



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 April 2025

by **Eleni Marshall BSc (hons) MSc FRICS FAAV MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/A0665/D/25/3360905

11 Woodpecker Drive, Northwich, Cheshire West and Chester, CW9 8EQ

- 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 Stephen Westwell against the decision of Cheshire West and Chester Council.
 - The application reference is 24/01066/FUL.
 - The development proposed is retrospective porch, two storey side extension, single storey rear extension and replacement windows/proposed rendering.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the original dwelling, surrounding properties and visual amenity.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a semi-detached two storey dwelling which stands on Woodpecker Drive with the original host dwelling having external finishes that include brickwork, cladding and tile. There are several elements to the appeal proposal and the Council's delegated report confirms that the single storey rear extension and the side extension are considered acceptable. I find no reason to conclude differently on these particular elements based upon the evidence before me and my site visit. On this basis the appeal will focus upon the remaining elements which are the front extension and external alterations to the front elevation as these are the elements upon which the refusal has been based.
4. Whilst some properties along Woodpecker Drive have undergone alteration, I find that there still remains a notable symmetry between the pairs of semi-detached dwellings which ultimately creates a regular, noticeable, rhythm in the street scene as a result of bulk scale and massing and uniform fenestration. As a result of alterations there is some variation in the material palette on the external elevations when viewed from within the street scene. Despite this I do not find that variations to the external materials, as noted in the appendices of the appellant's statement of case, currently detract from the overall sense of uniformity as a result of the built form and characteristics noted.
5. I do not find that the building materials that have been used in the construction of the dwelling (red multi-brick) are sufficient to warrant refusal in isolation. I acknowledge that the red multi-brick does not entirely match the original or adjoining semi-detached dwelling, however, I find that there are some general brick

variances along Woodpecker Drive and that the brick utilised at the appeal site, though a variation, can be considered acceptable in that regard and that this change alone does not significantly unbalance the pair of semi-detached dwellings.

6. The changes to the front elevation also include amendments to the fenestration through the provision of smaller window openings. I find that the openings, as submitted and seen on site, noticeably detract from the uniform appearance of the fenestration in dwellings within the vicinity which is at odds with the overall character and appearance of Woodpecker Drive. The reduction in size of the windows to the front elevation is therefore unacceptable in the context of the prevailing uniformity of fenestration. The proposal would also significantly disrupt the visual symmetry with the attached dwelling as a result of the window sizing.
7. The use of dark grey tiles, black fenestration and render would not be in keeping with the materials in the surrounding street scene as a whole, however, from my site visit and the evidence before me, I note that there are variations to external materials including darker materials which, whilst they are noticeable, do not particularly stand out in a manner which would warrant refusal of such materials in the case of the appeal site that is before me. Despite this, the examples of other, darker, materials and fenestration within the street scene of Woodpecker Drive have been combined with retention of the existing dimensions of the original fenestration which does allow some conformity and continuity in the context of the overall street scene. In this case, however, the combination of the proposed building materials, combined with the smaller window openings, contributes to the cumulative changes appearing inappropriate and visually prominent and further accentuates the prominence of the amended dwelling within the street scene.
8. From the plans before me, and the description of the site within the submission documents, I understand that the proposed porch has replaced the existing flat roofed porch which was previously in situ at the appeal site. Flat roof porches are noticeable as a characteristic within the street scene on other dwellings, however, at the time of my site visit I noted that amendments have been made to porch features within the street scene which has introduced some variety with these elements. Whilst the design of the porches in the street scene do vary, I find that these amended porches are generally of a smaller projection and that the porch, as constructed/submitted at the appeal site, is of a bulk scale and massing which creates an overly dominant feature.
9. The combination of the external materials utilised and the design of the porch I find creates an element which is not proportionate nor in keeping with the character and appearance of the original dwelling or the surrounding properties. I find that the porch has been poorly designed in the context of the immediate surroundings which generates harm to visual amenity as a result of the introduction of a visually alien feature. Overall, I note some alteration and amendment to dwellings along Woodpecker Drive, however, I do not find that these result in the same negative impacts as I have identified and as such, I do not find that such examples serve to justify the appeal proposal that is before me.
10. Whilst I note that there may be no other wider public viewpoints of the elevations of the appeal site due to the positioning on a cul-de-sac, the proposal is one which still falls to be considered in the context of the street scene. I acknowledge the appellant's reference to the National Design Guide and whilst this may note the potential for creating new identity, I do not find that this should be to the detriment

of the wider street scene and character and appearance for the reasons I have outlined above. I do not find that the proposal would enhance identity. I note the appellant's reasoning as to the reduced window size; however, this does not overcome the harm as a result of the visual contrast to the overwhelming uniformity in terms of windows along Woodpecker Drive on this occasion. I cannot conclude that the proposal as submitted represents high quality design due to the inappropriateness of the elements as outlined above

11. To summarise, I find the use of alternative external materials, as within this proposal, could be acceptable in the context of the street scene due to some variation present and noted at the time of my site visit. The external materials as presented within the overall appeal proposal, however, exacerbate the inappropriateness of the changes to the fenestration of the host dwelling in terms of the reduction in window sizes being entirely contrary to the vast majority of dwellings on Woodpecker Drive.
12. Whilst porch features are varied in terms of their general design within the street scene, I find that the overall bulk, scale, and massing of the porch in this case to be inappropriate and introduce an alien feature with the design being further accentuated, negatively, as a result of the proposed external materials. Cumulatively, the combination of amendments, and design and external materials as submitted is not in keeping with the character and appearance of, nor subordinate to, the original dwelling and surrounding properties alongside which it would be viewed in Woodpecker Drive.
13. The proposal would be contrary to Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan Part 1 Policy ENV6 which requires development to respect local character, Cheshire West and Chester Local Plan Part 2 (LP2) Policy DM3 which expects development to respect the character and protect the visual amenity of the local area as well as be designed to respect the scale, character and appearance of any existing building within the site and contribute positively to the character of the area and LP Policy DM21 which requires that extensions and alterations to existing dwellings be in keeping with the character and appearance of, and is subordinate to, the original dwelling and surrounding properties and the wider setting.
14. The proposal would also be contrary to the guidance set out within the Supplementary Planning Document: House Extensions and Domestic Outbuildings 2021 which advised that in designing front extensions great care must be taken to ensure that the character of the existing building and surrounding buildings is taken into account. Regard should also be had to preserving any symmetry in acknowledgement that the front elevation of a building, usually facing the street, is particularly sensitive to change. The proposal would also be contrary to paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 which requires that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area and be sympathetic to local character.

Other Matters

15. I note that it is outlined that the appellant sought to work with the Council offering alternative finishes around the windows, however, I have determined the proposal before me on its own merits against the Local Plan taking into account all relevant material considerations. I acknowledge that it is within my remit to condition the render to be removed on the front elevation should it be necessary for the appeal to

succeed, however, I do not find that given the issues I have identified that this would sufficiently overcome the issues identified in order to allow the appeal.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons outlined above, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Eleni Marshall

INSPECTOR