



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 July 2024

by M Ollerenshaw BSc (Hons) MTPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/W/24/3341160

623 Stretford Road, Old Trafford M16 0QA

- 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 Sarfraz Roy against the decision of Trafford Metropolitan Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 111774/FUL/23.
 - The development proposed is change of use of office building (B1) to 4 no. residential apartments (C3) with store room in the basement and alterations to elevations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of development above is taken from the Council's decision notice. While differing from the one given on the application form, it reflects the reduced number of apartments proposed as part of the revised scheme.
3. The Council's first reason for refusal refers to a policy in the emerging Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document For Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford And Wigan 2022 to 2039 (PfE Plan). This document was adopted in March 2024 after the planning application had been refused. The main parties had the opportunity to comment on the implications of this for the appeal through their submissions and I have taken into account any comments received.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area, and whether it would provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupiers, with particular regard to privacy and outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is a three storey building with basement which is located within a local shopping parade on the southern side of Stretford Road opposite its junction with Chester Road. The building was previously used as an office but is now vacant. It fronts a small forecourt and access to the rear is obtained from Talbot Place. The surrounding area is of mixed character comprising residential properties and a variety of commercial premises, including takeaways, hair salons, offices, a bingo hall and a public house.

6. The front elevation of the building includes mirrored cladding and white render panels to the ground floor with three windows at first floor. The ground floor frontage of the building is not particularly attractive and there is an opportunity to improve its appearance as part of the conversion. In that context, Policy L7 of the Trafford Local Plan: Core Strategy 2012 (CS) requires, amongst other things, that development enhances the street scene or character of the area.
7. The proposals would create four self-contained flats with associated internal and external alterations to facilitate the change of use. To the front elevation the existing mirrored cladding would be replaced by two windows at ground floor level, with two small windows below serving the basement common room.
8. As there are other residential properties in the area, I do not share the Council's view that the new windows would give rise to a residential appearance contrary to the surrounding character. However, the new ground floor windows and those to the basement below would not vertically align with the first floor windows above and the window frame designs would also not match the existing. The basement windows would be very small openings with a horizontal emphasis and would fail to reflect the proportions and vertical design of the remainder of the front windows. This would result in a disjointed and incongruous appearance to the front elevation of the building.
9. I concur with the Council's view that the alterations and improvements to the rear of the site would be beneficial to its appearance. However, the alterations to the front do not represent good design and are unacceptable.
10. I therefore conclude that the proposal, rather than enhancing the character and appearance of the area, would detract from it. Thus, it would conflict with CS Policy L7 and the Council's SPD 'A Guide for Designing House Extensions and Alterations (2012). There would also be a conflict with the requirements for sustainable places which respect and acknowledge the character and identity of the locality, contained in PfE Plan Policy JP-P1. The proposal would also conflict with paragraphs 131 and 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) which seek similar aims.

Living conditions

11. The living area and kitchen for Flat 1 would be served by the two new ground floor windows to the front. These windows would provide good levels of light. However, as they would face directly onto the forecourt with the pavement and road just beyond, there would be no defensible space outside the windows.
12. During my site visit I observed a high level of footfall along the pavement due partly to the location within close proximity of several commercial premises on a main road close to a busy junction and an adjacent pedestrian crossing. There are high volumes of passing traffic on Stretford Road, including stationary traffic waiting at the adjacent traffic lights, and the forecourt directly outside the windows is used for parking by customers of the nearby commercial premises. Furthermore, the appeal property is flanked by takeaways on either side which may attract customers late at night. Taking these factors into account, I consider that privacy within the living area and kitchen to Flat 1 would be heavily compromised and inadequate.
13. While this might be addressed, for example, by means of blinds or curtains, this in turn would adversely affect the outlook from these rooms and potentially

result in an oppressive environment for future occupiers. These rooms would not be served by any other windows to compensate for this lack of outlook.

14. Flat 4 would be situated at second floor level within the roof space of the building. Two roof lights in the front roof slope would provide the only source of outlook for the living room and kitchen within this unit. However, the section drawing indicates that the roof lights are situated relatively low on the front roof plane, and they would therefore provide some outlook from the living room and kitchen which would be satisfactory.
15. There is the potential for noise nuisance to future occupiers of the site due to its proximity to the adjacent commercial premises. Had I been minded to allow the appeal, this matter could have been addressed by an appropriately worded condition requiring the implementation of the noise mitigation measures detailed within the submitted noise impact assessment.
16. I conclude that the proposal would fail to provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupiers of Flat 1, having regard to privacy and outlook. It would therefore conflict with CS Policy L7, where this states that development must not prejudice future occupiers' amenity, and with PfE Plan Policy JP-P1 and the Framework which require development to provide high levels of amenity.

Planning Balance

17. The Council confirms that the Housing Delivery Test results show Trafford delivered 65% of its housing requirement over the three years to March 2023. That is below the 75% requirement. Therefore, the tilted balance set out in paragraph 11 d) of the Framework is engaged.
18. The provision of four new residential units would make a contribution to addressing the shortfall in housing delivery in the borough and accords with the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of housing. Given the scale of the development, I attach moderate positive weight to the provision of the new apartments. The proposal would also reuse a vacant building and thereby provide improved security to it. Employment opportunities would be created during the development phase and future occupiers would contribute to the local economy. I attach limited weight to these benefits.
19. The proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and would not provide satisfactory accommodation for future residents. These matters weigh significantly against the proposal. In this case, the adverse impacts of the proposal significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

Conclusion

20. The proposal would not accord with the development plan and there are no other considerations that outweigh this finding. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal is unacceptable and the appeal is dismissed.

M Ollerenshaw

INSPECTOR