



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 June 2019

by J Somers BSocSci (Planning) MA (HEC) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29th July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/B4215/W/19/3225599

St Chads Church, Stocks Street, Manchester M8 8GG

- 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 Father Ray Matus against the decision of Manchester City Council.
 - The application Ref 122087/FO/2018, dated 10 December 2018, was refused by notice dated 24 January 2019.
 - The development proposed in the installation of a new ramp to the east of the south porch and associated conversion of existing window into new doorway.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the special architectural and historic interest of the Grade II listed building and its setting.

Reasons

3. The Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 sets out the statutory approach and requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building and any features of architectural or historic interest it possesses.
4. The appeal property is a Roman Catholic Church which dates from the mid nineteenth century and is constructed with coursed sandstone rubble and a slate roof with tower. To the south of the building is a small porch which is original to the building and is where the main entry to the church is currently made from. The porch is entered from the front, with the eastern wall of the porch containing a two-light stone mullioned lancet arched window.
5. The church was listed as a Grade II building of special architectural and historic interest, however as the building is subject to Ecclesiastical Exemption, listed building consent for the proposed alterations is not required.
6. Whilst churches have a wide variety of both intangible and intangible significance based on their heritage values, to me, I consider the relevant components of the significance of the building to this appeal derives from its largely unaltered exterior which is a notable example of the neo-gothic Puginesque style; the attribution to the architects Weightman and Hadfield who designed a number of important Roman Catholic churches; the circulation routes of the building, with the southern porch being one of the main

- entrances; and the historic construction and materials which relay a symmetry to the overall church building. The setting of the church and how it is experienced is also important with landscaped gardens of lawn and plants having a positive influence to the setting of the church and how it is experienced.
7. The proposed alterations would consist of the removal of the window to the eastern side of the porch, along with stonework in order to facilitate a doorway with a door constructed of oak hardwood. An inverted L-shaped ramp with handrails would then be constructed from the new opening along the part of the southern wall in front of a larger window to the South Isle to an extended tarmac area which would remove part of the lawn in front of the southern wall of the church.
 8. The proposed alterations would be invasive to the historic building and result in the loss of original fabric. The proposed door would interfere with the original design and create a secondary entrance into the building which affects the historic circulation route and adds additional clutter to the side of the porch. Due to the siting, design and overall layout of the ramp, it would also be constructed in front of an existing window and would appear as an incongruous modern addition to the church, which significantly alters and clutters the overall appearance of the building and detrimentally diminishes its historic character. Whilst there is harm caused to the building itself, there is also harm caused to the setting via the loss of garden, and its replacement with tarmac and built form.
 9. It is clear to me that the proposed alterations would unacceptably harm the significance of the listed building, thus failing to preserve the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
 10. Although serious, the harm to the heritage asset in this case would be 'less than substantial,' within the meaning of the term in paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). Paragraph 194 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset should require clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 196 requires that, where a proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, the harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
 11. Supporting information accompanying the appeal suggest that benefits of the scheme are that full access can be given to persons with mobility impairments who may have difficulty going up the steps to the front of the south porch. The justification is given in the form of an assessment of different options, such as a ramp to the front of the porch which would omit the amount of lost fabric, but have an impact to the setting. The Council has also suggested options which would not involve a loss of historic fabric which have not been taken forward.
 12. Despite this, I am not convinced that adequate justification has been provided for the proposed works which would justify the harm caused. It is evident that there are other approaches and methodologies which could be employed that would not be as harmful to the historic fabric or its setting.
 13. That said, I am not convinced that the specified works are necessary and would result in harm to the listed building and its special architectural and historic

interest. As such the alterations would be contrary to Saved Policy DC19.1 of the Manchester City Council Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (which seeks to resist development where it would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of a building); and Policy EN3 of the Manchester City Council Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2012 (DPD) (which seeks that new developments be designed so as to support the preservation or enhancement of the historic environment, the character, setting and accessibility of areas and buildings of acknowledged importance).

14. I therefore find that the public benefits arising from the proposed development would not outweigh the harm I have identified. The scheme therefore conflicts with the Framework, which directs, at paragraph 193, 'that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation ... irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to their significance.'
15. To summarise, I consider the proposed development would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of this Grade II listed building and its setting and would not preserve its special architectural or historic interest. It has not been shown that public benefits would outweigh this harm and so the proposal would conflict with DPD Policy EN3, saved UDP Policy DC19.1, and National Planning Policy in the Framework.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

J Somers

INSPECTOR