



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 October 2020

by A Caines BSc(Hons) MSc TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 October 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/C4235/D/20/3256534

29 Priestnall Road, Heaton Mersey, Stockport SK4 3HW

- 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 & Mrs Peter & Nancy Bowler against the decision of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref DC/076156, dated 27 February 2020, was refused by notice dated 30 April 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as demolition of existing sectional garage and construction of "Coach-House" with "Hayloft" studio including landscaping etcetera.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Mauldeth Road Conservation Area (MRCA).

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies within the MRCA, which from the information before me and my own observations, derives its significance from the spatial and architectural quality of C19 and early C20 residential development based on the low density occupation of large houses set within spacious gardens with mature trees and hedges along the boundaries.
4. 29 Priestnall Road contributes positively to this character being one of five matching pairs of early C20 semi-detached houses and is located on a large corner plot. Its rear garden provides separation to the housing to the south on Sunnyfield Road, which lies outside the MRCA. The separation also provides a pleasing sense of openness in the otherwise closely-developed linear street pattern of Sunnyfield Road.
5. There is currently a flat roof single garage at the bottom of the garden. It is not of any historic or design merit, but due to its small size and set back from Sunnyfield Road, it is not prominent in the street scene and appears clearly ancillary in scale and function to the dwelling, such that it does not compromise the spatial character of this corner plot. In contrast, the proposed replacement building would be considerably taller and of greater width and mass than the existing. Although it would be similarly set back from the road, its height, width and depth would be apparent from the street and neighbouring properties. The appreciable scale of the development would be markedly greater than the

existing garage and thus, would reduce the sense of openness which currently exists at the site.

6. Furthermore, the large roof would be disproportionate resulting in a building with an ungainly top-heavy appearance. This would be exacerbated at the front by the uncharacteristic large double doors at first floor level. The ridge height would also be notably above the eaves of the surrounding houses, such that it would not appear subordinate. The proposal would therefore result in an overdominant addition to the appeal site, which would not sit comfortably in relation to the main house, neighbouring house to the south and the streetscene. Whilst additional landscaping may, in time, soften the effects of the proposal in the streetscene, the requirement for development proposals to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the MRCA applies with equal force whether or not the proposal is prominent in public view, so this would not overcome the harm identified.
7. In reasoning the above, I have noted the appellant's references to the "coach house" concept on which the proposal is based. However, irrespective of whether the concept is appropriate in this particular context, I have found that the proposal would, through its overall scale and design, be a harmful addition to the appeal site and its surroundings. I have also taken into account the historic "motor house" example in Mauldeth Road that I was referred to, but unlike the appeal scheme, it is read as a subordinate feature to the much larger and grander C19 house it sits closely alongside so is not justification for the proposal. In any event, I have determined this appeal on its own merits.
8. For all these reasons, I conclude that the development would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the MRCA. The scheme would provide home working space for the appellant during the current pandemic, and future proof the property should home working become a requirement rather than a preference. Minor environmental benefits may arise from reducing the need to travel to work. Nonetheless, heritage assets are irreplaceable and great weight should be given to their conservation. Therefore, as set out in paragraph 196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework), there are no public benefits that outweigh the less than substantial harm that would occur in this case.
9. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policies SIE-1 and SIE-3 of the Stockport Core Strategy DPD 2011 which require, amongst other considerations, that development is well designed and should preserve or enhance the historic environment. Furthermore it conflicts with saved Policy HC1.3 of the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review 2006 (UDP) regarding development in conservation areas; and the guidance on detached buildings contained within the Council's 'Extensions and Alterations to Dwellings' Supplementary Planning Document 2011, which requires garages to appear clearly subordinate in relation to the main house. The Council has also cited UDP Policy CDH1.8 in the refusal reasons, but as it relates to house extensions it is not directly relevant to the appeal scheme.

Other Matters

10. I note that the appellants would be willing to consider amendments to the main elevation and have provided a drawing to this effect in the statement. However, it is not the purpose of the appeal process to evolve a scheme or

engage in the consideration of alternatives¹. I have therefore determined this appeal on the plans that were before the Council when it made its decision.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given, I conclude that the proposal would be contrary to the relevant identified policies of the development plan, and the Framework, and therefore the appeal should be dismissed.

A Caines

INSPECTOR

¹ Having regard to Annex M of the Procedural Guide Appeals – England (2020).