



Conversion of domestic garage to nail salon and hairdresser

404 Bury Old Road, Prestwich, Manchester, M25 1PZ

Sequential Test

The proposed development comprises the change of use of an existing domestic garage within the residential curtilage of 404 Bury Old Road to a small-scale nail salon and hairdresser falling within Class E. As a Class E service use, the proposal falls within the broad definition of a main town centre use.

Paragraphs 91 and 92 of the NPPF require main town centre uses to be directed firstly to town centre locations, followed by edge-of-centre locations, and only then to out-of-centre locations where no suitable sites are available. Applicants are also expected to demonstrate flexibility in relation to the scale and format of development. Planning Practice Guidance confirms, however, that the application of the sequential test should be proportionate and appropriate to the particular proposal.

The proposal has arisen from the applicant's intention to establish a small-scale business from their home through the conversion of an existing domestic garage. The applicant is resident at 404 Bury Old Road and would personally operate the nail salon and hairdressing business from the premises. A key reason for establishing the business in this particular location is the flexibility that working from home provides, including the ability to balance the operation of the business with childcare responsibilities.

The applicant has therefore not undertaken a search for a conventional commercial unit within Prestwich town centre, as the proposal has not arisen from a requirement to establish a standalone town-centre salon. Renting a separate shop unit would represent a materially different business model, involving separate premises and associated overheads, and would remove the principal benefit of being able to operate a modest business from the applicant's home.

The development is also exceptionally small in scale, being accommodated entirely within an existing garage of approximately 17.9sqm. The business would operate by appointment only, with a maximum of four clients present at any one time. There is therefore limited scope to disaggregate or materially alter the format of the proposal; its particular scale and form are intrinsically linked to the reuse of the existing garage.

In applying the sequential approach, it is therefore important to distinguish between the need for a conventional commercial salon premises and the proposal actually before the Council, which is for a small resident-operated business within an existing building at the applicant's home. Requiring the applicant to rent a separate town-centre shop would fundamentally alter the nature and purpose of the proposal rather than constitute a genuinely comparable alternative location.

Nevertheless, the application site is located within the established urban area and is closely related to Prestwich town centre, with opportunities to access the premises by walking, public transport and other sustainable modes. The proposal is also of such a modest scale that it would have no realistic potential to materially affect the vitality or viability of Prestwich town centre.

Having regard to the particular nature of the proposal, its very limited floorspace, its operation by the resident of the host property, and the specific objective of facilitating a small home-based business, it is considered that a detailed search of available commercial units would be disproportionate in this instance. The proposal should therefore be considered acceptable in sequential terms when the test is applied proportionately to the scale and nature of the development.