

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 April 2022

by Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13TH April 2022

Appeal Ref. APP/H4315/D/22/3292410
93 Carr Mill Road, Billinge, Wigan WN5 7TY

- 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 Miss Rebecca Smith against the decision of St Helens Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application ref. P/2021/0995/HHFP, dated 16 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 14 January 2022.
 - The development proposed is a 2-storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a 2-storey side extension at 93 Carr Mill Road, Billinge, Wigan WN5 7TY in accordance with the terms of the application ref. P/2021/0995/HHFP, dated 16 November 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans numbered or annotated: 01514/SK/01; 01514/SK/02; and LOCATION PLAN.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those of the existing dwelling.

Main issue

2. I consider the main issue to be the effect of the proposed 2-storey side extension upon the character and appearance of the dwelling and the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is on the east side of Carr Mill Road, where in addition to a public house, there are dwellings which vary widely in terms of design, age of construction, siting and spacing. The semi-detached 2-storey cottages at nos 91 and 93 share a stone-built front elevation in which is inserted a date stone of 1770. They are both far deeper in plan form than they are wide. There is very little garden space at the rear of the dwellings, beyond which is open
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countryside. To the south of the wide side garden of no. 93 is the detached chalet-style bungalow at no. 95.

4. No. 93 has already been enlarged by part 2-storey, part single-storey side and rear extensions pursuant to planning permission ref. P/2015/0353. It is now proposed to add a 2-storey extension, just 2.925 m wide by 4.17 m deep, to the southern side of the earlier 2-storey side extension, flush with its rear wall.
5. The Council's view is that the proposed extension, in combination with the previous extensions, would not respect the scale, character and appearance of the original host property. It refers to the Householder Development Supplementary Planning Document (SPD), adopted in June 2011, which indicates that 2-storey side extensions should be no more than 3 m wide or occupy no more than half the width of the original house (whichever is the greater). Given the narrowness of the original house (4.3 m wide according to the Council), it would appear that the limit on width in this case, following the SPD, would be 3 m. The SPD clearly carries weight as a material consideration in decision making but it should not be applied prescriptively to the exclusion of all other factors, including the physical circumstances and context of a site.
6. The proposed 2-storey side extension would be under 3 m wide. However, this extension, when taken together with the approved and existing 2-storey side extension, would add on just under 7 m of width to the original building. Still, the majority of this increase, across about 4 m of width and beyond the SPD limit, has previously been approved by the Council. The Council acknowledges that the approved extensions were sizeable in relation to the original dwelling but rightly, in my view, points to the lower roof, the considerable distance back from the front of the dwelling and the lack of disturbance to the form and appearance of the original dwelling. It seems to me that those same design features, which made that extension scheme appear as a subservient addition, would also apply to the appeal scheme.
7. The extra width would only occur across a very small part of the overall depth of the cottage. The appeal extension would be added to a part of the building which is itself a secondary component in the overall built structure, being well set back from the original front elevation and original side gable which would remain as the dominant and most prominent architectural features. As well as being far smaller in all key dimensions than the approved 2-storey side extension, the proposed extension would be well set back from that earlier extension's front face. The development would appear subordinate to the existing and original building, when viewed as a whole, in terms of siting, size, scale and height. Some side additions could be large enough and/or be positioned so as to unbalance the built form of a pair of semi-detached houses but this scheme would not come close to doing that.
8. On the approaches to the site along the road, the proposed extension would not be particularly visible. Approaching uphill from the south, it would be largely hidden from view by the chalet bungalow at no. 95 and by the tall and exceptionally well maintained hedge across the front boundary of the appeal site. From the other direction, it would be completely hidden given the layout of the semi-detached pair of cottages. In the short-lived views that are available when looking through or over the vehicular entrance gates at the front of the cottage, the proposed extension would not appear unduly assertive

given its modest size and limited height and its position far back from the road, the front of the dwelling and the front of the previous 2-storey side extension.

9. A sizeable gap would be left between the side wall of the proposed extension and the boundary with no. 95. Maintaining a good impression of space to the side, the scheme would clearly avoid a visually damaging terracing effect and would not result in a cramped form of development.
10. Direct views across the whole southern side elevation would not be possible from public vantage points. In any event, rather than appearing visually disjointed and jarring, this elevation would become characterized by 3 double-height gable ends, each one appropriately progressing downwards in scale when moving backwards from the original gable end. Whilst the resulting side elevation, when viewed as a whole, would inevitably appear more convoluted than the original version, it would not appear so disrespectful of the original building's design as to warrant withholding planning permission.
11. Noting the proposed use of matching render, stone detailing and roof tiles, I consider overall that the proposed 2-storey side extension would make a visually positive contribution to its local setting, exhibit a high standard of architectural design and be sufficiently respectful of and sympathetic to the scale, design, character and appearance of the original building, local character and the street scene along Carr Mill Road. I therefore conclude on the main issue that the proposed 2-storey side extension would cause no material harm to the character and appearance of the dwelling and the area. The proposal would therefore accord with the design requirements for householder developments within Saved Policy GEN 8 of the St Helens Unitary Development Plan and with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) insofar as it relates to achieving well-designed places.
12. The project would not disregard the aims of the SPD for 2-storey side extensions as set out in paragraph 4.17 of the SPD even though there is conflict with its stipulation about width in paragraph 4.16. In any event, the absence of harm and the compliance with the aforementioned development plan policy and the Framework outweigh the conflict with the guidance in the SPD and a departure from it is justified for the reasons outlined above relating to the particular circumstances of the proposal, the property and the surroundings of the appeal site.
13. The scheme will enhance the quality of life for the occupiers of no. 93 by providing additional living accommodation. This is a further factor that weighs in favour of granting planning permission. The Council, correctly in my opinion, did not identify a loss of amenity for neighbouring properties for any reason. The appellant submitted case studies of 3 nearby properties along Carr Mill Road that have been variously widened. Whilst I was able to view these properties on my site visit, they have not played a telling part in the decision I have reached in this appeal because I have not been furnished with the full planning history of those sites and because it is an established planning principle that each case should be determined on its own merits.
14. In addition to a condition setting a time limit for the commencement of development, a condition requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the relevant approved drawings is necessary as this provides

certainty. I have also imposed the Council's other suggested condition on materials to ensure that the development would safeguard the character and appearance of the dwelling and the area.

15. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised and the absence of objections from local residents, I conclude that this appeal should succeed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR