



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 8 June 2021

by K Savage BA(Hons) MPlan MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/D/21/3269229

10 Richmond Road, Altrincham WA14 4DU

- 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 Sarah Ofonagoro against the decision of Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 102976/HHA/20, dated 22 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 15 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is erection of single storey side/rear extension and Velux window in loft.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. I have used the description of development given on the appeal form as this more fully describes the proposal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed extension on i) the character and appearance of the Old Market Place Conservation Area (the OMPCA), and ii) the living conditions of neighbouring occupants, in particular with respect to outlook and sense of enclosure.

Reasons

Conservation Area

4. The OMPCA is centred on Old Market Place in the centre of Altrincham and covers much of the historic commercial core of the town, with a surviving medieval layout, variety of historic architecture, juxtaposition of civic, commercial and residential uses, and history of markets and public gatherings. These factors evoke its long history of development as a market town and together contribute to its heritage significance.
5. The Conservation Area Appraisal (October 2014) (the CAA) sets out that the appeal site lies within Character Zone F, one of several extensions to the OMPCA in 2014. This is a wholly residential area with numerous properties that have retained a high level of architectural and historic character including 19th and 20th century Victorian and Edwardian residences along Richmond Road and Townfield Road. This area, including the appeal dwelling, contributes to the significance of the OMPCA in so far as it is evidence of the expansion of the town during these periods, with consistent and well-maintained form, layouts and architectural features.

6. The CAA refers to the private gardens of dwellings on Richmond Road which provide open space, but which are concealed from public view from Church Street at the rear by boundary treatments and an elevational change, though I saw the rear elevations are visible from the adjoining gardens and upper floor windows. Though not in clear public view, the CAA states that back elevations, and the integrity of buildings as historic structures, can be important to the character of a conservation area.
7. The dwellings on Richmond Road are consistent semi-detached properties with deep, shared two storey rear outriggers. The proposal seeks a ground floor extension which would wrap around the side and rear of the outrigger. I am aware that planning permission was granted in December 2020 for separate rear and side extensions to the dwelling¹. In essence, the proposal seeks to infill the space between these two extensions. I have had regard to this permission as a significant fall-back position for the appellant.
8. Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy (January 2012) (the CS) requires that development is appropriate to its context, and enhances the street scene or character of the area by appropriately addressing factors including scale, height, massing and layout.
9. The Conservation Area Management Plan (SPD5.3a, March 2016) sets out a number of policies. Most relevant is Policy 47, which states that '*single storey extensions may be acceptable subject to proposed size, scale, design and materials. Any proposed extensions should be high-quality in design and materials and in-keeping with the character of the property and surrounding historic rear elevations.*'
10. The historic pattern of development to the rear is well-maintained to the upper levels, with the first floor of the outriggers and the rooflines largely unaltered. These elements are visible from the public realm on Church Street and contribute positively to the street scene. The ground floors have been subject to various alterations, with a number of different extensions identified by the appellant. In particular, I note deep extensions to the rear of Nos 14 and 16, and a form of wraparound extension at No 18. No 30 also appears to have extensions similar in form to those already approved at the appeal site. Other extensions generally appear to be outbuildings of much smaller scale.
11. The permitted scheme comprises two modest lean-to additions, one to the rear of the outrigger and the other to the inner part of the side elevation. They are subservient in scale and the monopitch roofs match the main roof slopes in both directions. By matching the width of the existing outrigger, the approved rear extension helps to maintain the original scale and vertical emphasis of the rear elevation when viewed from the gardens at the rear. I note that the extensions at Nos 14 and 16, despite being deeper, also match the width of the original outrigger, as does that at No 30.
12. In contrast, the proposed extension would extend wider than the original outrigger, and would introduce an uncharacteristic dual pitched roof and gabled façade that would jar with the existing shape and pitch of the main roof slopes. The combined massing of the wraparound extension would also be significantly larger and more visually prominent than the two separate extensions. Its wider footprint and large door opening would also create a horizontal emphasis to the

¹ Council Ref 100465/HHA/20

rear elevation that would fail to reflect the proportions of the existing building. This would be exacerbated by the wraparound nature of the extension, which would envelop the lower part of outrigger. Together with the open plan internal layout which would be discernible through the large doors, the original shape of the building would no longer be discernible at the ground floor. I accept that the footprint and floor plan would also change under the approved scheme, but it would retain part of the original side elevation at ground floor level, which would enable the original shape of the building to still be read and understood.

13. I acknowledge that the example at No 18 includes a wraparound element. However, this is an isolated example which is unlike other extensions in size or form and is an exception to the prevailing pattern of development in the group. Accordingly, I do not regard it as a precedent and I have determined the proposal on its own merits.
14. Overall, the proposal, through its uncharacteristic wraparound design and gabled rear elevation, would not represent high quality design that respects the character and integrity of the property and surrounding historic rear elevations. Therefore, I conclude that the proposed scheme would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the OMPCA. This would conflict with the aforementioned requirements of Policy L7 of the CS, and with the guidance of the CAA and Management Plan for the OMPCA. I find that Policy L7 is generally consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) in seeking high quality design, and I afford it significant weight.
15. The Council's reason for refusal also refers to Policy R1 of the CS which relates to protection of the historic environment. The Council acknowledges that this policy is out-of-date as it does not reflect the balancing exercises set out in the Framework with respect to development affecting designated heritage assets. Given the harm identified, the proposal would conflict with this policy, but this conflict would attract only limited weight.

Living Conditions

16. The proposal would partially infill the existing space to the side of No 10. At present, there is some 3 metres between the side wall and the boundary fence, with a corresponding distance to from the fence to the windows in the side elevation of No 8. The extension would bring the side boundary some 1.7 metres closer to No 8 and would extend for a depth of 8.4 metres.
17. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document for house extensions (SPD4) (Feb 2012) sets out that extensions can project 3 metres plus the distance to the common boundary, a total of 4.3 metres in this case. At 8.4 metres, the proposal would be well in excess of this. However, apart from the final 1.1 metres, the extension would sit within and below the massing of the existing dwelling, at a distance of 4.3 metres to the side facing windows. I note that the extension lies to the north of these windows and, therefore, there would be no discernible loss of sunlight or increased overshadowing to No 8.
18. I also saw these windows to be large in size and set quite high above the external ground level. Consequently, the extension would not stand significantly higher than the windows, which would reduce the sense of the development overbearing on the neighbour. The retained separation distance, and lean-to roof proposed to the extension, would also limit the sense of enclosure felt by neighbouring occupants. The increased depth would create a

narrower outlook from neighbouring windows towards the rear gardens, but it would not be significantly diminished and based on my observations on site, it would not lead to a harmful loss of outlook for neighbouring occupants.

19. Therefore, whilst not in compliance with the guidance of SPD4, I conclude that the proposed extension would not significantly harm the living conditions of neighbouring residents. Therefore, I find no conflict with Policy L7 which requires that development does not prejudice the amenity of the future occupiers of the development and/or occupants of adjacent properties by reason of overbearing, overshadowing, overlooking, visual intrusion, noise and/or disturbance, odour or in any other way.

Planning Balance

20. The harm identified to the significance of the OMPCA would be less than substantial, in the language of the Framework. Paragraph 196 advises that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
21. I have already acknowledged the appellant's fall-back position. For the reasons set out, the fall-back scheme would not have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the OMPCA in the manner that the appeal scheme would. Consequently, the fall-back scheme would not justify allowing the appeal proposal and I afford this consideration limited weight.
22. Otherwise, there would be no more than limited private benefits to the appellant in terms of additional living space, and some modest, temporary economic benefits for local construction firms. I consider these benefits, taken together, would be insufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the heritage significance of the OMPCA.
23. Notwithstanding that I have found certain policies of the CS to be out of date, the 'tilted balance' of Paragraph 11 of the Framework is not engaged where the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed. Designated heritage assets are one such area or asset, as made clear by Footnote 6. In view of the harm to the significance of the OMPCA identified, Paragraph 11 does not indicate a presumption in favour of development, but rather points to the refusal of permission.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons set out, the proposal would conflict with the development plan, taken as a whole. This conflict is not outweighed by the other material considerations in this case. Therefore, for the reasons given, and taking all relevant matters into consideration, the appeal should be dismissed.

K Savage

INSPECTOR