



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 September 2025

by Elaine Moulton BA (Hons) BPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16th September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/B4215/W/25/3367235

Leapfrog Nursery, 26A Wilbraham Road, Manchester M14 6JU

- 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 Naveed Ashraf of Creative Property People Ltd against the decision of Manchester City Council.
 - The application Ref is 140358/FO/2024.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing building and the erection of a block of apartments comprising 24 apartments.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues:
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - Whether the site is a suitable location for the proposed development having regard to its density.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is located close to the junction of Wilbraham Road and Hart Road. The area is predominantly residential in nature comprising two storey semi-detached and terraced dwellings, and apartment buildings up to five-storeys in height. Whilst there is some variation in the design and appearance of the buildings within the surrounding area, the majority have pitched roofs. In addition, with some exceptions, there is a broadly consistent building line along Wilbraham Road and Hart Road.
4. The site is a parcel of land containing a single storey commercial building and a car park. It sits between 26 Wilbraham Road (No 26), a three-storey villa in use as a language school and, on Hart Road, two, two-storey villas (Hart Road villas), behind which is a four-storey apartment building. Although No 26 and the Hart Road villas have been extended, their frontages retain their architectural integrity. No 26 is set behind the car park within the appeal site and is only glimpsed from the street when passing the access, nonetheless, it adds positively to the character and appearance of the area, as do the Hart Road villas, due to their scale and period features.

5. The front boundary of the appeal site is enclosed by tall mature trees that extend partially along the side boundary with the adjoining Hart Road villa. Such trees positively contribute to the character and appearance of the site and the wider area. On my visit, when the trees were fully in leaf, I observed that the existing building is largely screened in views from the public domain, but that the sky could be seen through branches and foliage. Consequently, the site gives a sense of openness and visual relief from its more built-up surroundings.
6. The proposed building would be located closer to the front boundary than the existing. In such a position it would be some distance in front of the adjoining Hart Road villas and, to a greater extent, in front of No 26. It would span almost the entire width of its plot and would largely fill the gap between the adjoining buildings. Although the line of trees at the front of the site would filter views, the upper floors of the proposed building would be seen between branches, and the current views of the sky would be obscured. Consequently, the scale, massing and location of the proposed scheme would result in it being a dominating form of development that would detract from the appearance of the villas on both sides. Furthermore, it would appear cramped within its plot and the openness and visual relief provided by the existing site would be diminished to the detriment of the area.
7. Trees positioned along the side boundary towards the front of the site would be removed to accommodate the development. According to the appellant's Arboricultural Impact Assessment, such trees are either of high or moderate quality. Based on my observations on my visit, I consider that they make a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the locality, and their loss would be detrimental to the street scene. I have no evidence before me that would suggest that the trees would not survive and continue to positively contribute to the street scene for many years if current circumstances remained.
8. I note that it is intended to reposition one of the side boundary trees required to be removed, which is of high quality, to the rear of the proposed building. Due to its large size, it is reasonable to doubt whether the tree could be successfully relocated. Even if it could be moved as proposed, it would largely be obscured by the building and its contribution to the character and appearance of the area would, therefore, be materially reduced.
9. A consequence of the removal of the trees would mean that, unlike the existing building, the side elevation of the proposed development would be prominent in views whilst travelling along Hart Road towards Wilbraham Road. Its forward position relative to properties on Hart Road, scale and extent of unrelieved brickwork would result in it having a dominant and unacceptable appearance within the street scene.
10. The proposed building would be lower than the ridge height of both No 26 and the Hart Road villas. However, its flat roof design would fail to reflect their form and style despite being positioned close to them. Accordingly, the proposed building would be overly conspicuous, contrasting sharply with the appearance of the adjoining villas.
11. Whilst there are examples of flat roof buildings in the wider area, they are not visible in views of the appeal site. Furthermore, unlike the proposed development, there is greater separation on at least one side between such buildings and the adjoining properties, thereby ensuring that such developments do not appear

cramped within their plots. Accordingly, the other flat roof buildings do not assist in the assimilation of the proposed development into its surroundings or outweigh the harm that I have identified.

12. I acknowledge that sympathetic facing materials are proposed and that attempts have been made to incorporate within the proposed development modern interpretations of features that are common within the streetscape. Nevertheless, the effect of the scheme would be to unacceptably diminish the character, appearance, and integrity of the street scene for the reasons set out above.
13. The proposed development would not impact on the historic environment as the site is not located in a Conservation Area and is not within the setting of, a listed building. However, this is a neutral factor that does not outweigh the harm that I have found.
14. I find that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would be contrary to Policy JP-P1 of the Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document (PfE), adopted March 2024, and policies DM1 and EN1 of the Core Strategy (CS), adopted July 2012 and updated March 2024. Together, these policies seek the creation of well-designed places and require development to have regard to the character of the area and surrounding street scene. The proposed development would also be contrary to the similar aims set out in paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Suitable location

15. The appeal site is not in a designated centre and is not close to a Metrolink stop. It is, however, within a GMAL¹ 6 area and, therefore, the minimum net residential density for the location, as set out in PfE Policy JP-H4, is 50 dwellings per hectare. The density of the proposed development, at 104 dwellings per hectare, significantly exceeds that minimum. Nevertheless, as maximum standards are not specified, this policy does not preclude high density development outside of designated centres and remote from Metrolink stops.
16. CS Policy H6 sets out that in South Manchester, where the appeal site is located, high density development will generally only be appropriate within specified district centres. Outside of such centres, this policy indicates that the priority is to provide housing to meet identified shortfalls, including, amongst other things, homes for elderly people. The proposal constitutes a high-density development as defined in CS Policy H1. Consequently, as the site is outside of any district centre, the proposed development is contrary to CS Policy H6 unless shown to address a specified form of housing for which there is a shortfall.
17. The proposed apartments would comply with Building Regulations standards M4(2), accessible and adaptable dwellings, and M4(3), wheelchair user dwellings and would, thus, be suitable for elderly people. Therefore, whilst there is nothing before me that suggests that the proposed development is being specifically aimed at the elderly, in a modest way it could assist in addressing the identified shortfall in this type of accommodation. Accordingly, there would be no conflict with CS Policy H6.

¹ Greater Manchester Accessibility level

18. In conclusion, as it would help to meet a particular housing need, the site is a suitable location for a high-density development as proposed. It would therefore accord with the aims of CS Policy H6 set out above and would not conflict with PfE Policy JP-H4 regarding the density.

Other Matters

19. The Council has a five-year housing land supply and, consequently, current policy is providing enough housing to meet the requirements for the area. Therefore, although appreciating that the Framework seeks to boost the supply of housing, I attach limited weight to the provision of a 24 apartments as proposed.

Conclusion

20. I have found that the site is a suitable location for a high-density development. However, this does not outweigh the harm that I have identified to the character and appearance of the area. The proposed development therefore conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole and there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweighs the identified harm and associated development plan conflict.
21. I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elaine Moulton

INSPECTOR