



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 March 2025

by Ian McHugh DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date:

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/D/25/3358346

1 Beechfield, Altrincham, WA14 2QN

- 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 Mark and Mrs Helen Stant against the decision of Trafford Council.
 - The application Ref is 113458/HHA/24.
 - The development proposed is widening of existing driveway and reconstruction of driveway retaining wall in original sandstone.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for widening of existing driveway and reconstruction of driveway retaining wall in original sandstone at 1 Beechfield, Altrincham, WA14 2QN in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 113458/HHA/24, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin no 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 plans: Drawing Numbers: 2304 001 P1; 2304 005 P1; 2304 006 P1; 2304 007 P1; and 2304 008 P1.
 - 3) No development involving the use of materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the boundary treatment and proposed driveway hereby permitted shall take place until details of all such materials have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Devisdale Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

3. The appeal proposal is to widen an existing driveway which serves a residential property on Beechfield. Although the address of the property is Beechfield, the existing and proposed access is/would be from Higher Downs. The site is within the CA and part of the character and significance of Higher Downs is natural stone walls and soft landscaping that front the dwellings along the road. These walls vary in height and length with gaps for driveways and pedestrian gates that also differ in width.

4. The existing driveway is some 3.3m in width and the proposal would widen it to 5.5m. In addition, a pedestrian intervisibility splay of 1m x 1m would be provided. A new sandstone retaining wall would be constructed between the access drive and the garden of the property. The appellants argue that the proposal would provide a driveway that is safer, because existing visibility is restricted, and that it would be more convenient as car doors could be opened more fully. Because of the existing width, access to and from vehicles is limited. The appellants also point to other examples of accesses that have been widened since the CA was designated and consider that the Council's approach has been inconsistent. However, I have determined this appeal on its individual merits.
5. The Council considers that the loss of part of the boundary wall and soft landscaping would be an unsympathetic form of development that would harm the character and appearance of the CA. The Council's decision notice refers to a number of Development Plan policies, to Supplementary Planning Documents, plus the Devisdale Conservation Area Management Plan 2016 (AMP).
6. The AMP highlights the importance that the Council gives to boundary treatments within the CA and it states (amongst other things) that boundary treatments and front gardens should not be removed to create additional hardstanding, garaging or parking (Policy 35). Policy 34 also states that gate openings should not be widened or repositioned unless it can be proven that the access is unsafe.
7. When determining planning applications for development in conservation areas, it is a statutory requirement that decision makers pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. This requirement is reflected in Policy R1 of the Trafford Core Strategy and Policies JP-P1 and JP-P2 of the Council's Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan 2024. Chapter 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 contains similar provisions.
8. In this case, I acknowledge that there is some conflict with Policy 35 of the AMP as a portion of the existing boundary wall and soft landscaping would be removed. However, with regard to Policy 34 of the AMP, I consider that the proposal would result in a benefit to public safety, due to the improvement in pedestrian intervisibility. I noted at my site visit that there were continual pedestrian movements along Higher Downs, due largely to pupils attending the neighbouring Grammer School, and that the existing limited visibility is a potential risk to the safety of pedestrians.
9. Whilst the appearance of the entrance would change, that does not necessarily translate to harm. The proposal would result in only a relatively small part of the wall and some minor landscaping being removed. Most of the frontage wall and landscaping would be retained and, in my opinion, it would remain as a dominant and important feature in the streetscene. Consequently, the character and appearance of the CA would be preserved and no harm would be caused. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposal would not conflict with the relevant policies of the Development Plan, as referred to above.

Conditions

10. The Council has suggested conditions in the event of the appeal being allowed. I have imposed the standard condition relating to the period in which to commence the development. For clarity, a condition specifying the approved plans is also

necessary. To ensure a satisfactory appearance, a condition is imposed that requires the appellants to submit details of the materials to be used in the development to the Council for approval. The development is to be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons given above, it is concluded that the appeal be allowed.

Ian McHugh

INSPECTOR