



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 June 2024

by A Veevers BA(Hons) PGDipBCon MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28th June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/D/24/3339933

39 Handforth Road, Wilmslow SK9 2LX

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Sarah Hussain against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/3350M.
 - The development proposed is described as 'demolition of existing single story garage. Construction of multiple single and double story extensions to the front, side and rear of the property including a roof. Proposed sliding entrance gates and extension to existing drive way'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

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

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a two storey detached dwelling set back from the road by a sloping driveway and front garden which is bound by a stone wall with hedge above. The property is elevated slightly above Handforth Road, which descends towards the partially wooded River Dean valley to the north. The eye-catching tall chimneys to each side of the dwelling, double-hipped roof and arrangement of fenestration on the principal elevation facing the road provide symmetry to the property and reflect a particular vernacular style that is also evident at the neighbouring property, 41 Handforth Road (No 41) and which contributes positively to the street scene and character of the area.
4. In the vicinity of the appeal site, the area is predominantly characterised by detached residential properties in spacious plots. While there is considerable variation to the scale and appearance of properties along this part of Handforth Road, there is a generally consistent building line with properties set behind modest front gardens, low boundary walls and mature hedges and trees that reinforce the positive characteristics of the area.
5. The proposed extensions would increase the massing of the appeal property and would significantly alter its appearance when viewed from the road. The proposed gables on the front elevation would not project significantly forward of the building and the height of the building would not increase. Nevertheless, due to the design, width and height of the central bay, and the elevated position of the property, the frontage of the host building would be significantly

conspicuous. Even though a narrow gap would be retained between the side extensions and the side boundaries, cumulatively, the increased width of the resultant building would substantially elongate the roof. This would exacerbate the scale of the building. The hipped roof would do little to moderate the sense of scale.

6. Furthermore, the vertical emphasis and large amount of glazed fenestration to the projecting gables would not reflect the regular pattern of openings in the area and would further serve to emphasise the overall scale and mass of the proposal. Consequently, when viewed from the street, in the context of neighbouring properties, the building would be visibly incongruous and overly dominant
7. I acknowledge that contemporary design is not objectionable in and of itself and the materials proposed would generally be reflective of the wider area. Nonetheless, Policy HOU11 of the Council's Site Allocations and Development Policies Document, December 2022 (SADPD) states, amongst other things, that extensions to existing dwellings should be in keeping with the scale, character and appearance of their surroundings and the local area and be subordinate to the existing dwelling. The proposal would not be subordinate. Moreover, the design of the projecting gables would not be compatible with the characteristics of neighbouring properties. Thus, the scheme would be inconsistent with these guiding principles and would cause harm to the prevailing positive character and appearance of the area.
8. In terms of the proposed sliding gate and brick piers, although they would be set back from the pavement and would be a modest height, their solid form and width would introduce a prominent feature when viewed from the road. Their position above street level, due to the ascending driveway, would exacerbate the visual impact. From my site visit, whilst I saw the fence along the boundary with No 41, in the absence of any details about boundary treatment that would connect to the gate piers on the other side of the drive, the gate would be an incongruous feature on the drive. Even if a wall or fence were to be attached to the gate piers, the resultant enclosure would represent a visually obtrusive form of development that would harm the predominant open character and appearance of the site and area.
9. In support of the proposal, the appellant refers to the mixed scale and design of numerous properties in the local area along with the presence of high walls and gates along front boundaries. I viewed each of these during my visit to the area. Even though I recognise many properties extend the full width of the plot and are of varied design, few on the western side of Handforth Road had been modified in a way that altered the original hipped roof form or had been extended at two storeys in a similar way to that proposed. As such, together with the retention of mature frontage vegetation, the overall verdant character and sense of spaciousness along Handforth Road in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site has been maintained. In this respect, each building generally does not dominate its individual plot. That would not be the case with the appeal proposal because of the dominant projecting gables and the overall scale and mass of the extensions when viewed from the street.
10. I recognise the property at 34 Handforth Road includes projecting gables on the front elevation. However, this property is located on the opposite side of the bridged A34 carriageway and faces a flatted development. It is therefore

seen in a different context to the appeal site, as are the other examples provided on this side of the A34, most of which have retained a horizontal emphasis to fenestration and do not include gabled projections. They are therefore not directly comparable and do not weigh in favour of the proposal.

11. Although the open character along the street has already been marginally diminished because of high boundary treatments along the frontage of some neighbouring properties, these properties are clustered together close to the bridge over the A34. The solid form of gates and high boundary walls constructed here demonstrates to me the harmful visual effect that such boundary treatment has on the character and appearance of the area. I also saw boundary treatments in the area that included railings above low boundary walls which were softened by vegetation protruding through the railings and the open design of gates at these properties allowed views of front gardens, which lends a natural greenness to the appearance of the streetscene.
12. In any event, the examples provided do not represent the predominant character of the area. Any direct comparison with other examples does not indicate that the form of the proposed development would sit comfortably within the streetscene, nor does the existence of other examples justify further harm.
13. Whilst the Council do not find the proposed single storey rear extension objectionable, this aspect of the proposal alone is insufficient to overcome the overall adverse effects that I have described. Even if I considered the rear extension to be acceptable, it would be physically linked to the proposed side extensions. Thus, whilst it is possible for me to issue a split decision, in this case, such an approach would not be possible because the rear extension would not be independent of the side extensions.
14. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would unduly harm the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area. Accordingly, it would conflict with Policies GEN1 and HOU11 of the SADPD and Policies SD1, SD2 and SE1 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, 2010-2030, July 2017. Collectively these policies seek, amongst other things, development that is of high quality and contributes positively to an area's character.
15. Although Policy H2 of the Wilmslow Neighbourhood Plan 2019 technically refers to new residential development rather than extensions to dwellings, it is relevant insofar as the proposal would conflict with objectives of the policy. Amongst which is that the character and identity of Wilmslow is reinforced through locally distinctive design and architecture in residential development. The proposal would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework as it seeks those aims through well-designed places and developments that are sympathetic to local character and that maintain a strong sense of place.

Other Matters

16. The appeal site is located in an area that has established links to local amenities, services and public transport facilities. Compliance with Building Regulations with regards energy efficiency is an expectation of development. The appellant's offer to provide bat and bird boxes at the appeal site could be erected irrespective of the proposed development. These considerations do not

outweigh the harm I have found to the character and appearance of the host property and surrounding area as set out above.

17. I acknowledge that there was engagement with the Council while the application was under consideration and the proposal was amended in response to officer advice. However, the reasons for the eventual officer recommendation and decision are clearly set out in the Officer Report and communications prior to that point do not have a bearing on my consideration of the main issue, as set out above.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, and all other material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A Veevers

INSPECTOR