

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 June 2024

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 July 2024

Appeal Reference: APP/X0415/D/24/3340618

46 Parish Piece, Holmer Green, Buckinghamshire HP15 6SP

- 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. L. Potkin against the decision of Buckinghamshire Council.
 - The application (reference PL/23/2754/FA, dated 23 August 2023) was refused by notice dated 12 January 2024.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as “conversion of garage to a habitable room”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for “conversion of garage to a habitable room”, at 46 Parish Piece, Holmer Green, Buckinghamshire HP15 6SP, in accordance with the terms of the application reference (PL/23/2754/FA, dated 23 August 2023), subject to the conditions set out in the attached Schedule of Conditions.

Main issues

2. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on highway safety and convenience.

Reasons

3. Holmer Green is a modest settlement in Buckinghamshire, where villages are interspersed with rural areas. Parish Piece is part of a residential area that is characterised by detached dwellings on good-sized plots but the road is rather narrow and is somewhat congested by roadside parking. The pressure on roadside parking is exacerbated by traffic related to the school that lies opposite the appeal site.
4. Number 46 is located at a sharp bend in Parish Piece where the road turns through approximately 90 degrees, with Holmer Green Senior School on the outside of the bend. The appeal site is located on the inside of the turn, with its main point of access close to the corner itself. Although there is a length of footpath at the corner (and along the road), cars evidently park in this part of the road and on the footpath.
5. The existing house at number 46 Parish Piece is an attractive detached house, relatively modern in date but designed in a traditional style with a complex

pitched roof and finished with facing brickwork and tile-hanging. It is similar in design to others nearby that appear to have been built as part of the same development. It has a reasonably sized back garden, with additional width and a long side boundary, where Parish Piece turns a corner. The front garden is more limited in area.

6. The original design of the house included a built-in garage with a typical garage door on the front elevation. In reality, however, the garage has been subdivided by the construction of an internal partition, creating a small internal room in the house (with access from the main hall) and a storage room immediately behind the garage door, which has been retained. The alteration does not appear on the submitted "existing ground floor plan", however, and limited information has been provided about the alteration (although reference is made in the submissions to a restrictive condition relating to potential garage conversions).
7. It is now proposed that the original garage should be entirely converted to use as a "study", with a new window to replace the garage door.
8. Under the broad heading "Promoting sustainable transport", Section 9 of the revised 'National Planning Policy Framework' deals with a number of transport related issues. It points out the need to address concerns about the transport network (including in terms of "capacity and congestion") and to apply parking standards appropriately.
9. Local planning policies relating to parking requirements are more detailed, however. Thus, Policies TR2 and TR11 of the 'Chiltern District Local Plan Written Statement' (dating from 1997) are particularly relevant, notwithstanding the age of the 'Local Plan', as they identify specific considerations in relation to access and parking provision. Design policies also have implications for parking considerations, if hard surfaced areas would be unacceptably intrusive on street frontages, for example.
10. The County Council's 'Buckinghamshire Countywide Parking Guidance' (dated September 2015) is also relevant, though it does not have the same force as Policies in the Development Plan.
11. Although the proposed conversion would create an additional habitable room in the house, I am not persuaded that the traffic generated would be materially increased, in practice. The original garage is not currently in use as such, however, and I acknowledge that the proposed conversion would formalise the removal of the garage facility. I am convinced that an additional parking space ought to be provided as now proposed, in the light of local policies and guidance.
12. The proposed three parking spaces are shown on the submitted "Car Park Arrangement Plan" and the "Proposed Forecourt Plan" but the area available is not constrained by solid features on all sides and I accept that the bay sizes would be adequate in practice. Of course, the third of the three parking spaces would be restricted if the other spaces were occupied, but the original garage itself could not have been used without manoeuvring any car parked in front of the garage door.

13. Access to the site, at the corner of Parish Piece, is undoubtedly awkward, partly as a result of inconsiderate parking opposite the school, but the situation would not be significantly exacerbated by the proposed conversion and the revised layout.
14. The area given over to hard surfacing would be significant, but it would not be so intrusive as to be out of keeping with the surroundings, where other houses have parking spaces laid out in their front gardens. The alterations to the building itself would be in harmony with the existing construction.
15. Evidently, the proposed conversion would improve the accommodation at number 46 Parish Piece and I have concluded that the scheme would not have an undue impact on highway safety or convenience, bearing in mind the existing situation (and also taking into account the latest parking standards published by Buckinghamshire County Council).
16. Hence, I have concluded that the project would not be in conflict with either national planning policies or with the Development Plan as a whole. In short, I am persuaded that the scheme before me can properly be permitted, subject to conditions and, although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.
17. I have, however, also considered the need for conditions and, in imposing conditions, I have taken account of those suggested by the Council in the usual way (without prejudice to their main arguments in the appeal). In particular, I have concluded that conditions are necessary, to define the planning permission and to ensure that quality is maintained. These include a specific condition to regulate the construction of the parking spaces themselves.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:
 - unnumbered Ordnance Survey Location Plan (1:1250);
 - drawing number LE-02 (Car Park Arrangement Plan);
 - drawing number LE-03-A (Proposed Forecourt Plan);
 - drawing number LE-03 (Existing & Proposed Elevations);
 - drawing number LE-04 (Existing & Ground Floor Plan).
3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
4. Parking spaces are to be provided as shown on the approved plans. The additional hard surfacing for three car parking spaces shall be laid out prior to the new residential accommodation hereby permitted being first brought into use and those areas shall thereafter be kept available for the parking of vehicles in association with the residential use of the dwelling. The new hard surfacing shall be of a porous or permeable material, or alternatively shall allow for natural drainage to a porous or permeable surface within the site.