
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 November 2016

by Gareth Wildgoose BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 25th November 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/W4223/D/16/3160706
6 Coverhill Road, Grotton OL4 5RE

- 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 Jeff Heywood against the decision of Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref HH/338650/16, dated 24 May 2016, was refused by notice dated 20 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is 2 storey side extension with single storey rear & front extensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The effect on the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a two storey dwelling in a set back and elevated position on the western side of Coverhill Road. The property forms a pair of semi-detached dwellings with 8 Coverhill Road (No 8) to the south. The semi-detached pair are characterised by rendered elevations, a hipped roof design which creates a canopy at the front, and projecting bay windows up to the alignment of the roof canopy.
 4. The western side of Coverhill Road immediately surrounding the site has a mix of dwellings with a variety of architectural styles, scale and materials, together with differences in building lines and land levels. This includes a detached bungalow at 4 Coverhill Road (No 4) to the northern side which has a similar front building line and rendered elevations, but a different regular pitched roof with front gable feature to the front and an elevated position relative to No 6.
 5. Although plot sizes vary, significant gaps exist between most of the dwellings along the western side of Coverhill Road, particularly at first floor level. The set back and elevated position of front building lines above substantial gardens and hardstanding, together with the space to the side of dwellings contributes to the spacious character along the western side of Coverhill Road. This is evident, notwithstanding the contrasting character on the eastern side of Coverhill Road where building lines are more regular with a reduced set back from the road and less generous side space between dwellings.
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6. The appeal property has a single storey side extension used as a garage, a rear conservatory and a front porch. The single storey side extension adjoins the boundary with No 4, with an additional roof overhang, and projects beyond the main rear building line of both properties. The appeal proposal would replace part of the single storey extension with a two storey side extension. The extension would also have a single storey front element which would replace the existing porch, and would rebuild a link section at the rear to the part of the single storey extension that is being retained.
7. Policies 9 and 20 of the Oldham Local Development Framework – Joint Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (CS&DMP), adopted November 2011, when taken together seek to ensure that development is of high quality design which reflects the character and distinctiveness of local areas, including townscape. The supporting text of Policy 20 at paragraph 6.121 indicates that, amongst other things, development proposals should respond positively to its environment and site, contribute to a distinctive sense of place, make a positive contribution to the street scene, have an appropriate scale and massing, and relate to its context of neighbouring buildings. Although the policies of the CS&DMP pre-date the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) they are broadly consistent with its design objectives and are afforded considerable weight.
8. The two storey side extension would adjoin the boundary with No 4, with an additional roof overhang. As a consequence, it would significantly reduce the existing side space between the first floor of No 6 and the side wall of the bungalow of No 4, due to the raised land levels of the latter property. The resultant separation distance would be approximately 0.8m. In this regard, the different character and architectural style of the properties would lessen the perception of a terraced appearance. However, the limited gap remaining between the dwellings would create a cramped relationship between the properties when viewed from the front. This would have a detrimental impact on the character of the properties and the Coverhill Road street scene through a harmful loss of the characteristic spaciousness between the dwellings. The harmful effect could not be mitigated through use of matching materials or additional landscaping.
9. With regard to the above, the front and side extensions would alter the appearance of the front elevation of No 6, including a continuation of the main front building line and roof plane, overhang and ridge line at the side, resulting in an imbalance of the semi-detached pair. The resultant increase in roof width, scale and massing of No 6 would disrupt the existing symmetry with No 8, particularly above ground floor level. The varied character of the properties in the surrounding area somewhat reduces the importance of a regularity of appearance of individual properties. However, the contrasting appearance of the semi-detached properties would draw attention within the street scene and therefore, would emphasise the harmful relationship to No 4.
10. In reaching the above findings, I have taken into account that the existing single storey side extension already adjoins the boundary with No 4. However the elevated position of the bungalow at No 4 ensures that the presence of the existing extension does not have an adverse effect on the perception of space between the properties.

11. The Council have not expressed any specific concerns relating to the design of the proposed single storey link element at the rear of the side extension. Based on the evidence before me and my observations of the site, I have no reason to take a different view given its scale and proportions would remain subservient to the existing rear elevation in replacing part of an existing extension. However, this element of the extension cannot reasonably be severed and therefore, a split decision cannot be issued.
12. The appellant has drawn my attention to the close relationship of properties on the eastern side of Coverhill Road and within Greenview Chase, including extensions, together with other examples of two storey extensions adjoining the boundary in Grotton and Lydgate. However, I do not have the full details of the circumstances that led to the other extensions having been accepted. In any case, the characteristics of those properties, including extensions, and the relationship to surroundings where the sense of spaciousness is reduced, are different to the proposal before me. Consequently, the existing relationship of other properties in the surrounding area, do not justify a development that I consider to be harmful.
13. I conclude that the development would significantly harm the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with Policies 9 and 20 of the CS&DMP and the Framework.

Other Matters

14. The proposal would provide additional living space and replace extensions that I observed are in a poor condition. This would include bathroom facilities which would assist the adaptability of the property to meet the needs of the appellant associated to his disability. I understand and sympathise with the wishes and needs of the appellant in this respect. However, based on the evidence before me, I am not satisfied that a reconfiguration of the property to meet the needs of the appellant would necessitate the two storey side extension as proposed. In such circumstances, the personal circumstances are not sufficient to outweigh the harm identified.
15. The proposal would have short term local economic benefits arising from the necessary construction activity required to deliver the development. However, such benefits would not outweigh the harm identified.
16. The Council raised no concerns with respect to the living conditions of occupiers of neighbouring properties, the availability of amenity space or highway safety. Based on the evidence before me and my observations, I have no reason to take a different view. However, the absence of concern in these respects or objections from neighbours is a neutral factor.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above and taking all other matters into consideration, I conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

Gareth Wildgoose

INSPECTOR