



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 October 2023

by Elaine Moulton BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 31 October 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/W/23/3316576

Old Trafford Bowling Club, Talbot Road, Old Trafford, Manchester M16 0PW

- 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 Old Trafford Bowling Club against the decision of Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 109497/FUL/22, dated 28 October 2022, was refused by notice dated 18 January 2023.
 - The development proposed is change of use (of part) of bowling green to car park.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Council made its decision on the basis that the Old Trafford Bowling Club Pavilion was a non-designated heritage asset. However, since that date, and following the lodging of the appeal, the building has been designated as a Grade II listed building. I have determined the appeal on that basis.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are;
 - whether the proposed development would preserve the setting of the Grade II listed building, the Old Trafford Bowling Club Pavilion;
 - the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - the effect of the proposed development on sports provision in the area.

Reasons

Setting of the listed building

4. Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act) requires decision makers in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural interest which it possesses. Paragraph 199 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

5. The statutory list description identifies the Old Trafford Bowling Club Pavilion (the Pavilion) as an amateur bowls club pavilion dating from 1877. It is a substantial two storey building in a Tudor Revival style with a brick and half-timbered exterior, and verandas on two storeys designed to observe play on the bowling green.
6. The special interest and significance of the listed building is derived, in part, from its associative and historic value as a relatively rare example of a pre-1914 sports pavilion. As the pinnacle of bespoke buildings for amateur bowls clubs, it epitomises the important role that bowls played in the sporting and recreation life in the north-west heartland of Crown Green bowls. It's special interest and significance is also derived from its aesthetic value arising from its attractive design.
7. The bowling green forms part of the setting of the Pavilion and has an important functional and historic connection to the listed building. Consequently, it positively contributes to the significance of the designated heritage asset.
8. As illustrated by the 1934 map provided during the appeal, the bowling green was square, and the Pavilion was sited in a central position on one side. However, since that date a corner of the bowling green near to the Pavilion has been hard surfaced to form part of a car park. Consequently, whilst the bowling green extends to the full width shown on the 1934 map, it is no longer square shaped, and the Pavilion now lies in an off central position relative to the nearest side. The reduction in the extent of the bowling green, the change to its shape, and the associated revision to the relationship between it and the Pavilion that have already taken place, detract from the setting of this listed building and reduces its significance.
9. The increase in the extent of hard standing to form a larger car park, as proposed, would further reduce the size of the bowling green and any impression of its original scale that remains would be lost. Furthermore, whilst the bowling green would have a more regular shape, the proposal would draw further attention to the Pavilion's off-set position as no part of the bowling green would extend beyond one side of the building. Accordingly, the appeal proposal would have an additional adverse impact on the setting of the listed building and would, thereby, lead to a loss of significance of the heritage asset, amounting to less than substantial harm.
10. Paragraph 202 of the Framework sets out that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of that proposal, including where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
11. The appellant indicates that an increase in the size of the existing car park will provide much needed additional revenue that will, economically, provide long term sustainability for Old Trafford Bowling Club (the Club) and for the future maintenance of the Pavilion. I acknowledge that income could be generated by renting out the spaces when not required for use in association with the bowling green and the Pavilion. However, no financial information has been provided as to the likely income that would be generated, or how this might be used to sustain the Club and maintain the Pavilion. As such, on the basis of what is before me, I am unable to assess how far the proposals might go

towards safeguarding the future of the Pavilion and the Club. I therefore give very little weight to this argument.

12. Consequently, in the absence of any other identified benefits, any public benefits of the proposal do not outweigh the less than substantial harm identified above.
13. In view of the above, I find that the proposed development would fail to preserve the setting of the Grade II listed building, the Old Trafford Bowling Club Pavilion. Therefore, the proposal does not accord with Policies L7 and R1 of the Trafford Local Plan Core Strategy (2012) (CS) and the Civic Quarter Area Action Plan (2023) (CQAAP) in so far as their collective aims of achieving well designed places and protecting the historic environment. In addition, it would not satisfy the requirements of Section 66(1) of the Act and Section 16 of the Framework which are also concerned with heritage assets.

Character and appearance

14. The appeal site is located to the rear of two public car parking areas that adjoin Talbot Road and which are enclosed by low boundary walls, mature tree planting and vegetation that limit the visibility into the site from the surrounding area. At the access point on Talbot Road and from within the public car parks, where the site is most visible to the public, views of the bowling green are obscured by a tall fence.
15. The proposal would increase the extent of hard surfacing when viewed from public vantage points, however, hard surfaces already feature in such views. In such a context, additional car parking as proposed would be in keeping with the prevailing character. The reduction in the extent of the bowling green would not be apparent as it would remain outside of public views behind a fence. Furthermore, no existing trees or vegetation would be lost to accommodate the proposals. Consequently, whilst no soft landscaping is proposed, the appeal scheme would not materially change or harm the green character of the street scene or the wider area.
16. For these reasons, the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, it would not conflict with CS Policy L7 and the CQAAP, which requires development to be appropriate in its context and seek to protect the local environment. Furthermore, it would not conflict with the design aspirations of chapter 12 of the Framework.

Sports Provision

17. CS Policy L7, amongst other things, seeks to address key areas of deficiency in quality and quantity of open space and indoor/outdoor leisure provision by the adoption of actions including the protection of existing outdoor sports facilities. This policy is consistent with the advice given in paragraph 99 of the Framework which says that existing open space, sports and recreation buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless 1 or more of 3 criteria are met.
18. The Trafford Playing Pitch Strategy and Action Plan (2017) (the Plan) indicates that there is a sufficient supply of outdoor bowling greens to accommodate current and future demand across Trafford. The Plan identifies that the Club provides a single pitch. It recommends that the pitch, the quality of which is

rated 'good', is sustained by ensuring that the surface quality is monitored and does not deteriorate with continued community use.

19. The area of the bowling green that would be lost to the proposed development is irregular in shape and would not affect the length of the pitch. It would therefore not result in a reduction in the number and frequency of games that could be played at the Club. Accordingly, in the absence of any substantive evidence to the contrary, I find that a deficiency in provision at the Club or in the wider area would not arise as a single pitch would be retained. It is therefore reasonable to consider that the area of the bowling green affected by the proposal is surplus to requirements.
20. I conclude that the proposed development would not have an unacceptable effect on sports provision in the area and would therefore accord with CS Policy R5 and paragraph 99 of the Framework which seek to protect required sports facilities.

Other Matters

21. The appellant has drawn my attention to appeal reference APP/R3650/W/21/3266933 which, in part, addressed whether a building should be considered to be a non-designated heritage asset. However, as the Pavilion is now a listed building, such a consideration is not relevant to this appeal.

Conclusion

22. I have found that the proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area or result in the unacceptable loss of sports provision. However, the scheme's benefits do not outweigh the harm that I have identified arising from its failure to preserve the setting of a Grade II listed building. The proposed development therefore conflicts with the development plan as well as national guidance and legislation and there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweighs the identified harm and associated development plan conflict.
23. I thus conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elaine Moulton

INSPECTOR