
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 June 2020 by Hannah Ellison BSc (Hons) MSc

Decision by Susan Ashworth BA (Hons) BPL MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 30 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/H4315/D/20/3246127

6 Stuart Crescent, Billinge, St. Helens, Merseyside WN5 7NW

- 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 A Radcliffe and Miss K Wolfenden against the decision of St. Helens Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref P/2019/0716/HHFP, dated 17 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 6 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as 'retrospective application for a rear facing dormer'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matters

3. Planning permission was previously granted for development at No 6 Stuart Crescent, which included a single storey rear extension and rear dormer. The development has been carried out however the extensions have not been built in accordance with the approved plans of the previous permission. This appeal follows the refusal of retrospective planning permission for the extensions as constructed.
4. The description of development in the banner heading above is taken from the planning application form. However, it is clear from the evidence before me that the dormer has been constructed as a first-floor rear extension.
5. The Council has not raised any objection to the enlarged single storey rear extension shown on the submitted plans. I have therefore only considered this appeal on the basis of the concern relating to the first-floor extension.

Main Issues

6. The main issues are the effect of the first-floor extension on:
 - (i) the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the wider area;and

- (ii) the living conditions of nearby occupiers, with particular regard to privacy and outlook.

Reasons

7. The appeal property is a detached bungalow located within a suburban residential area. There is a mix of house types within the locality however the appeal dwelling is of similar character to the row of adjacent bungalows. The topography of the area is such that the appeal dwelling is set at a higher level than the adjacent bungalow at No 8 Stuart Crescent.

Character and appearance

8. The first-floor rear extension spans more than half the width of the bungalow, and its rear and south elevations are flush with the ground floor. This lack of legible set back from the eaves results in substantial two storey side and rear elevations and the resultant increased massing reads as a top-heavy addition that detracts from the bungalow's simple single storey form. As such, due to its overall scale and positioning, the extension significantly alters the form and appearance of the bungalow and fails to read as a subservient addition.
9. The host dwelling occupies an elevated plot compared to No 8 adjacent, therefore the extension is readily apparent from the public realm on the approach to the site from the south due to its scale, massing and positioning. It is also highly prominent from other vantage points in the immediate area and it reads as an overly dominant and incongruous feature in the wider street scene as its top-heavy massing appears at odds with the roofscape in the locality.
10. The first-floor extension is marginally wider than the previously approved dormer. However, the approval would read as a subservient addition as it would be set-in from the eaves and have a mono pitched roof, thus allowing the original form of the bungalow to remain legible. The first-floor extension as constructed adds a dominant vertical emphasis to the bungalow which fails to respect its characteristics and proportions.
11. The appellant has referred to other dormers in the locality. Whilst they are of various size and materials, the examples read as subservient additions to the host property, whereas for the reasons noted above, the constructed extension is an incongruous and overly dominant addition.
12. The Council has raised concerns with the use of render and note that it results in a significant disparity in the visual appearance of the extension in relation to nearby dwellings. I acknowledge that brick is the predominant external material within the locality, however the inclusion of rendered elements is not uncommon. The use of render in this instance reflects the previously approved modern alterations to the original bungalow and I do not therefore find it harms the character and appearance of the locality.
13. Consequently, taking all the above into consideration, the proposed development in so far as it relates to the first-floor extension, would harm the character and appearance of No 6 Stuart Crescent and the wider area. It therefore conflicts with policy GEN 8 of the St. Helens Unitary Development Plan (July 1998) (the UDP) which requires developments to respect the scale, design, character and appearance of the original dwelling, amongst other things.

Living conditions

14. Concern has been raised that the first floor sliding windows allow for overlooking to nearby properties. Whilst the window openings are large, I note that a frosted glass balustrade of a considerable height has been included. This therefore restricts the opportunity to overlook properties to the side and rear.
15. I acknowledge that the first-floor rear extension is visible from nearby properties to the side and rear, particularly the gardens of Nos 8 and 10 Stuart Crescent. However, it is positioned a reasonable distance away from No 10 and there is mature boundary treatment between No 8. As such, it does not cause an overbearing sense of enclosure and would not interfere with outlook in this regard.
16. Consequently, the development would not result in a harmful effect on the living conditions of nearby occupiers and is therefore consistent with policy GEN 8 of the UDP, whose purpose is also to ensure developments avoid unacceptable intrusiveness, overshadowing and dominance at close quarters in respect of both homes and gardens.

Other Matter

17. The appellant notes that the first-floor rear extension was constructed wider than the approved dormer to ensure structural stability, economy of construction and provide functional accommodation. However, I have not been provided with any convincing evidence in this regard. Nevertheless, these matters do not overcome the harm the extension has on the character and appearance of the dwelling and wider area and accordingly, they are afforded limited weight in support of the appeal.

Conclusion and Recommendation

18. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal is dismissed.

Hannah Ellison

Appeal Planning Officer

Inspector's Decision

19. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Susan Ashworth

INSPECTOR