



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 January 2025

by A. Graham BA(Hons) MA IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/W/24/3348135

Carradale, Heald Road, Bowdon, Greater Manchester WA14 2JD

- 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 Douglas James Taylor against the decision of Trafford Council.
 - The application Ref is: 112258/FUL/23.
 - The application is for conversion of existing basement to single dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal upon the living conditions of future residents.

Procedural Matter

3. Since the determination of this application a revised National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) was published on 12 December 2024 whose main focus was not directly relevant to this appeal. Nevertheless, I have determined this appeal in accordance with the revised provisions within the Framework.
4. The description of development used in the heading above differs from that used on the Council's Decision notice and instead the description is that as used by the Appellant on their original application form. I consider that the description of development still accurately reflects the proposal before me and as such I have used this description accordingly.
5. Both parties accepted that an external visit was appropriate to this site and there was no request for an internal inspection of the basement. However, an attempt was made to arrange an internal site visit to this basement for thoroughness, but nobody was present on site at the time of my visit. Despite this I feel that I was able to gain enough of an appreciation of the issues involved with this application to enable me to make this decision.

Reasons

6. The appeal property is a semi detached Victorian villa of substantial proportions within a pleasant tree lined road of similarly aged houses and villas. The building is set back from the roadside behind a beech type hedge and wall with

front lawned garden and terrace to the front. To the side is the main entrance to the building with a double garage to the rear. Also to the rear is a modest area of garden that allows access from the ground floor rear outshut which is a later addition to the building. The building is located within the Bowdon Conservation Area but is not listed.

7. The property currently contains three flats with flat one occupying the ground floor and also having access to the existing basement of the building that is currently used for storage. The basement is clearly fully below ground and extends across the whole footprint of the main structure. It has two lightwells to the front of the building where there appeared to be two windows serving the front rooms and to the rear it includes a small set of steps that gives access down to a rear door and a blocked window. There is also a lightwell and a blocked up lightwell to this rear elevation.
8. The proposal before me seeks permission to convert the entire basement area into a newly habitable flat that would be separate from the others within the building. In so doing the accommodation would comprise two bedrooms, wc and open plan living, dining and kitchen area. Externally the plans show a modest extension of the sunken wells at either end of the building as well as the opening up of previously blocked windows.
9. In considering this appeal I am required by Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 to give 'Special Attention' to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of The Downs Conservation Area. This is reflected in The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework), which states that 'Great Weight' should be given to the heritage assets' conservation and also illustrates the positive contribution that heritage assets can make to the creation of sustainable and economically viable communities.
10. With regards the effect of the proposals upon the character and appearance of the Bowden Conservation Area, I consider that such subtle alterations to the exterior of the property would have negligible effect upon the special historic and architectural character of the area. This is due primarily to the sunken nature of the interventions aswell as the robust visual shielding from the roadside into the site and the area of the intervention. As such there would be no associated harm and the character and appearance of the conservation area would be preserved.
11. With regards the proposals being suitable for future residents, the scheme would result in all spaces being fully below ground. On my site visit I saw that the existing windows, are very much subterranean with very little outlook and although some modifications would take place to relieve this lack of openness, the sunken aspect would very much remain and would, moreover, remain dominant. As a result, all rooms and all habitable spaces would be below ground with very little outlook from windows other than to look upon retaining structures each of which would be within close proximity to the windows themselves.
12. Even whilst opening those windows that have since been blocked, this would not allow the spaces within to benefit from the expected light levels that would be desirable. Even were internal spaces to be painted, this would also not have a significant effect upon the living conditions within even were the walls to be

painted brightly. In any case such cosmetic alterations would be unenforceable and as such would be out of my remit to control.

13. Although BRE guidance has been advanced to suggest such spaces would be suitable I do not have the benefit of seeing the particular assessment referred to, nor how it relates specifically to this scheme. As such, I can give this matter only very limited weight. Ultimately, whilst it would be physically possible to create habitable spaces here, the proposed plans do not convince me that the resultant standard of living would be of a good quality nor even necessarily healthy as a result due to the very poor outlook and difficulty in allowing daylight into the habitable rooms.
14. As such, although I find no harm to the character or appearance of the Bowden Conservation Area, I do find that the scheme would be in conflict with Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan and Policy L7 of the Trafford Core Strategy aswell as the overriding guidance contained within the Framework itself.

Conclusion

15. As such, for the reasons given above, and taking into account of all other matters raised, I dismiss the appeal.

A Graham

INSPECTOR