would be adversely affected if views from Viewfields towards the open space were blocked by the replacement garage. I do not consider this consideration to be sufficient alone to warrant dismissing the appeal, but it adds limited weight to the case against it.

Amenity

12. The proposed new detached garage would have some visual impact on the outlook from other residential properties, including a bungalow facing the appeal site. However, I do not consider this factor to carry much weight in the present case, due to the separation distances involved and the already irregular street pattern. In my view, residential amenity would not be significantly affected by the development.

Highway Safety

13. The existing and proposed development together would evidently give rise to a need for four off-street car parking spaces in an area where overflow parking on the carriageway of Viewfields would be undesirable. However, the Highway Authority maintains no objection subject to the agreement of precise details for

off-street parking and, in the circumstances, I find no highway objection, given the amount of space available within the site boundary, as revised.

Personal Circumstances

14. I recognise that this proposal arises from a desire on the part of Mr Richards to accommodate his disabled brother, whilst continuing to have a garage for his own use, which he regards as essential. This approach is broadly in line with national and local policy to accommodate all different housing need groups and create a safe environment for people with disabilities. However, I do not consider that the provision of a single unit of accommodation for a person with special needs carries sufficient planning weight to affect this particular decision. Nor do I attribute overriding weight to the personal circumstances involved because these are transient, in contrast with the permanence of the proposed built development.

Conclusion

15. For the overriding reason of adverse impact on character and appearance of the host property and the street scene of Viewfields, contrary to the adopted development plan, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

B J Sims

INSPECTOR