
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 February 2022

by Gareth Wildgoose BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21ST February 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/W4325/D/21/3288941

4 Poll Hill Road, Heswall CH60 7SN

- 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 & Mrs Richards against the decision of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref APP/21/00579, dated 24 March 2021, was refused by notice dated 20 September 2021.
 - The development proposed is a side extension above existing garage and new window added to front elevation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a side extension above existing garage and new window added to front elevation at 4 Poll Hill Road, Heswall CH60 7SN in accordance with the terms of the application ref: APP/21/00579, dated 24 March 2021, subject to these conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: PL001; PL002; PL003; PL004.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those of the existing building as specified within the application form.

Main Issue

2. The main issue of the appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host property and the area.

Reasons

3. No 4 Poll Hill Road (No 4) is an existing two-storey cottage adjoining the footway edge in an established residential area that has a mixed character of detached, semi-detached and terraced properties with a variation in building lines, architectural styles, form and materials. It has distinctive white render walls with contrasting black painted window surrounds and corner detailing, and a slate tile roof. The property has been extended over time with flat roofed single storey extensions added to each side that have contrasting sandstone walls and contemporary style fascia boarding. The single storey addition adjoining No 2, unusually includes a recessed main entrance to the property alongside a garage. A rear conservatory has also been added and is visible

from the street due to the setback position and lower slab level of No 6, a less prominent detached dwelling with a markedly different hipped roof appearance.

4. The main building of No 4 is detached from a neighbouring cottage at No 2 that has similar original proportions and upper floor window arrangements, albeit with differences in materials, architectural detailing and building lines. The separation between No 2 and No 4 has been removed at ground floor level by adjoining single storey additions, including garages, with noticeable differences in roof form. The harmony between the cottages has been further eroded by a glazed front porch at No 2 and a two-storey addition beyond in differing sandstone that adjoins the footway edge and which contributes to an extensive frontage due to its linkage with a neighbouring building.
5. The appeal proposal seeks to build above the existing flat roofed single storey recessed entrance and garage, up to the shared boundary with No 2. The first-floor side extension would mostly have matching materials and detailing with a front building line and roof line to match the existing dwelling and the addition of a new window at ground floor level. A new recessed window at the front would be added above the existing recessed entrance and a more modern window with juliet balcony would be included at the rear.
6. Policy HS11 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP), adopted February 2000, amongst other things, seeks that the scale of an extension is appropriate to the size of the plot, not dominating the existing building and has materials matching or complementing those of the existing building. It also indicates that design features such as lintels, sills, eaves and roof form and line should match or complement those of the existing building. The policy does include an approach to avoid the effect of 'terracing' requiring the first floor of a two-storey side extension to be set back at least 1.5 metres from the common boundary, or at least 1 metre from the front elevation and 1 metre from the common boundary; or at least 2 metres from the front elevation. However, this is applied specifically to 'semi-detached houses of a similar style with a consistent building line and ground level'. As such, to my mind, it is not directly applicable to No 4 when taking into account that No 2 has a slight change in building line angle with a set back from the footway edge and a lower height due to a gradual reduction in ground levels.
7. Further to the above, the extension has been carefully designed to ensure that it is in keeping with the established character of the dwelling with matching design features such as its roof form including eaves and ridge line when viewed from Poll Hill Road. Moreover, there would be appropriate demarcation of the extension in the form of the integration of the recessed entrance with an upper floor window to provide visual interest within the façade that, together with the addition of a new window at ground floor level of the dwelling, would ensure that the front elevation has an improved rhythm. Those additions and alterations, when taken with the position of an existing chimney, would also ensure that the extension improves the legibility of the frontage of the dwelling by better integrating the front entrance. As such, the extension would complement and enhance the appearance of the cottage rather than dominating it. In addition, the reinstatement of a full side gable would further improve the appearance of the building by emphasising its original form whilst replacing the discordant flat roof of the existing outrigger relative to neighbouring additions at No 2.

8. The demarcation, visual interest and subservience of the extension would be supported by use of complementary materials on the upper floor such as render and slate tile roofs as set out in the application form that can be secured by planning condition. This would assist the assimilation of the retained sandstone surrounds of the garage. The extension would be built up to the shared boundary. However, I am satisfied that, even if a first-floor development at No 2 were to come forward in the future, the variation in building line, orientation and height of that neighbouring property would reasonably necessitate and ensure a suitable degree of demarcation, a visual break and/or physical separation thereby limiting any perception of terracing.
9. With regard to the above, the previous additions to No 2 and the extensive frontage to which it contributes are an influential factor on the integration of the proposal within the street scene. The proximity of those neighbouring features would ensure that No 4 as extended would not be overly prominent or out of place against the footway edge. The proposal at No 4 does include more overtly modern first floor windows and a juliet balcony at the rear. However, the presence of such features on the rear elevation alongside an existing conservatory would not be visible in the street scene and would not have an unacceptable impact on the character of the host building or the area. Furthermore, as the extension would not project beyond existing front and rear building lines, there would be adequate separation to surrounding properties to avoid harm to the living conditions of their occupiers. In addition, the existing parking arrangements would be unaffected.
10. The submitted plans do not indicate any overhang of drainpipes and guttering beyond the shared boundary. Nonetheless, the construction of the extension and maintenance of its rendered side wall would likely require some access from the neighbouring property. However, such matters reflect private legal rights relating to land ownership that are not within my jurisdiction. The possibility of any difficulties in those respects does not justify withholding planning permission, given that I observed similar arrangements of buildings adjoining shared boundaries in the local area.
11. In reaching the above findings, I have taken into account that the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance House Extensions (SPG), July 2004, recommends a different approach to two storey side extensions in seeking to maintain a visual break and ensure that an extension respects the character and scale of the original house. The SPG states that such extensions should have a set back of one metre for two storey side extensions and a lower ridge height for properties that stand in a line of detached and semi-detached dwellings, and also a recommended distance of 1 metre between the extension and the side boundary for maintenance and access. The proposal would not accord with those guidelines of the SPG. Nonetheless, based upon the evidence before me, the guidance in the SPG appears to differ from Policy HS11 insofar as is relevant to the proposal. In such circumstances, I have necessarily made my own assessment of the proposal based upon the character of the existing building and the site-specific relationship to its surroundings. Given my previous findings of an absence of harm arising from the proposal when taking account of the existing building and its immediate surroundings, a departure from the SPG requirements is justified in this instance.
12. Having regard to all of the above, I conclude that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the host property or the area. The

development would not conflict with the relevant Policy HS11 of the UDP for the reasons previously set out. There is also no conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Conditions

13. The Council recommended three conditions be imposed should I be minded to allow the appeal, which I have considered against the tests of the Framework and advice provided in Planning Practice Guidance. To provide certainty of the permission granted, it is necessary to impose conditions setting out the standard time limit and to specify the approved plans. In the interests of the character and appearance of the area, a condition is also required to ensure that materials match the existing dwelling as specified on the application form.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed and planning permission granted subject to the conditions set out previously.

Gareth Wildgoose

INSPECTOR