



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 April 2012

by S Poole BA(Hons) DipArch MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 14 May 2012

Appeal Ref: APP/K2230/D/12/2172265

7 Old Road West, Gravesend, Kent DA11 0LH

- 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 M R L Northern against the decision of Gravesham Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20110975 was refused by notice dated 19 December 2011.
 - The development proposed is the formation of a vehicular access on a classified road with front garden hardstanding.
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Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are the effects of the proposal on the character and appearance of the street scene and highway safety.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal property is a detached 2-storey house. The section of Old Road West of which it forms part primarily comprises handsome semi-detached houses of similar size and age. On the whole these properties have low front boundary walls behind which many have verdant front gardens. These elements make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of this section of Old Road West, a matter to which I attach significant weight.
4. Parking forecourts have been formed in front of the houses immediately to both sides of the appeal site and further along on the southern side of the road. However, these properties predominately retain some element of front boundary enclosure and most include vegetation. By contrast, the proposal would involve the removal of the section of front boundary wall between the gate piers - which would be reduced in height to improve visibility - and the laying of hard surfacing over most of the front garden space allowing very limited scope for substantive planting close to the road. As a consequence of this, and having regard to the cumulative effect of further loss of elements that contribute to the character of the area, I conclude that the proposal would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the street scene.
5. For these reasons the proposal therefore fails to comply with Policy TC1 of the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 1994 under which the Council will not normally permit proposals for new development which cause harm to interests of acknowledged importance.

Highway safety

6. LP Policy T5 indicates that the formation of new accesses to certain roads will not normally be permitted, except where no danger would arise. Old Road West is one of those roads. It is a classified road (B216), a two way, two lane highway subject to a 30mph speed limit. On-street parking is prohibited between 0800 and 1830 on Mondays to Saturdays, but outside those times parking is allowed.
7. The Council's Planning Guidance Note 6: *Vehicle Accesses on Classified Highways* (revised February 2009) states that all applications for off street parking on classified roads such as Old Road West will be expected to provide space to allow for a vehicle to turn within the site, which would typically require a forecourt area with a width of 7.5m and depth of 8m. The proposed forecourt area would not meet this requirement and there is no evidence before me to demonstrate that an average-sized vehicle would be able to enter and exit the appeal site in forward gear.
8. I note my colleague's comments in respect of the allowed appeal for the formation of forecourt parking at No. 13 (ref: APP/K2230/C/08/2089351), in particular her observations regarding reported traffic accidents and the effect of the nearby traffic lights on the speed and frequency of traffic. However, due to the appeal site's proximity to the crossroads and the bend in the road to the east, coupled with the height of the boundary wall between the appeal site and No. 5, I am not satisfied that adequate visibility would be provided for vehicles reversing out of the appeal site onto Old Road West.
9. In my judgement, reversing into the site would also be harmful to road safety on a busy through road of this kind. In addition, I am mindful that these matters would be exasperated by on-street parking during periods when restrictions do not apply.
10. I recognise that the forecourt parking area in front of Nos. 9 and 11 was approved under the current development plan. However, the access/egress points serving these properties are further from the crossroads and, in my judgement, offer better visibility than would be provided by the appeal scheme. I therefore attribute limited weight to this matter.
11. I conclude on this issue that, due to the inadequate size of the forecourt, the resulting need to reverse into or out of the site and the unsatisfactory levels of visibility available, the proposal would have an unacceptable effect on highway safety within this section of Old Road West and therefore conflicts with LP Policy T5.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, including planning decisions relating to other forecourt parking proposals in the area and efforts made to secure parking at the rear of the property, I conclude that the appeal should fail.

S Poole

INSPECTOR