



# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 October 2023

**by L Hughes BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI**

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

**Decision date: 7 November 2023**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/V4250/D/23/3327251**

**8 Blenheim Street, Tyldesley, Wigan M29 8JL**

- 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 Alex Allen against the decision of Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council.
  - The application Ref A/23/95585/HH, dated 23 May 2023, was refused by notice dated 18 July 2023.
  - The development proposed is first-floor extension to side.
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## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development on the application form was for a proposed 1st floor side extension over existing garage to provide addition bedroom. The description in the banner header above is taken from the Council's decision notice, as this better describes the proposed development.

## Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area.

## Reasons

4. Number 8 Blenheim Street is a two-storey link detached property at the end of a row of four dwellings of the same architectural style. The properties are linked by their single storey side elements, which, all bar one, have been converted from garages into living accommodation. The proposed development is for a first-floor extension over the dwelling's existing single storey side accommodation.
5. Whilst the street is comprised of a range of house types, including terraces, the individual row which includes 8 Blenheim Street has a distinct character. The space between the properties at first-floor level, over the single storey elements, is a design feature of the row. The distinct design ensures that the properties retain their appearance as detached or semi-detached, rather than having a terraced effect. The space between the properties above the linkages provides for a regular rhythm of development, and contributes positively to the street scene.
6. The Council's House Extensions Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2019 (SPD) contains guidance as to how extensions should be designed and built well.

7. The SPD is clear that the form and scale of extensions should be subordinate to the existing building and positioned so that they do not dominate the street scene. The purpose of the guidance regarding set back distances is to ensure that extensions avoid a terracing effect by maintaining a visual break along front elevations. Where the ground floor is flush with the host dwelling, a minimum setback of 2m is required for the first floor. The proposed first floor extension would be set back just 0.5m. As there is no gap at ground floor level to the boundary, in order to avoid the impression of a continuous frontage an adequate set back would be an essential design element of the extension. I recognise that the SPD provides guidance rather than being part of the development plan. However, the proposed 0.5m set back would not enable the proposed extension to appear fully subordinate to the host property or ensure that a terraced effect would not occur. This would disrupt the pattern of development of the row of houses. It would erode the existing important sense of spaciousness, and be out of character with the immediate street scene.
8. The appellant has argued that the guidance regarding set back distances from the main property contained within the SPD refers to two-storey side extensions, whereas the appeal is for a first-floor extension. However, whilst factually correct, the proposal would appear as a two-storey feature in the street scene, and as such I consider that the guidance within the SPD remains relevant.
9. Guidance contained within the SPD states that house extensions require a minimum distance of 0.8m between a side extension and the site boundary to ensure a terracing effect does not occur. The extension proposed would be constructed up to the common boundary. Although not compliant with the SPD, the ground floor accommodation is already linked with the property next door and the dwellings were specifically designed with no gap between the boundary. I agree with the appellant that it would be unreasonable to expect such a gap to exist in this instance where the properties are already joined. Notwithstanding this, the overall scale of development would nevertheless be harmful to the street scene.
10. My attention has been drawn to two similar first-floor extensions in a nearby street, which were approved in 2003 and 2004. However, I have no information regarding their setback distances. These extensions were permitted in a different policy context, prior to the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the adoption of the Wigan Local Plan Core Strategy 2013 (CS). The extensions also pre-date the SPD which specifically introduced guidance to ensure the avoidance of terracing impacts. I have determined this appeal on its individual planning merits and under the current policy context, and the example of other developments in the locality does not lead me to find that this proposal would be acceptable.
11. The appellant has drawn my attention to the National Design Guide (NDG) which forms part of the government's collection of planning practice guidance. The NDG highlights that a characteristic of a well-designed place is that it enhances its surroundings and has a coherent pattern of development. The proposed extension, due to its lack of setback and lack of subordination would therefore be in conflict with the NDG, insofar as it would disrupt the existing pattern of development and detract from its surroundings.

12. I conclude that the proposed extension would detract from the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surrounding area. As such, it would not conform with Policy C10 of the CS which seeks to ensure that development respects the character and identity of its locality in terms of size and is integrated effectively with its surroundings. It would conflict with guidance contained within the SPD which highlights that extensions must not have an adverse effect on the house itself or the quality of a streetscape. It would also conflict with the Framework which states that development should be sympathetic to local character and the surrounding built environment.

### **Other Matters**

13. The benefits that the appellant would derive from the proposed development are acknowledged, particularly the additional living space. I agree that the principle of an extension is acceptable, that it would be an effective use of the building, and that there are no highway or parking issues associated with the proposal. The extension would use matching materials and building on an existing structure would be a low carbon development option. However, none of these matters outweigh the harm that I have identified to the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area. Whilst small social benefits would be achieved, good design is an important element of sustainable development. As such, the proposal would not be sustainable development.

### **Conclusion**

14. The proposal would conflict with the development plan when taken as a whole and there are no material considerations which would indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
15. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

*L Hughes*

INSPECTOR