
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 31 May 2022

by S Ashworth BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 6 June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/D/22/3296355

321 Stockport Road, Timperley, Altrincham WA15 7UE

- 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 Jane Carroll against the decision of Trafford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 105817/HHA/21, dated 4 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2022.
 - The development proposed is construction of two storey garage block. Office space at first floor and garage at ground floor.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area

Reasons

3. 321 Stockport Road, is a mid-terrace dwelling with a long, narrow rear garden which backs onto Grove Lane. Stockport Road itself is a main route through the settlement and has a dense and busy urban character. The character of this part of Grove Lane is considerably quieter. The lane itself is narrow with a footpath to one side only and parking restrictions to both sides. The rear of properties fronting Stockport Road are visible but are set back from the lane separated from it by garden and parking areas, small scale garages and domestic outbuildings, fences and other boundary treatments. Within that context is No 152 Stockport Road, a detached dwelling which faces Grove Lane but which is set well back from it and, at the time of my visit, a partially constructed building at the rear of No 317. Opposite the site is a large open area of green space which contributes to the quieter open character of the immediate area.
4. The proposal is to construct a two storey, flat roofed building to accommodate parking space for a van with office space above, to be used in connection with the dwelling. The building would be faced in a mix of red brick, render and timber cladding and would have a painted steel shutter door to the front and aluminium framed glazed windows to both the front and rear at first floor level. Parking space for one vehicle would be maintained at the front of the building.

5. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document 4 A Guide to Designing House Extensions and Alterations indicates that careful consideration needs to be given to garages that are visible in the street scene. Garages, including proposals for accommodation above garages, that are over-dominant or uncharacteristically prominent in the street scene by reason of their size or location will not be considered acceptable. Whilst the garage in this case would not be located immediately adjacent to the dwelling it would be visible within the public realm and I have no reason to consider the advice in the SPD does not apply to it.
6. Land levels between Stockport Road and Grove Lane decrease such that the height of the building would appear less from the rear than it would from the front. Nevertheless at 5.23m in height and with a depth of over 6m it would be a substantial building, significantly larger than small scale traditional domestic outbuildings in the area. Fences and vegetation, some of which appear taller than a standard 2m fence due to the raised ground levels, would obscure the bottom part of the building on approach along Grove Lane from the east. Nevertheless, the building would still be significantly taller than those fences and, being set forward of them and only 3.4m back from the carriageway at its nearest point, would be highly prominent in the street scene.
7. In addition to that, as a result of its flat roofed form coupled with its height, size and detailing including the steel door, the building would appear boxy and utilitarian. Moreover, whilst I recognise that its external materials have been chosen, in part, to reflect the brick of the dwellings, they would not in themselves alleviate its dominating appearance in the street scene.
8. I note that a two-storey dwelling has been permitted in close proximity to the site at the rear of No 317¹. However, it appears from the evidence before me that this building would have a different form and appearance to the appeal building and is not therefore directly comparable. Furthermore, from what I have read, the need at the time to boost housing supply in the area weighed significantly in favour of the Council's decision to permit it. A similar benefit does not exist in this case.
9. Consequently, for the reasons set out, the proposal would have a detrimental effect on the character and appearance of the area. As such it would be contrary to Policy L7.1 of the Trafford Core Strategy 2012 which states that in relation to matters of design, development must be appropriate in its context; enhance the street scene or character of the area by appropriately addressing, amongst other things, scale, height, massing and elevation treatment.

Other Matter

10. The planning application was refused for a single reason; that the proposed development would be detrimental to the visual amenity of the street scene and surrounding area more generally. However, it is clear from the Officer's report that the Council also had concerns about overlooking from a wide first floor window at the rear of the proposed building and the effect it would have on the privacy of neighbouring residents. Had the application been approvable

¹ Application Number: 98892/FUL/19

the Council considered the matter could have been dealt with by a planning condition requiring the rear window to be non-opening and fitted with obscure glazing. However, the appellant does not agree that such a condition is justified given that no objections to the proposal were raised by neighbours and on the basis that boundary hedges will provide screening.

11. The lack of objection to a planning application has no bearing on whether or not a proposal is acceptable in planning terms. Furthermore, even though I noted the presence of boundary hedges it seems to me that the windows, which would extend across almost the full width of the building, would enable outlook across neighbouring gardens, towards the rear of the properties and towards the windows in the side elevation of nearby flats. Without the condition suggested by the Council I am unconvinced that the development would not adversely affect the privacy of neighbouring residents. However, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, the matter is not in itself determinative.
12. I acknowledge that the proposal would provide enhanced working arrangements for the appellant. This is a private benefit of the scheme which carries limited weight and does not outweigh the harm to the area that I have identified.

Conclusion

13. Accordingly, for the reasons set out above the proposal would be contrary to the development plan. There are no material circumstances which indicate that the proposal should be allowed. Accordingly, taking all other matters raised into account, the appeal is dismissed.

S Ashworth

INSPECTOR