

Request to Remove Permitted Development Right - Partial Conversion of Garage

Reason: The Current Garage Space is not sufficient in size to park a vehicle and does not meet the current set standards for such use.

1. Use of Garage Space: According to a study cited by the Department for Transport: Manual for street, only 44% of people in England use their garage for parking. Section 8.3.41 of the manual states *In determining what counts as parking and what does not, it is recommended that the following is taken into account: whether garages count fully will need to be decided on a scheme-by-scheme basis. This will depend on factors such as: the availability of other spaces, including on-street parking – where this is limited, residents are more likely to park in their garages; the availability of separate cycle parking and general storage capacity – garages are often used for storing bicycles and other household items; and the size of the garage – larger garages can be used for both storage and car parking, and many authorities now recommend a minimum size of 6000 (L) cm by 3000 (w) cm.*

2. Availability of Parking: Based on the guidance, we consider there to be more than ample parking within the close. The Cul-de-sac area within Deer Hill Close houses nine properties. Eight of the nine have a driveway and garage. Excluding all of the garages (which are not in use for vehicle parking) we estimate the area can park up to 22 average cars. This equates to 2.44 vehicles per property. Furthermore Carrs Road, which is accessed via a walkthrough from the close, has space for many more vehicles specifically adjacent to the conservation area, where there are no properties.

3. Garage Dimensions: Our integral garage dimensions are 5263cms (L) by 2632cm (w). We also suspect that the other garages have the same dimensions because we are not aware of anyone who uses their garage for parking. Due to the lack of internal width, we do not consider the garage sufficiently wide enough to park a reasonably sized vehicle without either causing damage to the vehicle or potential injury to the driver when trying to enter/exit the vehicle.

4. Garage Use: As the above mentioned guidance references, like the majority of garage owners and also like most of our neighbours on the Close, we use our garage primarily for storage, because of point 1 above and because there is insufficient space within the property, hence our need to extend. Due to the limited size of the current kitchen, the garage space is used to store the washing machine (pipework installed by the previous owner), fridge freezer and several shelves of food & perishable goods. We also need to store various power and hand tools, suitcases, bicycles, sport and gym equipment and other general storage. The garage is accessed via the garage door or an internal door connected to the kitchen, which limits space for a dining table in the kitchen. Unlike many of the other neighbours we do not have space for storage in our loft, because it forms the third bedroom.

5. Environmental, Cost, Health & Safety Impacts: Because day to day appliances and other items are stored in the garage, access is constant throughout the day. This results in a significant loss of heat within the house, requiring the heating to be on for longer periods in order to reheat, we consider this to have both environmental and energy cost implications. The garage also hosts a wall mounted gas boiler and electric fuse box both on the far wall, should a vehicle be inside both would be both inaccessible to reach. This would pose a risk, should the power need to be isolated in an emergency. It is worthy of note that Mr C Grice is in receipt of a Disability War Pension, partly due to back injuries sustained during military service. Ergonomically trying manoeuvre out of a partially open vehicle door without damaging it on the wall has previously resulted in twisting and turning whilst trying to egress from a confined space resulting in the injury being aggravated.

6. Common Use of Garages: We suspect that none of the garages are used for their original purpose: one has been transformed into a habitable area, others have been partitioned or converted in some way. None of this impacts upon the current parking arrangements with 15 vehicles regularly being parked within the Cul-de-Sac. Nor in the two years we have resided at the property has there been any issue with individuals/visitors parking on the road, which is occasionally used for parking when large events are hosted in the village. Our property alone can facilitate three cars being parked on the highway in front of our house. There is a gap in the fence line separating us from Carrs Road, which is for pedestrian traffic. Pedestrians have no need and do not pass directly in front of our property onto Carrs Road, because the gap is positioned in the centre of the fenceline.

Overall Purpose of the Extension

7. Number of Bedrooms: Because we both work from home, our housing extension plan is primarily aimed to increase the living (specifically the kitchen so we can negate accessing the garage) and working space. The plan is to maintain two bedrooms on the first floor, by converting the current bathroom into a study and the rear bedroom into a bathroom. The room above the new bedroom created by the extension will be a second office. These areas could also be storage/closets as they would be too small/unsuitable for bedrooms. Therefore, our property will in essence remain a three bed.

Conclusion

In Summary, whilst we appreciate that your focus is to ensure sufficient parking and no hindrance to anyone caused by parked vehicles, we strongly believe there is no impact on our neighbours or community. Our belief is strongly evidenced by the single objection you received from our opposite neighbour at No 5 whose objection related solely to their viewing, which you dismissed in your findings. We also suspect that no other property in the close has the opportunity to extend their properties and therefore do not anticipate any further impact i.e., loss of parking space due to expansion.

We also feel that the condition put in place does not fully take into account the constraints of the garage, even despite you acknowledging in your delegated decision report that the garage does not fully meet internal space standards, for garaging modern vehicles according to the Highways Design Guide SPD. We suspect that the garage was never used by the previous owner to park his vehicle, we cannot use it to park ours, and the research would suggest that in future it would be highly unlikely that another occupant would use it for its designated purpose, because as suggested average vehicles have become larger, and the current property layout does not facilitate sufficient space for appliances and storage, thus making its original purpose redundant.

We therefore put forward that the condition you have put in place has no clear justification and therefore does not pass the test of reasonableness or necessity as required in the government's national Planning Practice Guidance. Should it remain in place, it is highly unlikely that we would go ahead with our current extension plans because the negative impacts would not have been resolved.