



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 August 2021

by Paul Singleton BSc MA MRTPI

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

Decision date: 16 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/J2373/D/21/3274577

12 Links Road, Blackpool FY1 2SE

- 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 and Mrs Kumar against the decision of Blackpool Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/0011, dated 6 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 3 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is erection of two storey side extension and part single, part two storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. I have adopted the description of development as it appears in the Council's decision notice rather than that given in the original application as this better reflects the amended scheme considered by the Council in reaching its decision on the application.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are: (a) the effect on the character and appearance of the appeal building and the street scene on Links Road, (b) the effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of the adjacent dwelling at Number 10 Links Road, and (c) whether the proposal would result in an adverse effect on the public highway due to a reduction in off-street parking spaces at the property.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal building forms one half of a pair of traditional semi-detached properties with brick and render to the front elevation and a tiled, hipped roof. The dwelling has bay windows to both the ground and first floors with a small gable above, and a single flat window at first floor level above the entrance door. A small porch has been added which projects forward of the main wall of the dwelling. With the exception of this later addition, the front elevation of the dwelling mirrors that of its immediate neighbours in terms of its overall design, the proportions and position of its doors and windows and its roof details.

5. Although there is some variety in the types of dwellings along Links Road, semi-detached properties are the dominant form of housing and there is a strong commonality in the design and appearance of the 3 pairs of dwellings comprising Numbers 4-14 (evens) on the west side of the street. This row follows a common building line with each pair of properties having the same building width with clear spacing between the buildings. I noted on my site visit that, although there are single storey garages at the side of some dwellings, very few properties in Links Road have been extended by means of a 2 storey side extension. Hence, the general rhythm of building frontage and the visual gaps provided by the driveways and accesses between properties remains largely intact along much of the street.
6. The proposal includes the erection of a two storey side addition that would extend to the common boundary with No. 10 Links Road. This would largely fill the space between Nos. 10 and 12, leaving a 1 metre (m) wide passage to the side of No. 10 as the remaining gap between the buildings. Although the first floor would be set back by 1m, the ground floor of the extension would be in line with the main front wall of the dwelling. Whilst it might be perceived over a relatively short length of Links Road, I agree with the Council that this proposed siting of the two-storey addition would result in the creation of an unwelcome terracing effect in the street scene. Notwithstanding that the eaves and ridge height would be slightly lower than those of the existing building, the scale and massing of the side extension would result in an appearance of overdevelopment of the site and would interrupt the existing pattern and rhythm of buildings along this side of Links Road.
7. The appellants assert that the design guidance within the Council's Extending Your Home Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) permits a 1m wide gap between residential properties where they stand in a side-to-side relationship. On my reading of the SPD, Design Note 3 states that first floor side extensions should be sited 1m from the boundary of the site rather than from the side wall of the adjacent dwelling. This requirement may be relaxed if the dwelling and its neighbour have significantly staggered building lines and alternative means of access to the rear of the property.
8. Those conditions do not apply in this case as the two dwellings share a common building line and the appeal property does not have an alternative means of access to the rear garden. The existing access to the rear would be closed off by the side extension and this could create future difficulties with removing garden waste and other refuse from the property and result in all refuse and recycling bins being stored in the front garden. The extension at No. 7 Links Road referred to in the appellants' statement is a single storey garage. That at No. 5, although of two storey form, appears to be only as deep as a standard domestic garage. If there is no living accommodation to the rear of the garage element both of these extensions appear to retain the potential for an access through the garage to the rear garden. Such an arrangement would not be feasible within the layout proposed in the appeal scheme.
9. For these reasons, I find that the proposal would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance both of the appeal building itself and of this part of Links Road. The proposal conflicts with Policy CS7 of the Blackpool Local Plan Core Strategy 2012-2027 (CS) which requires that new development should be well designed and should enhance the character and appearance of the local area. It also conflicts with Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016 (LP)

Policies LQ14, which states that building extensions must be well designed and detailed in relation to the original building and adjoining properties, and LQ1, which sets out the expectation that all new development should be of a high standard of design and make a positive contribution to the quality of the surrounding environment.

Living conditions

10. None of the ground floor windows in the side elevation of No. 10 Links Road appear to serve principal rooms and that at the upper level appears to serve a stair landing. Whilst the proposed side and rear extensions might, potentially, lead to some reduction in the amount of light reaching some of those windows I do not consider that this would have a significant effect on the living conditions of the occupiers when using the principal rooms within the dwelling.
11. The proposal would, however, result in the 1m wide passage to the side of No. 10 being enclosed on both sides by a brick wall of two storey height along most of its length. I agree that this would create a tunnel effect which would be oppressive for the occupiers of the adjacent dwelling when using that passage. As this is a key link from the front to the rear of the dwelling which is likely to be in frequent use, this would result in an unacceptable impact on the living conditions of the occupiers of that property. Accordingly, I find that the proposal conflicts with LP Policy BH3, which states that development should not adversely affect the amenity of neighbouring residential properties, and with CS Policy CS7, which requires that the design of new development should ensure that the amenities of nearby residents are not adversely affected.

Car parking and effect on the highway

12. The detached garage at the appeal property appears to have been constructed some years ago and I accept the appellants' assertion that this does not meet the 3m minimum width specification that the Council applies to domestic garages. Given its location at the bottom of the driveway, it would be difficult to access with a modern vehicle on a regular basis. Similarly, the restricted width of the driveway to the side of the dwelling significantly reduces its value as a parking space. For these reasons, it seems likely that all off-street parking at the dwelling currently takes place within the front garden area.
13. This would not be affected by the proposed development and the same area would remain available for parking. All of the front garden area is block-paved providing space for 2 cars to be parked quite easily. In my assessment, it would be possible to park 3 cars with some degree of blocking other cars in. This might require some manoeuvring of cars when one user wishes to leave the house but this would not be unusual in a residential environment where driveways of single car width are commonly used to park 2 or more cars.
14. The Council states that, because the proposed extensions would increase the number of bedrooms in the dwelling, the relevant parking standard would increase from 2 to 3 spaces. However, the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance on Access and Parking (2005) states that the standards are set as maximum standards rather than minimum requirements. Although the spaces would not be independently accessible, my assessment that it would be possible to park 3 average-sized cars within the block-paved area to the front of the house means that the desired standard would be met.

15. Even if the development led to the parking of one additional car on the street, this would not give rise to any issues in terms of the free flow of vehicles on Links Road as the road is wide enough to accommodate parking on both sides. At the time of my visit, a good number of parking spaces were available in this section of the road and I accept the appellants' evidence that there is no undue pressure on on-street parking in Links Road. I therefore find that the proposal would not result in an insufficient level of off-street parking at the appeal property or in any detriment to the safe operation of Links Road as part of the public highway.
16. I note the Council's concerns about the absence of green infrastructure within the front garden but that situation would not be changed by the appeal proposal. The appellants or future occupiers of the dwelling might wish to reintroduce soft planting into the front garden at some time in the future. However, it would not be appropriate to withhold planning permission for the appeal proposal in the hope that this might possibly occur.

Conclusions

17. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed on the grounds that the proposal would not achieve a high standard of design and would cause detriment both to the character and appearance of the appeal dwelling and the street scene within Links Road, and to the living conditions of the occupiers of the adjacent dwelling.

Paul Singleton

INSPECTOR