
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 June 2024

by P Eggleton BSc(Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 June 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/D/24/3343460

13 Manchester Road, Altrincham, Trafford WA14 4RG

- 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 & Mrs Sedgewick against the decision of Trafford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 111981/HHA/23, dated 3 October 2023, was refused by notice dated 5 February 2024.
 - The development proposed is a rear dormer window.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a rear dormer window at 13 Manchester Road, Altrincham, Trafford in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 111981/HHA/23, dated 3 October 2023, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 10339A.
 - 3) The works hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the description of materials set out in the application form.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area; and the house which is a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

3. The property lies within the Sandiway Conservation Area. The Conservation Area Management Plan 2016 describes that the area is characterised by two prominent coaching inns on the main highway surrounded by the small scale domestic properties on the surrounding roads. The grand but somewhat rundown appearance of the public houses contrasts with the charming appearance of the cottages to the east and the high-quality villas to the west, set back in well planted gardens. The appeal property is part of two pairs of semi-detached houses that are described as being two storeys tall, with attic
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dormer windows. It goes on to advise that the houses face directly onto Manchester Road and retain their original front doors and most have original 2 and 3 pane sash windows.

4. The detailed description above is not entirely accurate but the appeal property does have the original fenestration details and materials and although side and rear alterations have been carried out, it is the best example of the four with regard to retention of its original character and materials. The four houses make a positive contribution to the conservation area. The properties to the north and to the rear lie outside the conservation area.
5. The proposal would result in a dormer window to the rear roof slope. It would be of a similar scale to the front facing dormer although it would extend to the eaves. The ornate eaves detailing of the front elevation is not present to the rear. Although the building materials would match those of the front elevation, the window detailing and materials would differ. Given the proportions and matching position of this dormer, it would sit unobtrusively within this rear roof slope. The more modern window detailing, rather than matching the small twin ornate windows to the front, would clearly distinguish it as a modern intervention, despite its matching overall form. It is evident that care has been taken with regard to the form, size, materials and detailing and I consider that it would represent high quality design within this context.
6. The rear roof slope is just visible in a narrow gap between the large two storey extension of the first house in Rutland Road which is outside the conservation area and the rear of the neighbouring semi-detached pair of properties. This approach to the conservation area is dominated by the more modern houses outside the conservation area. The concrete pebble dash garage associated with the northernmost of these semi-detached twin houses detracts from this approach. In any event, the change in form of the appeal property and the detailing of the proposal would be almost indiscernible.
7. There would be clearer views of the structure from the small park to the south, although these too would be restricted by trees and other vegetation within the park. The structure would also be screened from view to a large extent, by the rear outrigger. The roof of the dormer and the very top of the new window would however just be discernible. The attached property has a rear dormer with a flat roof that is at odds with the design and proportions of the property. This would remain the more prominent element in the view from the park. The rear of these properties, as would be expected, do not include the ornate detailing of the frontages and do not contribute to the significance of the wider conservation area to the same extent.
8. Given the high quality of the design of this proposal and its position to the rear of these properties, I do not consider that it would result in any harm to the significance of the conservation area. As it lies at the edge of the conservation area and would be experienced from both within an outside the area, I have considered its setting. Historic England's guidance *The Setting of Heritage Assets* Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3 (Second Edition) is clear that views of an asset will play an important part in the way in which we experience an asset in its setting, but it is also influenced by other environmental factors and by our understanding of the historic relationship between places. With regard to the proposed dormer, I am satisfied that it

- would not materially alter how the conservation area would be experienced and given its design and limited visibility, it would not harm its setting.
9. The council advise that these properties represent non-designated heritage assets. Alterations have been made to some of these houses which do detract from their character. This proposal would represent a high quality new intervention that would have a very limited impact on the original fabric. It would not alter the important detailing that contributes most to the architectural interest and form of these properties. It would not alter the main public appearance of the property which contributes most to the wider area. Although it has been demonstrated that unsympathetic alterations to the rear roofscape detract from the significance of this group of buildings as heritage assets, I consider that this well thought out intervention would complement the original form of this rear element of the property. It would provide a more satisfactory approach to achieving improved living accommodation. Given the existing circumstances, this proposal would not result in harm to the character or appearance of this group of buildings or the house itself.
 10. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 imposes a duty requiring that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas. I am satisfied that this proposal would preserve the character and appearance; and the setting of the conservation area. As there would be no harm and the proposal represents high quality design, there would be no conflict with the design or heritage requirements of policies L7 and R1 of the Trafford Local Plan: Core Strategy 2012; or policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan 2022 to 2039 (2024). Similarly, there would be no conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.
 11. The council's Supplementary Planning Document SPD4: A Guide for Designing House Extensions and Alterations, includes guidance with regard to dormer windows and roof alterations. This proposal would satisfy the requirement to be proportionate to the scale of the property and reflect the style and architectural character of the original house. The detailed guidance advises that dormers should match the style and proportions of the windows below and as far as possible, be vertically aligned with openings below; and the openings in dormer windows should be smaller than those in the original elevation otherwise they can appear top-heavy. It would not be possible to align this dormer with the windows below but it would not appear top heavy and has been designed to be of a size to match the front facing dormer. The hierarchy of window sizes, whilst important to the front elevation, is of lesser concern to the rear as the windows are not viewed together from any public vantage point. Generally, the proposal meets the overall design aspirations of the guidance.
 12. Reference has also been made to Sandiway Conservation Area Supplementary Planning Document SPD5.12a: Conservation Area Management Plan 2016. The high quality of this design would satisfy the requirements of policy 41 that development should be of a high-quality and in-keeping with the character of the surrounding historic rear elevations. I also find support from policy 44 which advises that new development should take inspiration from the established architectural styles. Policy 42 advises that loft conversions may be permitted only if conservation rooflights are used and/or are restricted to the rear elevations of properties. The wording of this is not entirely clear. If it was

intended to restrict all dormer windows, it seems likely that it would specify this more clearly. Whilst the proposal would be at odds with such an interpretation, it would not conflict with the aim of the policy which is to ensure new development is appropriate for its setting and is of high quality and innovative design.

13. I have had regard to the statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. Aside from some minor conflict with specific details of policies, overall, the proposal gains general support from the local and national policies. It would preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area; and it would not harm the significance of the non-designated heritage asset. As there are no other matters that weigh against the proposal, I allow the appeal.
14. I have imposed conditions relating to the commencement of development and the details of the approved plans for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning. The application form sets out that the materials would generally match but specifies the materials for the window frame. I have imposed a condition to require that these materials be used to ensure that the development would have a satisfactory appearance.

Peter Eggleton

INSPECTOR