

Jonathan Davidson Architects

Albert's Restaurant & Bar
Barlow Moor Road, Didsbury

App ref: 141933/FO/2025

Response to Consultee Comments
25 April 2025

HIGHWAYS COMMENTS

HIGHWAYS RESPONSE The proposal is for the expansion of the existing restaurant to 1st floor level to provide private dining facilities. It appears that the 1st floor private dining room will accommodate in total 10no. tables and 40no. seats. It would be useful to understand the frequency of use of the 1st floor private dining facility. The proposed development extends only within the red-line boundary of the site and as such, does not impinge upon the adopted highway.

APPLICANT RESPONSE

It is anticipated that the room would be used on average once a week.

PARKING AND ACCESS: Vehicular access to the site is provided via the existing access point from Old Lansdowne Road. There is a car park to the rear of the site which provides 14no. car parking spaces including 2no. disabled parking spaces. It is understood that this will remain unaffected by the proposal. Further clarification is sought on how car parking will be managed at the site with the proposed 1st floor private dining facility. There is an existing pedestrian access point from Barlow Moor Road and Old Lansdowne Road. It also appears that the accessible ramp at the side elevation is also to be retained. Access to the first floor will be via the existing restaurant space.

APPLICANT RESPONSE

The functions taking place would be private and pre-booked. Customers booking the room would be advised that parking is limited and prioritised for restaurant users. They will be encouraged to use public transport/taxis or walk. The applicant operates private dining rooms in other Albert's restaurants it is their experience that customers walk or travel by taxi when attending these functions. The site is in an accessible location within easy walking distance of bus stops along Barlow Moor Road.

Step free access to the 1st floor will be available either via the existing accessible ramped access into the restaurant and from there into the proposed extension where lift access is available or directly into the extension from the external terrace.

REFUSE AND SERVICING: Refuse bins will be located in the existing bin store with the site boundary. It is assumed that the refuse servicing arrangement for the site will continue as existing. It appears that the existing service yard & outdoor furniture store is to be lost. Confirmation is required on whether the existing delivery servicing arrangement at the site will be affected.

APPLICANT RESPONSE

The existing refuse storage and servicing will continue unaffected. Other deliveries and servicing will also be unaffected by the proposals. The current service yard / furniture store is under utilised and this function can be provided within existing facilities elsewhere on the site.

HERITAGE COMMENTS

The building is a prominent landmark building at the corner junction of Barlow Moor Road and Lansdowne Road and while it has been altered it retains its historic character and contributes to the character of the conservation area. It is a typical example of a former Victorian villa and illustrative of a significant period of economic growth

and the expansion of the mercantile class in Manchester. The single storey extension to the rear and side of the building, and the canopy to frontage, have been installed in the early 2010s under the approved planning application 089976/FO/2009/S2. The alterations to the front elevation, implemented as part of this application, have had a particularly detrimental impact on the architectural and historic interest of the existing property, which nonetheless remains an important contributor to the local area.

The conservation area is characterised by predominantly Victorian three storey pairs of semi-detached properties. External walls are generally red or orange with dressings in stone brick, and blue slate roofs. The spacing between buildings along Barlow Moor Road contributes to a verdant and grander setting.

The proposed two storey side extension would bring forward the two-storey existing extension approved 134104/FO/2022 and would be virtually flush with the front façade. The existing extension is set significantly back from the front elevation and thereby is less visually prominent maintaining a sense of spacing between buildings. While an ancillary addition the proposal would infill a large portion of the gap between the restaurant and the adjacent building to the west as well as increase the perceived mass of the building. This would significantly diminish the openness of the urban layout which is an important feature of the conservation area.

The proposal would also unbalance the symmetry of the front elevation of the property with the gables being prominent features by introducing additional mass and a pitched form which would conflict visually with the gable form. The harm to significance would be less than substantial at the lower range given the size of the conservation area but is still material in the planning balance and required to be offset by planning benefits as set out in paragraph 2012 of the NPPF.

APPLICANT RESPONSE

Whilst the front elevation demonstrates an element of symmetry this is not reflected in the rear elevation or the treatment of the gable ends, even prior to the previously approved extensions. The more prominent east gable, facing Old Landsdowne Road, is unaffected whilst the visibility of the west gable is more restricted by the proximity of adjacent properties.

Although the front facade of the extension will move further forward, the proposals seek to mitigate the impact on the massing of the existing facade by introducing a full height glazed strip into the elevation to visually separate the new extension from the existing facade. This is further reinforced by the use of a different material for the solid elements of the new extension, being a darker brick in contrast to the white rendered facade of the existing.

The roof of the proposed extension is a continuation of the profile of the existing extension and the apex of this sits below the eaves of the main building such that the existing roof form is unaffected.

We believe the above factors ensure that the proposed extension remains visually subservient to the existing building.

The continued sustainable use of the building is an important consideration and appreciate that the current use seeks to expand the dining offer to the first floor with an accessible lift. It is noted however that the current side extension provides stair access to the first floor and would suggest that a smaller enlargement of this element to include a lift, with set back from the front elevation could achieve the same outcome with some reconfiguration of the first-floor layout. Alternatively, would request that any side extension incorporates more of a set back from the front façade to maintain the perceived spacing between buildings.

APPLICANT RESPONSE

The current stair access to the 1st floor is very much 'back of house' both in its connections to the restaurant space and in its overall quality and arrangement. It is also operationally undesirable for these back of house movements to take place in a front of house space.

This requires the provision of a separate 'front of house' staircase and lift access to the 1st floor, all to be contained within a relatively small footprint to ensure it does not project beyond the main front facade or the side wall of the existing extension.

Additionally, it is important that there is access to the first floor from within the existing restaurant space, allowing private dining customers to use the main bar facilities prior to moving to the 1st floor. The only access point available within the restaurant is in the south west corner and this restricts how far back the proposed extension can be.

However, we have responded to these concerns by reviewing the staircase and access arrangements to try and increase the set back as much as possible, whilst still retaining the required functionality. This has resulted in an additional set back of 300mm to take the front line of the extension to 625mm back from the main facade and updated drawings are provided with this statement.

As the proposal would infill the spacing between buildings, and detract from the visual appearance of the building it cannot be supported and would harm the character of the Albert Park Conservation Area contrary to Policy JP-P2 and the 2012 of the NPPF. The harm could be mitigated with a smaller set back addition that retains the perceived visual spacing between buildings.

APPLICANT RESPONSE

The proposals have been amended to increase the set back from the main facade as much as possible and we believe this, in conjunction with the elevational treatments outlined above, will mitigate the visual impact of the proposed extension whilst allowing the beneficial use of the 1st floor.

In addition, we believe that the removal of the service yard from the front of the property and its replacement with a public usage and views into the building will have a positive impact on the streetscape and on the character of the conservation area.