

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 May 2022

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL
an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 June 2022

Appeal Reference: APP/A0665/D/22/3294788
4 St. Georges Way, Northwich CW9 8XG

- 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 K and C Murray against the decision of Cheshire West and Chester Council.
 - The application (reference 21/02143/FUL, dated 14 May 2021) was refused by notice dated 23 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as follows: "Convert part of existing garage to reception room, first floor bedroom extension over existing garage, single storey rear extension to garage".
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the conversion of part of the existing garage to form a reception room, the construction of a first floor bedroom extension over the existing garage, and the construction of a single-storey rear extension to the garage, at 4 St. Georges Way, Northwich CW9 8XG, in accordance with the terms of the application (reference 21/02143/FUL, dated 14 May 2021), subject to the conditions set out in the attached Schedule of Conditions.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr and Mrs K and C Murray (the Appellants) against Cheshire West and Chester Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main issue

3. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located within an extensive residential area that is crossed by the A553 distributor road. The estate has been laid out in a meandering road pattern but it is rather densely built up, with houses closely spaced along the road frontages and having relatively small back gardens compared with typical older estates. Planting in front gardens softens the townscape but there are

few large trees in the streets near the appeal site. The houses are traditional in style but they exhibit an eclectic mixture of architectural features, including Tudor-style timbering, herringbone brickwork, arched windows and round windows.

5. Number 4 St. Georges Way is a large, four-bedroom detached house, with a small front garden that provides parking spaces in front of the double garage and a small landscaped area. There is a modest back garden behind the house and narrow passageways either side of it. The house itself is designed in a traditional style, with hipped roofs. Nevertheless, the front elevation includes a variety of materials, with brickwork that has been embellished by decorative quoins and an area of painted rendering. The windows feature small leaded lights with insets that allude to historical designs.
6. It is now proposed that most of the existing garage should be converted to form a "study" (or "reception room"), with a window facing one of the side passageways. A very narrow portion at the front of the garage would be retained as "garage storage", behind the wide garage door. A small single storey extension behind the garage (and at the side of the main part of the house) would create a new w.c. and shower room, serving the study. At first floor level, a new bedroom would be created, by enlarging the roof of the garage to form a side gable and inserting a new dormer.
7. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, by adding to the overall quality of the area and being visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history (while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change).
8. An emphasis on the importance of good design is also to be found in the Development Plan, notably at Policy ENV6 of the Cheshire West and Chester 'Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies' and Policies DM3 and DM21 of the Cheshire West and Chester 'Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies'. Both Parts of the Local Plan are intended to promote good design generally and to reflect local character (among other things). Policy DM21 of the 'Local Plan (Part Two)' has a particular relevance to "development within the curtilage of a dwellinghouse".
9. The Council's 'Supplementary Planning Document: House Extensions and Domestic Outbuildings' (dated January 2021) is also relevant, though it does not have the same force as Policies in the Development Plan.
10. The proposed alterations would have a limited effect on the external appearance of the building but would add to the building bulk at the front of the property. The roof over the garage would be extended to form a gable adjacent to the pathway at the side of the house, with a new dormer element on the front slope of the new roof structure. Thus, the space between the appeal building and its neighbour would be reduced, while the new dormer would add to the volume of the building on the front elevation, extending in front of the main first floor element, even though the footprint of the existing house would not be extended forwards, towards the road.

11. As a result, the frontage on this part of St. George's Way would be more closely built up and the space between these two houses, affording a sight of open areas beyond, would be reduced. The existing frontages are closely built up, however, and the quality of the streetscene does not depend upon opportunities for glimpses through to the rear. The existing gap between the houses does not make a significant contribution to the character or appearance of the surroundings and the reduction that would be caused would be acceptable in its context.
12. On balance, I have concluded that the design of the new dormer and roof alterations would be in harmony with the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings and would broadly maintain the character of the locality. Thus, it would accord with Policies in the Development Plan and national planning policies that are intended to promote good design.
13. In reaching my conclusions, I have noted that reference is made in the submissions to other sites which are said to share some similarities with the appeal site. I am conscious, however, that each appeal must be considered on its own merits and that other circumstances are likely to apply in different cases. Thus, the comparisons with other projects have limited relevance to this appeal, in my view.
14. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms, and the proposed extension would be a useful addition to the accommodation at 4 St. Georges Way, even though the additional study and bedroom would be somewhat cramped. In short, I am persuaded that the scheme before me can properly be permitted, subject to conditions and, although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.
15. I have, however, also considered the need for conditions and, in imposing conditions, I have taken account of the conditions suggested by the Council in the usual way (without prejudice to their main arguments in the appeal), subject to modifications necessary, in my opinion, in the interests of clarity and enforceability. In particular, I have concluded that conditions are necessary, to define the planning permission and to ensure that quality is maintained.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:
 - unnumbered Ordnance Survey site plan (1:1250);
 - unnumbered Ordnance Survey block plan (1:500);
 - drawing number P01 (Site Location Plan);
 - drawing number P02 (Existing Ground Floor Plan);
 - drawing number P03 (Existing First and Roof Plan);
 - drawing number P04 (Existing Elevations);
 - drawing number P05A (Proposed Ground Floor Plan);
 - drawing number P06C (Proposed First and Roof Plan);
 - drawing number P07C (Proposed Elevations);
 - drawing number P08C (Proposed 3d View);
 - drawing number P09 (Proposed 3d Streetscene).
3. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.