



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 9 November 2021

by F Rafiq BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 December 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/R0660/W/21/3279465

26 Manchester Road, Wilmslow SK9 1BG

- 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 C Mather (Mather & Co Ltd) against the decision of Cheshire East Council.
 - The application Ref 20/3052M, dated 13 July 2020, was refused by notice dated 28 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as '(1) Demolition of existing rear outrigger; (2) Part 3 storey, part single storey rear extension with roofspace alterations in connection with change of use for office purposes; (3) Alterations to front elevation comprising replacement shopfront, new entrance feature, replacement windows; (4) Change of use of former retail premises to be used for offices (Use Class B1(a))'.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. A revised National Planning Policy Framework was published in July 2021 (the Framework). Whilst the paragraph numbers have changed in regard to those relevant to the main issue of this case, the substance thereof remains the same as the 2019 iteration. I have had regard to the revised Framework in this decision.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host building and the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located on Manchester Road, a busy road which rises to the south further towards the centre of Wilmslow. The appeal property is a two storey traditional building with accommodation in the roof space that forms part of a short terrace row. It is adjacent to a larger, more modern three storey apartment block and there are a mix of two and three storey buildings in the vicinity of the site. Despite this variance, buildings are set back a short distance from the highway with limited gaps between them. There are also similarities in the styles and massing amongst some of the terraces and semi-detached properties in the area. This provides a strong street frontage and a degree of cohesiveness to the character of the area.

5. The proposal includes an extension to the rear of the property, following the demolition of the existing single and two storey rear outrigger elements. The extension would partly be a three-storey structure which would extend across most of the width of the existing building. Although it would reduce down to a single storey, it would nevertheless be substantially larger than the rear outriggers and extensions currently seen on the appeal site and on the remainder of the terrace.
6. The flat roof of the third storey element would appear as a bulky addition that would sit uncomfortably on the pitched roof form of the existing building. The northern elevation would also feature an expanse of brickwork with limited fenestration. I note the modern design of the proposal is intended to contrast with the existing building, including a colour contrast on the materials. In this instance, the combination of the scale of the extension and its expansive largely blank side elevation would introduce an unduly dominant and incongruous addition that would not complement the traditional form of the appeal building.
7. I recognise that the extension is proposed to the rear of the site and that there would not be views of it from the front along Manchester Road nor from within the Conservation Area whose boundary is along the main road. However, the extension, given the extent of its rearward projection and the open aspect towards it from Ladyfield Street across a hardstanding area to the rear of the appeal terrace, would result in it being clearly visible from public vantage points.
8. I was able to see that in such views from Ladyfield Street, the rear extension would be seen against the larger apartment block as well as modern materials on other buildings. However, in contrast to the larger apartment building, the terrace that the appeal site forms part of has a distinct appearance in terms of smaller scale, differing materials and particular form consisting of subservient extensions to the rear of the main section of the respective building. The part three storey appeal proposal would almost entirely obscure the rear of the two-storey existing building and appear as a dominant, incongruous addition.
9. Reference has been made to the modern, flat roof extension on the corner of this terrace. Whilst it is in a more prominent location when viewed from Ladyfield Street, it is also of a more diminutive scale than the appeal proposal. As a single storey structure with a limited footprint, it does not compromise the traditional form of the two-storey appeal terrace. In any event, and given its size, neither this nearby extension, nor the visual impact of the apartment block would outweigh the harm the scale and bulky form of the extension would have on the host building and the area.
10. I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the host building and the area. As such, it would conflict with Policies SD 2 and SE 1 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, which seek, amongst other matters, development proposals that contribute positively to their surroundings. It would also be contrary to Paragraph 130 of the Framework, which seeks to ensure that development is sympathetic to local character.

Other Matters

11. The proposal would support a local, established company that is seeking to expand whilst retaining a local presence in the town. It would result in a considerable investment in bringing a vacant property back into use, as well as potential job creation and generating revenue to local businesses and the Council. I also note the visual improvement that would be made to the Manchester Road frontage and the use of energy efficiency and other measures to reduce carbon emissions. The proposal would also make effective use of previously developed land and reference has been made to support from local and national policy on these benefits. I attach some weight to these matters but, even when taken together, they would be insufficient against the substantial weight I attach to the harm I have found in relation to the main issue and the conflict with the development plan.
12. The proposal would be acceptable in terms of land use, in relation to flood risk, and in respect of protected species. The appeal site is also well located in relation to public transport facilities, shops and services and local parks. The development would also have no harmful impact on heritage assets nor the living conditions of neighbouring residential occupiers. The proposal would further be compliant with Building Regulations and other relevant British Standards, would not result in the loss of trees or other vegetation and be acceptable on waste storage and removal. These are however neutral considerations and not matters which weigh in favour of the development.
13. Reference has also been made to other extensions, including those on listed buildings and where sites are within the Conservation Area. I was able to see these referenced sites at the time of my visit. Those extensions on properties on the opposite side of Manchester Road, although large, broadly reflected the traditional appearance of the host buildings, including at roof level where they left the form of the main roof visible. More immediately, to the rear of other properties on the appeal terrace, the extensions are more moderate single and two storey additions which leave the rear main roof of the terrace unobstructed. Each case must be determined on its own individual merits and/or impacts, having regard to the particular circumstances involved. As such, parallels are not easily drawn with the referenced extensions nor with the approved four storey infill development and I can confirm that I have determined this appeal on its own merits.
14. The appeal application was amended during consideration of the development by the Council including reduction in the scale of the ground floor extension. My attention has also been drawn to the various design options that were considered in developing the appeal proposal as well as a pitched roof option on the extension sought. Other matters relating to the Council's assessment of the application have also been raised, including errors, matters of judgement in relation to the Conservation Area and consideration of all relevant matters. I am however tasked with determining the appeal on its planning merits and can confirm that I have considered it accordingly, having regard to the evidence before me. Administrative matters such as these should be taken up with the Council.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework, and all other relevant material considerations, the appeal is dismissed.

F Rafiq

INSPECTOR