



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 April 2024

by K Townend BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17TH May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/B4215/W/23/3332516

221 Upper Chorlton Road, Manchester M16 0DE

- 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 Mrs Fiona Taylor on behalf of IVC Evidensia UK against the decision of Manchester City Council.
 - The application Ref is 137121/FO/2023.
 - The development proposed is erection of a single storey extension to the front, installation of access ramp and associated external alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The description of development is usually taken from the application form. However, the plans indicate that the proposal includes other external alterations, and the provision of an access ramp. The appeal form reflects the description on the Council's decision notice, confirming the appellant's agreement to the change. The Council dealt with the appeal on this basis, and I shall proceed on the basis of the description, as set out in the banner heading above.
3. Places for Everyone Joint Development Plan (PfE) was adopted on 21 March 2024 by nine Greater Manchester Authorities, including Manchester City Council. This appeal was received before the adoption of PfE and as such the policy, at that time was emerging policy. However, both main parties have had an opportunity to comment on the adoption of PfE. I have therefore given full weight to PfE in my decision.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the existing property and the surrounding area.

Reasons

5. 221 Upper Chorlton Road is a semi-detached property which is currently in use as a veterinary clinic. The building is red brick with bay windows at the front, a double height gable and stone detailing. There are some similarities in design detailing with the adjoining property, such as the bay windows and stone features. However, there are also differences in that the adjoining property has been extended to the side and has dormer windows in the roof. From the evidence before me the adjoining property has been converted to flats.

6. The existing building on the appeal site has been extended to the rear with two-storey and single storey extensions. The area to the side and rear of the building is hard surfaced and laid out with parking spaces. To the front is an existing disabled access ramp set within a solid wall and a small parking area. The front boundary is a low wall.
7. Opposite the site is a row of shops and food uses with residential above. The wider area is residential with a modern block of flats built on the junction with Seymour Grove. The character of the area is residential with the local row of shops. The properties are mainly two-storey semi-detached houses and blocks of flats. The appeal property and its adjoining neighbour have a different character and appearance to the other properties in the area and I have not been made aware of any other properties of the same design and detailing as the appeal site.
8. The proposed extension to the front of the property would span most of the width of the existing property including projecting forward of the prominent central double height gable and enclose the existing ground floor entrance and the two bay windows. The extension would be single storey and flat roofed.
9. Although it is smaller than the original building, by reason of it extending over the double height gable the extension would unbalance the frontage of the building, when read as a whole with the adjoining property. Moreover, the width and depth of the extension does not respect the proportions of the existing building and would not be read as a small, subservient, or modest, addition. The massing of the extension is, therefore, not appropriate as a forward extension on the existing building.
10. The new extension, albeit glazed along the front, would be prominent on the front elevation and unbalance the appearance of the building when read with the adjoining property. In that regard the siting and appearance of the appeal proposal is inappropriate. That the building is not listed nor within a Conservation Area does not remove the need for the development to be appropriate in its design, materials, and details.
11. Although the proposal would have sections of reclaimed brick it also includes large areas of glazing which are not in keeping or in proportion with the design and fenestration details of the existing building. The original bay windows and doorway would not be readily visible from outside the site, even though they would be retained as a feature visible from within the new waiting area. Moreover, the design of the front extension does not reflect the position or design of the bay windows, even if I were to accept that the new glazing is a modern interpretation of the bay windows.
12. The other bay windows on Egerton Road North and Upper Chorlton Road referred to by the appellant are two-storey bays of a different design and on buildings of different scale and character to the appeal site. Consequently, that there are other bay windows in the area does not justify covering the bay windows at the appeal site.
13. Overall, the proposed extension would be a modern addition to the front of the property which does not respect the massing, materials, detailing or design of the existing building. The proposal would result in a substantial change to the character of the existing property which would not enhance the character of the area or protect the built environment. The proposed extension would,

therefore, be harmful to the character and appearance of the existing building and the surrounding area. I have assessed the proposal on its own merits and find that the harm to the character and appearance of the area is significant.

14. That the existing two-storey side extension, basement conversion and dormers added to the adjoining property has already resulted in some degree of unbalancing to the building as a whole does not justify further harm. The side extensions and dormers, even though they are rendered, are all subservient and the basement conversion is not visually prominent. The adjoining property, albeit extended, retains the original features. The building, as a whole, can still be read and understood from the street. The proposed forward extension would be of greater harm to the front elevation than any of the alterations carried out to the adjoining property.
15. The modern flats on the opposite side of the appeal property are of a different form, scale, materials, and design. As too is the pair of semi-detached houses, including 219b Upper Chorlton Road. The area has a mixed character and appearance. However, the host building has its own character and appearance and the extension, although using materials and detailing that is seen in the wider area, would not be appropriate on the host building. The porch addition to number 219b does not form part of the approval referred to by the appellant. However, albeit of a different colour brick, it is a subservient addition that respects the scale and character of the dwelling.
16. The appellant has also drawn my attention to a number of forward extensions and additions to the shops on the opposite side of Upper Chorlton Road. Although I saw these at the time of my visit, I have not been provided with any substantive evidence that any of these additions have planning permission. Moreover, the forward additions are related to the ground floor retail units and are mostly lightweight canopy structures which could easily be removed. These structures have become part of the character and appearance of the row of commercial premises, encompassing part of the hard standing to the front of the street, but not harming any important features of the existing buildings. For these reasons, the forward additions to the properties opposite the appeal site are materially different to the appeal before me which proposes a more permanent structure which would hide the original features of the building.
17. Due to the proposed extension the proposed ramp would have to achieve an increase in height in a smaller area than the existing facility. The proposal, therefore, would result in this structure appearing to be level with the low wall when viewed from the road and a significant height above ground level when adjacent to the building. Overall, the proposed ramp would appear as a large structure at the front of the property, in addition to the proposed extension.
18. The new access ramp would provide better access to the veterinary clinic for staff and visitors and would replace the existing facility, which is not compliant with the relevant disability discrimination legislation. This is a benefit, but I only give this limited weight as the site does have disabled access provision. The removal of the tall solid wall forming the existing ramp would be a benefit and enhance visibility at the front of the property. However, although there would be benefits from the proposed new facility it would result in large sections of solid structure with metal railings above.
19. Landscaping between the sections would soften the appearance from within the ramp and would provide additional landscaping with biodiversity benefits and

surface water reduction. However, the landscaping would not significantly soften the external appearance from the access to the site or from Upper Chorlton Road.

20. The alternative proposal, of a platform lift for disabled access, has been offered by the appellant but no amended plans were submitted to the Council or with the appeal. I have, therefore, assessed the proposal as shown on the submitted plans.
21. For the above reasons, the proposed front extension and disabled access ramp would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the existing property and the surrounding area. The proposal would, therefore, be contrary to Policies DM 1, EN 1 and SP 1 (as amended) of Manchester's Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document (CS), adopted 2012.
22. Collectively these policies seek to ensure that, amongst other matters, all development is appropriate in terms of siting, layout, scale, form, massing, materials, and detail, and has regard to the character of the area, follows the seven principles of urban design, and aims to enhance the overall image of the City.
23. For the same reasons the proposal would fail to comply with Policies JP-P1 and JP-Strat9 of PfE which, taken together, seeks beautiful, healthy, and varied places through, amongst other matters, development that respects and acknowledges character and seeks to protect and enhance the character and attractiveness of the area.
24. The Council has also referred to Policy DC1 of the Manchester Plan, the Unitary Development Plan for the City of Manchester, adopted 1995 (UDP) in their reason for refusal. Policy DC1 relates to residential extensions. As the appeal proposal relates to an extension to a commercial premises this policy is not wholly relevant. Moreover, the principles set out in Policy DC1 are similar to the requirements of Policies DM 1, EN 1 and SP 1 of the CS in requiring development to have regard to the general character of the property, the appearance of the street-scene, and be subservient to the original building. I have, therefore, assessed the proposal against the CS policies referred to and not considered Policy DC1 of the UDP any further.

Other Matters

25. The appellant contends that the proposal is to enable the expansion of the veterinary surgery to accommodate a new reception, waiting area and consultation space, as shown on the submitted plans. However, the need does not justify the harm to the character and appearance of the existing property and the surrounding area.
26. Even if there is no other physical or viable option to extend the property, which has not been substantiated with any evidenced, this does not outweigh the significant harm that would result from the proposed development.
27. I also have no substantive evidence that the business would not continue to operate from the appeal site, and therefore retain the existing employment space and site, without the proposed extension and new ramp, notwithstanding the comments from the appellant. Moreover, I have no substantive evidence that there are no other sites within this part of South Manchester that could

accommodate the veterinary surgery business. The retention and expansion of the business and community facility does not override the weight given to the environmental harm from the proposal.

28. The reduction of surface water run-off and enhancement to biodiversity from the sedum roof and additional landscaping are benefits of the development which are given moderate weight. However, these would also not outweigh the harm from the proposed development to the character and appearance of the existing building and the surrounding area.

Conclusion

29. For the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

K Townend

INSPECTOR