



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 December 2024

by Martin H Seddon BSc MPhil DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 January 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/D/24/3349655

27 The Firs, Bowdon, Trafford WA14 2TF

- 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 Ms M Gregg against the decision of Trafford Council.
 - The application Ref is 112787/HHA/24.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing conservatory and construction of replacement single storey extension, construction of canopy to front elevation and replacement of fascia to front bay window.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to demolition of existing conservatory and construction of replacement single storey extension and construction of canopy to front elevation, and planning permission is refused for demolition of existing conservatory and construction of replacement single storey extension and construction of canopy to front elevation.
2. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to replacement of fascia to front bay window and planning permission is granted for replacement of fascia to front bay window at 27 The Firs, Bowdon, Trafford WA14 2TF in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 112787/HHA/24, and the plans submitted with it so far as relevant to that part of the development hereby permitted and subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plan: 10340_P10 House Plans, Elevations and Sections as proposed, only so far as it relates to “decorative timber fascia to match existing detail on neighbouring property”.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the building and whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Bowdon Conservation Area.

Reasons

4. In accordance with the duty imposed by section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 I am required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area. Moreover, paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) states that when considering the impact of new development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
5. The Bowdon conservation area is based on the historic core of the settlement around St Mary's Parish Church, Bowdon Hall, and nearby cottages. It includes the surrounding residential areas, mostly developed after 1845. The special interest and significance of the conservation area derives from its strategic position providing views over the Bollin Valley and Cheshire Plain. The extension of its mediaeval core into the rural hinterland by a very prosperous community resulted in residential development of a high standard of architecture and design. The Firs is identified as one of five character zones in the Bowdon Conservation Area Appraisal. Most houses in the zone are substantial semi-detached properties with large gardens.
6. The appeal building of 27 The Firs is a 3 storey semi-detached Victorian dwelling located within a row of similar dwellings. The front elevation of the pair of dwellings appears to be relatively unaltered and through their age, design and use of materials they are an attractive feature in the street scene and conservation area.
7. The Council does not object to the proposed replacement fascia to the front bay window. I see no reason to disagree as it would be of an appropriate design and use of materials.
8. The Council has no objection to the demolition of the existing rear conservatory. However, with its mono-pitch roof it is consistent with the general character of most rear extensions to the neighbouring houses. The replacement extension would be larger and of a contemporary design with a significant amount of glazing and a flat roof with a lantern.
9. The properties at the Firs, including the appeal building, are not listed buildings, but have group value, and are identified in the conservation area appraisal as positive contributors to the conservation area for their retained form and architectural features.
10. The appellant has referred to the Historic England good practice notes and guidance which do not prevent modern extensions to heritage assets but highlight the factors that should be carefully considered to preserve the historical significance of the asset. The proposed replacement extension would be difficult to see from public views, being at the rear of the building and screened from neighbouring properties by boundary fencing, vegetation, and other rear extensions. Nevertheless, whilst the extension has been carefully designed, its simplicity in form, and appearance as an attached modern garden room, would not reinforce the heritage values of the building or enhance those values over time.

11. I find that the proposed replacement extension would be harmful to the character and appearance of the building. It would be contrary to policy 42 of the Bowdon Conservation Area Management Plan which indicates that extensions to historic buildings should have regard to the established style by respecting its features, form, proportions, and materials.
12. The proposed new canopy at the front door of the building would be appropriate in design and use of materials. However, it would cover some original details of the doorway and would unbalance the symmetry with the similar existing front door of the semi-detached pair of dwellings. Despite the existence of a canopy at 11 The Firs, the proposed canopy would be harmful to the character and appearance of the pair of semi-detached buildings and should be dismissed.
13. I have found above that the proposed replacement extension and canopy to the front elevation would harm the character and appearance of the appeal building. I also consider that the proposed development would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. However, in view of the context of the rear extension, with limited visibility from public views, and small scale of the canopy, the harm to the conservation area as a whole and its significance would be less than substantial.
14. Paragraph 215 of the Framework indicates that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. However, the benefits from the proposed rear extension and canopy to the front elevation would primarily constitute private benefits, rather than public benefits, and would not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the conservation area as a designated heritage asset.
15. I find that there would be conflict with Trafford Core Strategy policies L7 and R1 which together require development to be appropriate in its context and to take account of surrounding building styles, and historic distinctiveness. The proposed development would fail to comply with policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the Places for Everyone Plan which seek to ensure sustainable development and the conservation of heritage assets. There would also be conflict with the heritage objectives in the Framework.

Conclusion

16. There are no other considerations sufficient to outweigh my finding that the proposed replacement extension and canopy to the front elevation would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the building and would fail to conserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Bowdon Conservation Area. These parts of the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole.
17. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed so far as it relates to the proposed replacement extension and canopy to front elevation and allowed in relation to the proposed replacement fascia to the front bay window.

Martin H Seddon

INSPECTOR