
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 March 2024

by Sarah Manchester BSc MSc PhD MEnvSc

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/N2345/W/23/3331121

2A Harewood Road, Preston, Lancashire PR1 6XH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Imtiaz Vali against the decision of Preston City Council.
 - The application Ref is 06/2023/0569.
 - The development proposed is erection of new 3 storey Class E unit including external disabled ramp and eating area following demolition of existing building.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters and Background

2. Planning permission (Ref: 06/2021/0975) was granted in 2021 for external alterations and extension with new shop front and new roller shutters. In January 2023, permission (Ref: 06/2022/1077) was granted for external alterations and extension with new shop front, new concealed roller shutters, new disabled ramp, installation of flue to roof and outside seating area. I understand that the later permission has been implemented but, while construction has commenced, the development has not been completed and the building is not in use. Nevertheless, it is a valid fallback position at this site.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

4. No 2A is an irregularly shaped, 2-storey, flat roof commercial property at the end of a residential terrace comprising 2-storey dwellings with simple pitched roofs. The appeal property occupies an awkward, truncated plot with a small open frontage, and its side and rear elevations abut the footway. It is well separated from the acutely angled junction of St George's Road and Harewood Road by a long tapering footway. The nearby 388 St George's Road is an imposing extended 2-storey detached building in use as a mosque, Deepdale Labour Club sits at the far end of Harewood Road, and there are ground floor commercial premises in the terrace on the opposite side of the road. Nevertheless, the primarily residential area is characterised by generally modest and traditional terraced housing, in brick and render with pitched and hipped roofs, and laid out on a regular street pattern.

5. The proposal would be predominantly 3-storey in height with a flat roof and an extensively glazed front elevation. The glazing would wrap around onto the narrow side elevation, where it would meet a tall brick wall. The brick finish would continue onto the ground floor rear elevation, above which the rear first and second floors would comprise a large 2-storey bay feature finished in white render together with a grey standing seam metal curtain wall which would continue onto the roof. The adjoining hip to gable roof conversion and parts of the 3-storey side elevation abutting the terrace would be finished in slate.
6. While the building would not be very much taller than the pitched ridge of the adjoining residential terrace, its 3-storey elevations would be considerably taller than the adjoining 2-storey eaves. The tall building would be markedly more bulky than the modest neighbouring dwellings with their simple pitched roofs. It would be conspicuous by virtue not only of its bulk but also its overtly contemporary design, including contrasting features and external materials. The tall box-like form would be out of keeping with the unexceptional scale, massing and appearance of the 2-storey terraced housing that provides the visual context for the proposal.
7. The glazed 3-storey commercial frontage would be out of keeping with the ground floor commercial frontages in the traditional 2-storey terraced properties on the opposite side of Harewood Road. These commercial premises are in any case widely separated from the appeal property. The vertical emphasis and scale of the glazed façades would be poorly-related to the domestic scale and horizontal emphasis of the fenestration in the adjoining terrace. The visual context would also include windows in No 388 and terraced properties to the south of St George's Road, but the traditional properties would not integrate the proposal into its surroundings.
8. The juxtaposition of the sloping top to the brick side elevation and the standing seam metal to the side and rear elevations might be reminiscent of a box dormer extension. However, the elevated 2-storey box bay and metal curtain wall would overhang the rear ground floor elevation, creating a visually obtrusive and top heavy feature. The proposal would be poorly related to nearby domestic dormer extensions, which are subservient to their 2-storey hosts, in materials and colours to harmonise with the local roofscape and facing back lanes and the rears of properties. Glimpsed, partial and oblique views of rear dormers are afforded in gaps between buildings and in passing, but they would not integrate the prominent and incongruous rear elevation of the proposal into the St George's Road street scene.
9. The varied external materials are already in use in the area. However, their contemporary juxtaposition would not harmonise with the surrounding built environment. Each of the contrasting front, side and rear elevations would be prominent in the street scene and poorly related to neighbouring buildings. The visually discordant proposal would disrupt the rhythm and uniformity of the street scenes and it would not contribute to a harmonious townscape.
10. The prominence and adverse visual impact of the proposal would be exacerbated by the frontage treatment including glass balustrades and protruding glass canopy finishing roughly in line with the neighbouring residential front boundary treatments. The glazed canopy would allow for outdoor activity during inclement weather and contribute to the vitality of the public realm. However, notwithstanding the commercial frontages on the

opposite side of Harewood Road, the appeal site is not in a local centre. The visually obtrusive frontage would not be in keeping with the relatively low-key and traditional residential character and appearance of the area.

11. The proposal has been designed to make an architectural statement and create a landmark feature. Undoubtedly, the building would be conspicuous in the street scene. However, the end-of-terrace commercial property would not be an important townscape building nor contribute positively to the legibility of the public realm. While St George's Road is a long straight road between the A6 and Skeffington Road, it does not appear to be a strategic route nor afford significant townscape views or vistas. Moreover, while the appeal site is prominently located near a road junction, St George's Road continues straight past it and the views from the direction of the A6 terminate with the tall chimney and mature tree canopies to the rear of Skeffington Road. The proposal would not therefore be a terminus to views and it would not enhance existing views and vistas, rather it would disrupt the long views in either direction along the otherwise relatively harmonious St George's Road.
12. By virtue of its height and scale, cluttered design and mixed materials, and its contemporary modular appearance, the proposal would not sit comfortably in its surroundings. Notwithstanding that the design takes cues from the surrounding townscape, including roof forms and materials, the proposal would be out of proportion and out of keeping with the surrounding built environment. Consequently, the proposal would be a discordant and incongruous feature that would not add to the overall quality of the area nor make a positive contribution to sense of place or local distinctiveness.
13. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policy 17 of the Central Lancashire Adopted Core Strategy Adopted July 2012 and Policies AD1(a) and EN9 of the Preston Local Plan 2012-2026 Site Allocations & Development Management Policies Adopted July 2015. These require, among other things, that the design and scale of development should be in keeping with the character and appearance of the area and that proposals should take opportunities to make a positive contribution to local distinctiveness through high quality design that responds to its context. It would also conflict with the design aims of the Preston Shopfront Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (December 2017), the National Design Guide and the National Planning Policy Framework including in relation to having a coherent identity that is visually attractive and relates well to its surrounding context.

Other Considerations

14. The previous planning permission is a valid fallback position at this site. It would be a 2-storey building with a flat roof finishing above the eaves line of the adjoining residential property. It would be finished in white render with slate and sandstone tile details and grey aluminium-framed openings. At ground floor level, it would have a door opening and an extensively glazed, wraparound shopfront including bifold doors. The Harewood Road elevation would feature the ground floor access, disabled ramp with handrails, external steps and external eating area but it would not be covered by a large, glazed canopy. While that development might be of little architectural merit, it would be a relatively modest building that would not dominate its surroundings. It would not be directly comparable to the appeal proposal and it would not result

in similar or greater harm to visual amenity. Neither it nor the poor condition of the appeal building provide a justification for the substantially large and visually obtrusive proposal.

15. I am aware of the petition of support from over 90 local residents. However, taking into account that there is already a planning permission that would provide similar benefits without the harm that I have found, the representations carry only limited weight in favour of the scheme.
16. My attention has been drawn to numerous buildings and developments elsewhere, including the Flatiron Building in New York, Christchurch in Durham, Rolls Crescent in Hulme, Deansgate Quay in Manchester, Gold Thread Works and 48 West Cliff in Preston. While these may illustrate successful urban design, including the treatment of corner locations and the juxtaposition of materials, none of these relates to a modest end of terrace property in a traditional residential urban setting. They are not demonstrably directly comparable to the proposal, appeal site or the surrounding context.
17. The nearby 388 St George's Road is a substantially large extended building, but it is a traditional detached 2-storey building with a hipped pitched roof. Its extensions are large, but nevertheless subservient to their host and they are set back from the street behind boundary walls. The traditional materials and sloping roof forms, albeit monopitch, relate well to the surrounding built environment. As such, the extensions to No 388 are not visually incongruous. No 388 is in any case widely separated from the appeal property and its coherent form does not provide a justification for the scheme.
18. The ISSA is similar to the proposal insofar as it has a flat roof, extensive glazing and it incorporates a range of contrasting external materials. However, it differs from the proposal by virtue of being a substantially large, detached building set in a large plot and in a very different surrounding context that includes the Deepdale Stadium. In contrast to the end of terrace appeal property, the large scale and design of the ISSA comfortably accommodates a range of materials and, although overtly contemporary, it is nevertheless harmonious and sympathetic to its surroundings. Irrespective of its materials and its glazing, the ISSA does not provide a visual context and it would not integrate the proposal into its surroundings.
19. I also note the varying heights of buildings along St Georges Road, particularly the lower 2-storey end of terrace dwellings with hipped roofs adjoining taller gable end properties. Nevertheless, they are traditional properties, finished in matching materials and they are a repeating feature of the street scene. The 3-storey end of terrace buildings on Garstang Road and Deepdale Road appear to be traditional buildings with architectural details and roofscapes in keeping with their surroundings. The 3-storey building on Tulketh Brow is at the end of a short terrace, but it appears to be a coherent design, with matching hipped roofscale with chimneys, in matching materials to neighbouring properties. Buildings of different designs, scales and heights in different contexts are not directly comparable to the proposal and do not weigh in its favour.
20. I note the excerpts from documents including By Design – Urban Design in the Planning System, Urban Design Compendium, By Design – Better Places to Live, and Buildings in Context. These set out that a different approach may be justified in prominent corner locations, including innovative design and the creation of landmark buildings. However, they note that design can contribute

to making urban fabric coherent or it can undermine it and every building is part of a greater whole. They emphasize the importance of place-making and context and that townscape character depends on individual buildings contributing to harmony, including by relating to the scale and form of neighbouring buildings. A building should only stand out from the background of buildings if it contributes positively to views and vistas as a landmark. These documents are in any case design guidance and they are not prescriptive.

21. The 3-storey height and form would not be demonstrably similar to dormer roof extensions that could be constructed to the rear of the neighbouring terrace under permitted development (PD) rights. The proposal would be taller than the adjoining roof and the elevated box bay feature and curtain wall would protrude out from the rear elevation. It would be conspicuously dissimilar and more bulky than a subservient dormer extension to a 2-storey dwelling. The residential neighbours' PD rights do not weigh in favour of the proposal. While a large flat roof dormer extension to the rear of the adjoining property might partly screen the box bay from views, there is little evidence that the neighbours intend to exercise their PD rights in this regard. Theoretical future development does not provide a justification for the proposal.
22. The appellant considers that the Council did not work proactively during the processing of the application, including that it did not advise him that the rear dormer feature should be subordinate to its host. Be that as it may, it is not a matter that weighs in favour of the proposal.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons set out above, I conclude that the proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations that would outweigh that conflict.
24. Therefore, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Sarah Manchester

INSPECTOR