
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 August 2019 by Hannah Ellison MSc BSc (Hons)

Decision by Susan Ashworth BA (Hons) BPL MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 13 September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/D/19/3231427

17 East Downs Road, Bowdon, Altrincham, WA14 2LG

- 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 David Vanderhook against the decision of Trafford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 96229/HHA/18, dated 22 November 2018, was refused by notice dated 22 May 2019.
 - The development proposed is the removal of existing rear lean-to extension and construction of new rear extension and associated external landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on:
 - the character and appearance of the host property and, linked to that, whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the Bowdon Conservation Area, and;
 - the living conditions of occupiers at No.19 East Downs Road, with particular regard to outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site comprises a large three-storey (and basement), mid-terrace dwelling within a long narrow plot in the Bowdon Conservation Area (the 'CA'). The Bowdon Conservation Area Supplementary Planning Document SPD5.9 Conservation Area Appraisal (July 2016) identifies the high level of architectural integrity and detail of the housing stock as being one element of significance of this CA. Nos.15-19 East Downs Road are identified as a positive contributor to the CA as they reflect a substantial number of other elements in the CA in age, style, material and form.

5. The appeal dwelling has matching characteristics to the wider terrace, including a substantial three-storey rear outrigger which occupies more than half the width of the dwelling, leaving a narrow gap between the boundary wall with No.19. There is a single storey extension attached to the outrigger. This proposal seeks permission for a wrap-around single storey extension, to the side and rear of the outrigger, following demolition of the existing lean-to extension.
6. There is a strong rhythm to the rear elevation of the host terrace, largely resulting from the wide outriggers with prominent gabled rooflines. Further, due to their scale, the three-storey outriggers are a significant feature of the rear, and the gradual slope in ground level through the garden further increases their prominence. The proposed development would not be highly visible from the street scene due to the layout of the host terrace. However, it would be visible from neighbouring sites and the rhythm between the rear elevation of the main dwelling and the outriggers is evidently experienced from the gardens and is a key feature of the terrace.
7. This proposal would introduce a single-storey flat roofed extension which would infill the space between the party boundary and side elevation of the outrigger. It is acknowledged the proposal would be of a contemporary, visually light-weight design to juxtapose the historic context. However, due to its wrap-around form it would erode the spacing to the side which itself contributes positively to the building by allowing the form and massing of the original dwelling to be read. Moreover, the boxy form of the proposed extension, which would have a horizontal emphasis, would partly obscure and thereby detract from the vertical proportions and prominence of the outrigger. As such, the extension would read as an unsympathetic addition to the host property.
8. It is suggested that the proposal would have a similar horizontal effect as the existing white paint to the ground floor of the dwelling. However, the painted bricks do not detract from the form or massing of the property as the original three-storey elevation of the outrigger is still clearly evident. Accordingly, the painted brick is not comparable to the appeal proposal.
9. The proposal would also result in the loss of a number of historic features located to the side of the outrigger, including traditional window openings, an entrance to the basement and external boundary wall. These features contribute positively to the character of the host property and the site.
10. Other extensions have been referenced in support of this proposal. It is noted that none appear to be of the form proposed in this case and I have not been provided with the full circumstances which led to their approval. In any event, I have considered this appeal on its own merits and have found that it would cause harm as identified above.
11. Accordingly, I find that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host property and would neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the Bowdon Conservation Area. For these reasons the development would be in conflict with policies R1 and L7 of the Trafford Local Plan Core Strategy, January 2012 (the 'CS') which collectively seek to protect, maintain or enhance heritage assets and ensure that development is appropriate in its context and enhance the character of the area.

12. In terms of the approach set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) the proposal would cause less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area's significance as a designated heritage asset. Paragraph 196 states that where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimal viable use. I am not aware of any public benefits associated with this proposal. The Framework is clear that great weight should be attached to the asset's conservation and as such public benefits do not outweigh the harm I have identified.

Living conditions

13. The narrow gap between Nos.17 and 19 and the high party boundary wall means that the outlook from the side and rear windows of No.19 is already restricted. Whilst the existing ivy to the top of the wall creates a softer outlook, it is acknowledged that due to its flat roof design, this proposal would not substantially alter the outlook from the window on the side elevation of No.19's outrigger.
14. However, there is a further window on the side elevation of No.19's single-storey extension which currently benefits from a better outlook due to the drop in ground levels and significant reduction in height of the boundary wall close to it. The proposal would substantially increase the height of the boundary at this point, thus restricting outlook and having an overbearing impact. Therefore, based on the evidence before me, the proposal would have an adverse effect on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.
15. It is recognised that the space between the side of No.19 and the party boundary is narrow and already a relatively dark area. Thus, it is likely this space is not highly utilised, especially given the presence of the large landscaped garden beyond the rear elevation. However, even if the increase in height of the boundary wall does not worsen this relationship, this does not overcome the issue of outlook noted above.
16. Consequently, the proposal would harm the living conditions of occupiers of No.19 arising from its overbearing nature and loss of outlook. Thus, the proposal would conflict with Policy L7 of the CS which seeks to ensure the amenity of occupants of adjacent properties is not prejudiced.

Other Matters

17. It is noted the occupants of No.19 have not raised any concern with the proposal. However, a lack of opposition for a proposal is not a ground for granting planning permission and this does not have a bearing on the issue.

Conclusion and Recommendation

18. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, I recommend that the appeal is dismissed.

Hannah Ellison

Appeals Planning Officer

Inspector's Decision

19. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

Susan Ashworth

INSPECTOR