
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 February 2020

by T J Burnham BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/B4215/W/19/3242928
10 Birch Polygon, Manchester M14 5HX

- 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 Ms Alesha Khan against the decision of Manchester City Council.
 - The application Ref 125065/FO/2019, dated 4 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 4 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is conversion of single family dwelling to form a total of 4 self contained apartments. Works to include new dormers in roof at the front of the property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of the development has been altered on the Council decision notice. I have no evidence that the change was agreed and the original description adequately describes the proposals. I have determined the appeal on this basis.
3. I noted on my site visit, that works, including a single large flat roofed dormer window on the front roof slope had commenced. The dormer window proposed under this appeal varies from that which has been partially constructed which the evidence indicates is subject to separate action.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are:
 - i. the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing property and area with particular regard to the two front dormer windows and car parking and associated surfacing;
 - ii. whether the proposal would provide suitable living conditions for future occupiers with particular regard to levels of floorspace, natural light and access arrangements; and
 - iii. the effect of the proposal on the supply of family housing.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The property is located on Birch Polygon, Rusholme, Central Manchester. There are a number of late 19th Century properties along with more modern residential development. Whilst having been subject to alterations over time, the older

properties within the street, including No.10, exhibit a considerable amount of character. The dormer windows proposed in relation to the appeal scheme would be excessively wide and set in only slightly from eaves level. This would result in them having a large and overly bulky appearance which would dominate the front roof slope of the property to the detriment of the appearance of the property and the character of the area.

6. Whilst my attention has been drawn to existing box style dormers in the street, they appear to be of some age and limited details have been supplied. I am unaware of the circumstances under which these may have been deemed acceptable and their presence does not justify the dormer windows proposed.
7. The appeal scheme would therefore fail to accord with Policies SP1 and DM1 of Manchester's Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (2012) (CS) which require amongst other things that development enhances or creates character and is appropriate in scale, form and massing.
8. It is proposed to locate 4 parking spaces to the rear of the property which would be accessed via a driveway to the side. Although the access along the driveway would not be of excessive width, nothing within the evidence suggests that the resultant gap would restrict the spaces from being accessed. Although the evidence indicates that significant tree and shrub clearance has occurred, the spaces would be tucked to the rear so that they would not have any significant impact on the character of the neighbourhood and were I minded to allow the appeal it would be possible to require a landscaping scheme via condition. Therefore, with regard to this particular matter, the proposal would not conflict with Policies SP1 or DM1 of the CS nor saved Policy DC 5.1 of The Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester (UDP) (1995) which amongst other things seek to limit the effects of flat conversions on the character of neighbourhoods.

Living conditions

9. The proposal relates to the provision of four 2-bedroom flats. The evidence indicates that these would be 4 person flats. The guidance¹ notes that the quality of space and light available within a property can have a profound impact on a resident's experience and suggests that this type of dwelling should have a floorspace of 70m². This is a minimum, which developers are encouraged to exceed. Three of the four flats would have a floorspace well below this level. The only flat which would meet these requirements would be that in the basement. However, this would likely be an extremely dark and gloomy space as in the main it would only be served by a limited number of slender windows at high level. Its entrance would be set to the rear of the building in a secluded position. This would not enhance either the street environment or the experience of residents.
10. I therefore conclude on this issue that the appeal proposal would result in cramped accommodation partly lacking in natural light which would not be the high-quality housing that is sought. Consequently, the flats would fail to provide suitable living conditions for future occupiers.
11. The appeal proposal would therefore be contrary to Policies SP1, H1 and DM1 of the CS which amongst other things require well designed development which would make a positive contribution to the health, safety and wellbeing of residents, Policy DC5 of the UDP where it requires regard to be had to the standard of accommodation for future occupiers in relation to flat conversions as well as the guidance and the SPD² which have similar aims.

¹ Manchester Residential Quality Guidance 2017

² Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Planning Guidance 2007

Family housing

12. Whilst the evidence and my observations on site indicated that flats and apartments are common within the locality, so too are family sized dwellings. Although the property appears to have been subject to a period of dis-use the evidence suggests that it was in use as a single dwelling until it was vacated. The proposal would result in the loss of a larger family sized dwellinghouse.
13. The Council's policies encourage a mixed and diverse community through retaining or attracting economically active households to central Manchester, with an emphasis on increasing the provision of family housing. As a result of my above findings on living conditions, the particular configuration of the appeal proposal does not readily lend itself to being family accommodation, whereas the existing dwelling, while large in size, could. Accordingly, the proposal would result in the loss of a unit that could be suitable for family accommodation.
14. The appellant suggests that this is not an area where families requiring such a dwelling would want to live and that there is subsequently very little demand for a larger family dwelling in this location. However, very limited evidence has been supplied to justify this position and I can only therefore afford this matter limited weight.
15. I conclude on this issue that the proposal would have a significant adverse effect on the range of housing provision, with particular regard to family accommodation. Therefore, the proposal would conflict with policies SP1, H1, H5 and DM1 of the CS and guidance within the SPD which has similar aims.

Other Matters

16. I note that the development would provide off street parking, cycle and bin storage, although these are neutral factors. The evidence indicates that the property was in extremely poor condition prior to being taken on by the current owner. While the renovation of the property as a result of this proposal would have clear benefits, these would not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified. While concern has been raised in relation to communication with the Council, little information has been supplied and I afford this matter limited weight.

Conclusion

17. Taking all matters into account, the appeal should be dismissed.

T J Burnham

INSPECTOR