



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 27 July 2021

by R Morgan BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/D/21/3273795

Greenwalk Cottage, Green Walk, Bowdon, ALTRINCHAM, WA14 2SL

- 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 Richard Williams against the decision of Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 102760/HHA/20, dated 30 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 3 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is a two-storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. I have used the description of development used on the decision notice and appeal form, which reflects the revised proposal on which the Council made its decision.
3. Since the Council made its decision, a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been published. The main parties have been invited to comment on any implications which the changes may have for their case, but no issues have been raised. I am satisfied that the changes in the revised document, including the increased emphasis on design, do not prejudice either party's case, and have assessed the appeal on the basis of the 2021 version of the Framework.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the proposal would conserve or enhance the character or appearance of the host building and the Bowdon Conservation Area.

Reasons

5. Greenwalk Cottage is located within the Bowdon Conservation Area (CA), which is an attractive suburb of Altrincham with a wide variety of building styles and architecture, reflecting the age of properties and the development of the area over a long time period. Despite these differences, the high quality of the buildings and their architectural integrity are defining characteristics of the area. Mature trees in large gardens, and greenery in open spaces and recreation areas, contribute to a verdant and spacious feel to the CA.

6. The appeal site is located just within the area identified within the Conservation Area Appraisal (CAA) as Character Zone B – the Historic Core. This part of the CA is predominately residential and is characterised by vernacular style brick cottages with relatively small plot sizes, and modest sized early Victorian houses. This contrasts with other parts of the CA, such as The Firs (Character Zone D), the boundary of which is adjacent to the appeal site, which contains many examples of grand, semi-detached houses and villas set within large, landscaped plots.
7. Greenwalk Cottage is a modest, two-storey property set well back from Green Walk behind a large and attractive front garden with mature planting. The original cottage is of a simple vernacular style, with timber windows with stone cills, a slate roof with chimneys, and white render on the main elevations.
8. The property is identified within the CAA as dating to the period 1838-1877, and as being typical of this part of the CA in age, style, materials and form, reflecting the traditional functional character of the area, and illustrating the development of Green Walk. The appeal property does not form a prominent feature within the streetscene, but owing to its surviving original form and features, Greenwalk Cottage nonetheless contributes positively to the character of the CA. The CAA identifies the building as a 'positive contributor' to the CA, and as such it is considered to be a non-designated heritage asset.
9. The Conservation Area Management Plan notes that the typical style of residential buildings in the historic core would not comfortably accommodate substantial extension. In the case of the appeal property, there have already been extensions to the side and rear, in addition to a detached garage at the side of the house, but the siting and scale of the existing extensions means that they are not prominent from the front, and the original, simple form of the building remains clearly apparent.
10. However, two-storey side extension now proposed would have the effect of elongating the building by around a third. Although just under half of the width of the original house, the proposal would significantly alter the composition and form of the cottage. By continuing the existing building lines, with no set back or drop in ridge height, it would be difficult to differentiate the extension from the original part of the house. As a result, the modest scale and form of the historic building would no longer be apparent, and due to its siting, the proposed extension would become the visible part of the house when viewed from the street. The effect would be to would undermine the appreciation of the historic dwelling from the public domain, and to erode the qualities for which the building is identified as a 'positive contributor' to the CA.
11. The cottage is offset to the side of the plot, so when viewed from the front, the stepped side gable with its glazed porch is a prominent feature, which contributes positively to the character of the property. Although two of the window openings would be replicated on the proposed extension, the new side gable would a large and predominately featureless wall, causing harm to the character of the building.
12. The proposed extension would reflect the existing building through the use of matching materials and the sympathetic design and position of windows, and the reinstatement of a missing chimney would be a benefit of the scheme. However, the proposed relocation of the existing right hand side chimneys to the new side gable would erode the sense of the scale and form of the original

- building, causing further harm to the character of the building. Although moving the chimney stacks would retain the symmetry of the building, the alteration would cause a link between the external appearance of the house and the original internal layout to be lost.
13. Whilst the chimneys may be capable of being altered or removed under permitted development rights, their proposed relocation is part of a scheme which requires planning permission. There is nothing to suggest that the chimneys would be likely to be altered in the absence of the proposed extension, so I give limited weight to this suggested fall-back position.
 14. The proposed extension would reduce the space between the house and garage, particularly at first floor level, and would restrict views through to the property to the rear. However, the surrounding buildings, including the adjacent villas, already provide a sense of enclosure within this rear part of the site; the sense of spaciousness around the dwelling being largely provided by the front garden. The proposal would not affect the garden and would not erode the spacious quality of the site to any harmful degree.
 15. The appeal property is close to the Grade II* listed St Mary's Church, but substantial buildings at the top of Church Brow and Green Walk screen the appeal property from the church, so the proposal would not cause harm to the setting of the listed building. The appeal property is not readily visible from Church Brow, and its location to the rear of the listed cottages fronting onto that street means that the proposal would not affect the setting of those buildings either.
 16. Despite the lack of harm to the setting of nearby listed buildings, I have found that the scale, form and siting of the proposed extension would harm the character of the appeal property, and would erode the particular qualities for which it has been identified as a positive contributor. As such, the proposal would cause harm to both the cottage, which is identified as a non-designated heritage asset, and to the wider CA. With regard to paragraph 202 of the Framework, the harm to the CA would be less than substantial. However, Framework paragraph 199 requires that great weight should be given to an asset's conservation, irrespective of the level of harm.
 17. The Framework requires that harm to the CA should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Whilst the proposed re-instatement of a missing chimney would be a benefit of the scheme, this would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified.
 18. I conclude that the proposal would fail to conserve or enhance the character or appearance of the host building and the Bowdon Conservation Area. It would be contrary to Policy L7 of the Trafford Local Plan 2012, which amongst other considerations requires that development must enhance the character of the area by appropriately addressing scale, massing and elevation treatment. It is also contrary to Policy R1, which whilst not fully reflecting guidance in the Framework, is consistent in its requirement that developers must demonstrate how proposals will preserve or enhance the Conservation Area.
 19. The proposal also fails to accord with Policy 42 of the Bowden Conservation Area Management Plan 2016, which requires that extensions to an existing historic building should respect its established features, form, proportions and materials. There is further conflict with the requirements for side extensions

contained in section 3.1 of Supplementary Planning Document 4, and with the guidance on conserving and enhancing the historic environment within Section 16 of the Framework.

Other Matters

20. The appellant has drawn my attention to other planning applications which have been approved nearby, but they are concerned with very different buildings whose contribution to the CA is not the same as that of the appeal building. The examples provided do not justify allowing the proposed development, which would cause harm for the reasons identified.

Conclusion

21. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and there are no considerations which outweigh this finding. For the reasons set out above, the appeal is dismissed.

R Morgan

INSPECTOR