



# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 May 2022

**by R Hitchcock BSc(Hons) DipCD MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 25 May 2022**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/W4325/W/22/3292330**

**23 Venables Drive, Spital CH63 9LY**

- 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 Ms Hannah Earp against the decision of Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council.
- The application Ref APP/21/00262, dated 10 February 2021, was refused by notice dated 14 January 2022.
- The development proposed is the subdivision of plot and creation of 1no. new dwelling.

## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Preliminary Matters

2. During the course of the Council's consideration of the planning application revised plans were provided by the appellant showing changes to the scale and design of the dwelling. These are the plans on which the Council made its decision and I have proceeded on the same basis. For the avoidance of doubt the relevant plans are: 140-2020-LP Rev A, 140-2020-02 Rev E, 140-2020-03 Rev F, 140-2020-04 Rev E and 140-2020-05 Rev E.

## Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the locality.

## Reasons

4. Venables Drive forms part of a residential estate loop road with off-shoot cul-de-sacs. The area features a variety of different house types set in clusters across the estate. Notwithstanding a range of extensions and alterations that have taken place, the buildings often have common height and styling, and they are constructed in a limited palette of materials. This results in a strong identity and consistent character to the locality.
5. Houses on the road are set behind front gardens, the majority of which are open or benefit from low walls or boundary landscaping. The predominant absence of high frontage fences and walls within the streetscape enhances the sense of space between the buildings and creates a positive open feel.
6. The appeal site is a corner plot at the junction with Barnes Green. It sits within a row of similarly styled link-detached buildings which are regularly spaced to provide a consistent rhythm of development. This reflects the arrangement amongst the majority of the various house types across the estate.

7. A sense of space exists about the junction. This is, in part, due to the fact that No23 is angled to the corner and set deeper within its plot than the neighbouring buildings to the south. Furthermore, the site benefits from a splayed garden area resulting in significantly greater width along the rear boundary compared to the site's frontage and other plots in the row.
8. The proposed 2-storey building would be set close to a new dividing boundary with 23 Venables Drive and the blank side elevation of the existing dwelling. It would have frontages onto both roads. The larger expanse and main entrance facing on to Barnes Green would read as its principal elevation. The resultant plot sizes would be smaller compared to the typical layout of detached family houses on the estate. Nevertheless, they would provide sufficient amenity space for users of the existing and proposed dwellings.
9. The proposed building would be positioned behind the line of the frontage to No23. It would have a lower, narrower gable presenting to Venables Drive. Although this would result in a somewhat subordinate appearance compared to other houses in the row, the scale of the building and uncharacteristically wide 2-storey elevation to Barnes Green would appear cramped on the corner site. Despite the existing garden size, the building would be uncharacteristically close to No23 and the Barnes Green road frontage.
10. The limited spacing between the proposal and existing dwelling would provide little visual relief between the buildings. This would cause them to be viewed as a largely single mass on the corner. The subsequent scale of development would jar with the prevailing layout and rhythm of development. It would unduly undermine the sense of spaciousness about the junction. As a location close to a main entrance into the estate the effect would be readily visible on the approach.
11. I acknowledge that there are some corner plots where development has encroached closer to the highway as a consequence of extensions to the original buildings. However, these are generally of more limited height and massing such that their effect on the sense of spaciousness is more restrained.
12. Whilst there are also examples of side extensions which have closed gaps between some buildings. these are in the minority and are sited in less prominent locations. They are not therefore a strong reason for permitting a development of the scale proposed on a prominent corner site.
13. For the above reasons, I find the proposal would unduly harm the character and appearance of the locality. It would conflict with saved Policy HS4 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan [2000] as it seeks development to relate well to surrounding property and avoid detrimental change to the character of the area. This is an aim consistent with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework.

### **Other Matters**

14. Significant adverse effects on the living conditions of nearby third-party residents would not arise due to the distances between the proposed building and houses in other plots. Although the parking provision at the site would be limited, this could be increased to avoid pressure for on-street parking in close proximity to the junction. As the Council's highway advisor has indicated, parking elsewhere would cause little harm to highway safety.

15. I note the appellant's contention that the proposal would make efficient use of the land in a popular residential area. It could be built out quickly and contribute to the borough's housing requirement as part of an identified need to rely on windfalls sites. However, those benefits are not necessarily dependent on the specific detail of the scheme before me. They do not therefore outweigh the harm identified in the particular circumstances of the case.
16. I note the frustrations expressed by the appellant in relation to the extensive engagement and conflicting advice of the Council in the run up to making its decision. However, this is not a matter for this appeal.

### **Conclusion**

17. The proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole. There are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan. Therefore, for the reasons given, I conclude that the appeal should not be allowed.

*R Hitchcock*

INSPECTOR