



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 August 2024

by R Jones BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 September 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/W4325/D/24/3345705

40 Far Meadow Lane, Irby, Wirral CH61 4XW

- 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 Mr Joseph Smith against the decision of Wirral Council.
 - The application Ref is APPH/24/00158.
 - The development proposed is 2 storey side extension and loft conversion to existing semi-detached bungalow dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are the effect of the proposed two-storey side extension on:
 - the character and appearance of the host dwelling and streetscene; and
 - the living conditions of occupiers at No.42 Far Meadow Lane, with regards outlook and light.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. No.40 Far Meadow Lane (No.40) is one of 8no. semi-detached, gabled-ended bungalows in a row, located on the south side of Far Meadow Lane.
4. A two-storey side extension is proposed to No.40 to accommodate a larger kitchen and stairs at ground floor and a first floor ensuite bedroom. The ground floor of the proposed extension would project around 1.5m from the existing flank gable, over a depth of 9.4m (aligning with the rear elevation), but would be offset from the front elevation by 1m. The proposed first floor is smaller than the ground, projecting only 1.3m from the flank gable (so offset 0.2m at the side from the ground floor) and would have a depth of around 3.6m.
5. A characteristic of the row of 8no. bungalows on the south side of Far Meadow Lane is a steeply pitched roof profile, with low eaves, which finish just above the head of the ground floor windows. The first floor of the proposed extension has been designed with a pitched roof, but because of its offset from the ground floor, it would have a narrow flank gable and very high eaves. In contrast, at ground floor, to the front and rear, the proposed roof form is

hipped. I understand that the design of the proposed extension responds to the need to avoid a terracing effect with the non-attached neighbour, and to secure sufficient headroom at first floor above the stairs. However, I find that the proposed first floor roof, and particularly the very high eaves, would give the appearance of a narrow, true first floor (described by the Council as a 'flat front design'), which would fail to complement, and would appear unsympathetic to, the characteristic steeply pitch roof design of its host.

6. The Council's guidance in the *Supplementary Planning Guidance: House Extensions (2004)* (SPG) is that two-storey side extensions should be set back from the front of the host dwelling by 1m and should have a lower ridge height. The proposed extension would accord with this guidance; the ground floor would be offset by 1m from the front elevation and the first floor by 3.6m. It would also have a lower ridge height and I acknowledge that the SPG does not specify how much lower the ridge of the extension should be compared to the main dwelling. There is disagreement between the parties as to whether the proposed ridgeline would be 0.07m or 0.1m lower than the host roof. On either measurement, the difference in height would be barely discernible from the ground, reading as a continuation of the existing ridgeline. This would contribute to the undue prominence of the proposed extension, and would fail to meet the objective of the SPG guidance, namely that extensions should retain the character and not over-dominate the existing dwelling.
7. Although I observed that neighbouring bungalows have been altered, none have been extended over two-storeys and there is a uniformity and cohesion to the group of eight. No.40 is set slightly forward of its non-attached neighbour at No.42 Far Meadow Lane and because of this the proposed side extension, and notably the narrow first floor gable, would be dominant and unduly prominent in the streetscene, particularly when viewed from the east. It would appear an incongruous addition which I find would cause harm to the uniform character and appearance of the streetscene.
8. I therefore conclude on the first main issue that the proposed design and scale of the extension would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host bungalow and streetscene. Consequently, it would conflict with Policy HS11 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan (2000) (UDP) which requires, amongst other things, that the scale of extensions should not dominate, and design features such as lintels, sills, eaves and roof form and line should match or complement the existing building. It would also conflict with paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in so far as it requires that decisions should ensure that developments are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and are sympathetic to local character.

Living conditions

9. The guidance in the Council's SPG is that where a sole window to a main habitable room faces a blank wall they must be a minimum of 14m apart. I observed on my site visit that there is a first floor window on the gable of the neighbouring bungalow at No.42 Far Meadow Lane (No.42) which directly faces No.40, and is offset by only around 4.6m, so less than the Council's guidance.
10. The appellant has submitted in evidence photographs (date stamped 7 April 2024) of the interior of No.42 which show that the loft space is only accessible through a loft hatch; there is no permanent internal staircase giving first floor

access. I concur with the appellant that in the absence of a safe means of access, the loft space cannot reasonably be considered, or function, as a main habitable room such as a bedroom. Therefore, whilst the proposed two-storey extension would project around 1.3m (at first floor) closer to the existing facing window on the gable of No.42, this would not result in loss of outlook from, or light to, a habitable room and therein harm the living conditions of the neighbours.

11. Consequently, the proposal would accord with UDP Policy HS11 where it requires that house extensions are not unneighbourly, with particular regard being had to the effect of light to and outlook from neighbouring habitable rooms. It would also accord with paragraph 135 of the Framework which, amongst other things, requires development to create places that have a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

Conclusion

12. Although I have found no harm to the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers at No.42, I have concluded that the proposal would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host bungalow and streetscene. Therefore, for the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

R. Jones

INSPECTOR