



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 May 2024

by P J Staddon BSc, Dip, MBA (Distinction), MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2ND July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/K0425/D/23/3336187

334 Micklefield Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire HP13 7HX

- 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 Carl Catlin against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application Ref 23/06969/FUL, dated 2 August 2023, was refused by notice dated 18 October 2023.
 - The development proposed is 'retrospective application for construction of garage'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The development description that appears in the decision notice differs from that stated in the application form, by including the words 'for construction'. I have adopted this description, as it more fully captures the operational development that has taken place.
3. For clarity, Buckinghamshire Council (the Council) was created as a Unitary Authority in April 2020, and subsumed Wycombe District Council and its planning functions. A number of the planning policy documents and guidance referred to in this case were produced by the predecessor district council.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - The impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area.
 - The effect of the development on highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal property is a semi-detached house, located on the north side of Micklefield Road and close to its junction with Ashdown Road. The house and the neighbouring property under the same roof (No 1 Ashdown Road) are sited on a splayed angle, facing the junction. There is a similar arrangement on the other side of the junction, where No 336 Micklefield Road and No 2 Ashdown Road turn the corner into the side street.

6. The appeal development is a single storey garage, which has been built in the front (south-eastern) corner of the dwelling's triangular plot. It is built in wall panels with a pebbledash type finish, and with a shallow pitched profiled roof. The rear of the garage is close to an existing outbuilding to the side of the house. The front of the garage, which includes an up and over door, is sited a short distance back from the edge of the footway; I measured that distance to be about 0.7 metres.
7. Micklefield Road is a primarily residential road. It is characterised by relatively uniform rows of semi-detached and short links of 2-storey housing, which are typically set back behind modest depth front gardens. This character is apparent in the vicinity of the appeal site, where the dwellings are set behind gardens containing lawns, hedges and parking spaces, which all contribute to an open and attractive suburban character.
8. The prominent siting of the garage, notably forward of No 334 and the link of 4 houses to the east¹, and in close proximity to the public highway, means that it appears as an incongruent feature that is out of character with its context. This effect is particularly so when viewed from the east, where the garage appears as a quite stark and jarring presence in front of the established line of dwellings. The view from the west is filtered, to some extent, by hedging and vegetation.
9. On this main issue, I conclude that the development is harmful to the character and appearance of the area. This conflicts with policies DM35 and DM36 of the Wycombe District Local Plan (adopted August 2019) which, amongst other matters, require new developments to improve the character and appearance of the area, and to respond positively to their context. It also conflicts with the Council's Householder Planning and Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (adopted January 2020), which specifically advises against garages being sited forward of the front building lines of dwellings, to prevent intrusion into the streetscene.

Highway safety

10. The Council's decision notice contains 3 reasons relating to highway safety. Reason 2 relates to concerns about vehicles stopping on the highway whilst the garage doors are operated; reason 3 relates to concerns about the garage doors encroaching onto the public highway; and reason 4 concerns pedestrian visibility.
11. The main development plan policy cited in these reasons is policy DM33, which requires, amongst other matters, that new development provides safe and convenient access to the local highway. This is broadly consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework's (the Framework) paragraph 114(b). The Council's refusal reasons also reference Buckinghamshire Countywide Parking Guidance (CPG) (adopted September 2015); Buckinghamshire Council Local Transport Plan 4 (adopted April 2016); and the Buckinghamshire Council Highways Development Management Guidance document (adopted July 2018). However, the latter 2 documents appear to be wide-ranging and the Council has not identified any specific area of conflict.

¹ Nos 332, 330, 328 and 326 Micklefield Road

12. There are no yellow line parking restrictions on Micklefield Road close to the appeal site, but I did observe that parking of cars straddling the footway was commonplace, including in proximity to the Ashdown Road junction. There is also a bus stop on the opposite side of the road, marked by a painted box, and some cross hatching in the middle of the carriageway, and I noted a number of buses travelling along the road on my site inspection. These may not be particularly unusual roadside characteristics in a suburban location, but they are matters that do add to road safety considerations and concerns.
13. The appeal development creates additional road safety concerns. The lack of sufficient space in front of the garage, as advised in the SPD² and the CPG³, means that use of the garage for regular storage of a vehicle could result in awkward manoeuvres, navigating parked cars, stopped buses, moving traffic and the need for an individual to get in and out of a vehicle to operate the garage doors. I also observed those doors in operation on my site inspection, and there is a notable incursion of the swing of the doors into the footway, where a pedestrian may be passing, and may be placed at risk of being struck. Added to that, visibility for a driver exiting the garage is very poor indeed, as it is heavily compromised by the garage walls, and this effect would be even more so if reversing out; this places passing pedestrians in danger.
14. I have considered carefully the appellant's submissions on these matters, including his view that remote controlled roller doors could address any concerns, that the bus stop is not directly opposite the garage doors, that a parking mirror could be installed, and that other driveways have compromised visibility. However, whilst remote doors and a parking mirror might improve the situation, they are not part of the development applied for, nor would they address all of the highways safety issues that I have identified. I have also considered the points concerning other driveways and the photographs presented by the appellant, but these are not directly comparable to the appeal proposal, nor do they justify allowing it, given the planning harm that I have identified.
15. On this main issue, I conclude that the development would fail to provide safe and convenient access to the local highway and would be detrimental to the interest of highways safety. This would conflict with development plan policy DM33, the Framework's paragraph 114(b), and the guidance identified above.

Conclusion

16. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

P. Staddon

INSPECTOR

² Paragraph 12.2 of Wycombe District Council's Householder Planning and Design Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (adopted January 2020)

³ Page 26 of the Buckinghamshire Countywide Parking Guidance (CPG) (adopted September 2015)