



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 February 2026

by K Mee BA(Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 26 February 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/Q4245/W/25/3375960

Land to the rear of Alexander House, 94 Talbot Road, Trafford M16 0PJ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant permission in principle.
 - The appeal is made by Blueoak Estates Ltd against the decision of Trafford Council.
 - The application Ref is 117109/PIP/25.
 - The development proposed is described as “application for permission in principle for residential development of up to 8no. apartments”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Background and Preliminary Matters

2. The proposal is for permission in principle. Planning Practice Guidance (the PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development. The permission in principle route has 2 stages: the first stage (or permission in principle stage) establishes whether a site is suitable in-principle and the second (“technical details consent”) stage is when the detailed development proposals are assessed. This appeal relates to the first of these 2 stages.
3. The scope of the considerations for permission in principle is limited to location, land use and the amount of development. All other matters are considered as part of a subsequent Technical Details Consent application if permission in principle is granted. Drawing Ref: 21/TALB/FEAS/500 shows a possible layout, and I have considered this as indicative only.
4. An applicant can apply for permission in principle for a range of dwellings by expressing a minimum and maximum net number of dwellings as part of the application. In this instance, permission in principle has been sought for 8 apartments.

Main Issue

5. The main parties agree that the principle of residential development on land to the rear of Alexander House is acceptable, and I have no reason to disagree. Therefore, the main issue is whether the site is suitable for residential development with particular regard to its location and the amount of development.

Reasons

6. Whilst I recognise there are some smaller scale buildings in the vicinity of the appeal site, the surrounding area is mainly characterised by tall multi-storey

residential buildings, including those currently under construction, that define the prevailing character and appearance of the area.

7. The appeal site occupies a small corner of land which has historically been used as a surface car park serving Alexander House, a tall building of approximately 11-storeys in height which is now in residential use, but is now surplus to requirements. The proposal would provide 8 apartments. An indicative plan suggests that these could be built within a small footprint positioned towards the rear of the appeal site.
8. The number of units proposed would result in a small-scale development at odds with the scale of the surrounding buildings. Furthermore, the positioning of the site in a constrained corner of the car park would fail to form a coherent relationship with Alexander House. It would therefore result in an incongruous and visually awkward addition when viewed from a variety of public vantage points, particularly from Talbot Road and Birch Avenue. While the design and appearance of the proposed building would be considered at the technical details stage, its inevitable small scale would fail to make efficient use of the land or integrate satisfactorily with the established surrounding built form, thereby causing harm to the character and appearance of the area.
9. The Central Neighbourhood Illustrative Masterplan within the Civic Quarter Area Action Plan (January 2023) (the CQAAP) shows potential multi-storey development within the rear car park of Alexander House. However, it depicts a larger site area which is also positioned in such a way that it would integrate more positively with Alexander House and the surrounding area.
10. The parties disagree over whether character and appearance falls within the scope of the application. In support of their argument, the Council has drawn my attention to appeal decisions (APP/H1840/W/23/3332227 and APP/T2350/W/19/3236414) where matters of character and appearance were deemed relevant. Although relating to development in the countryside, these decisions reinforce that character and appearance may be considered insofar as they relate to the three permission in principle matters: location, land use and amount of development.
11. The appellant has referred to an approved scheme, identified as the 'Velocity' scheme (LPA reference 110696/FUL/23) situated on adjacent land to the east of the appeal site. Whilst full details of this scheme have not been provided, from the evidence before me, the approved scheme would appear to provide new residential development with a much larger footprint and with a combination of building heights. Nevertheless, the location and amount of development proposed within the appeal before me differs substantially in broad density terms to that scheme and of that which is suggested by the masterplan for the area.
12. I am aware that a previous appeal relating to the site was dismissed. I have had regard to the Inspector's findings in that case; however, that decision concerned a full planning application, and I do not have the full particulars of the scheme then before the Inspector. Given that the current appeal relates to an application for permission in principle, the relevance of the earlier findings is necessarily limited. I have, in any event, determined this appeal on its own merits and on the evidence before me.
13. For the above reasons, whilst the location in terms of sustainability may be suitable for residential development, the proposed amount of development (8

apartments) and its integration with the surrounding built form would be unacceptable and would result in harm to the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, the proposal would conflict with Policy JP-P1 of Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan Document 2022-2039 (March 2024) (the DPD) where it requires development to respect and acknowledge the character and identity of the locality in terms of design, siting, size and scale.

Other Matters

14. The appeal site lies in proximity to Trafford Town Hall which is a Grade II listed building. I have therefore had special regard to section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The significance of the building derives from its architectural, historical and communal value. Its setting is principally defined by the mature planting and formal gardens to the west. However, given the separation distance, intervening buildings and the position of the appeal site, I find that, at this permission in principle stage, the proposal would not give rise to harm to the significance of its setting. The proposal would therefore preserve their special interest, in accordance with the statutory duty.
15. I acknowledge that Policy CQ10 of the CQAAP seeks to remove surplus car parking to make best use of land for appropriate redevelopment. However, I am not satisfied that the appeal scheme is the sole means of achieving those objectives, and this does not outweigh the harm I have found and conflict with the development plan.

Planning Balance

16. For the reasons set out above, the proposal would not be suitable for the residential development proposed because it would cause harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would conflict with Policy JP-P1 of the DPD, and I afford this conflict significant weight.
17. The Council accepts that it cannot demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites. The level of shortfall has not been agreed by the parties. This is stated as being either 3.75 years or 4.7 years. In any event, the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within paragraph 11d) of the Framework is engaged. This requires that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.
18. The proposal would make a modest contribution to housing supply, with associated economic benefits during the period of construction and once occupied. Based on the evidence submitted, the associated benefits of the proposal would not outweigh the conflict found. Consequently, the adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the proposal conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole and there are no material

considerations that indicate that the development should be determined otherwise than in accordance with it. Consequently, the appeal does not succeed.

K Mee

INSPECTOR