
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 November 2016

by Mike Hayden BSc DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 5 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/16/3157402
32 Park Road, Watford WD17 4QN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs P. Scully against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/00796/FULH, dated 12 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 8 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is two storey side & rear and single storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the setting of 30 Park Road as a locally listed building and on the character and appearance of the Nascot Conservation Area.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal property is a two storey semi-detached dwelling located within the Nascot Road Conservation Area. It adjoins 30 Park Road, a locally listed building and non-designated heritage asset within the Conservation Area. The character and appearance of the Conservation Area is derived from the surviving examples of Victorian architecture, which demonstrate the gradual development of Watford during this period of its history. No. 30 is an attractively detailed, Victorian detached villa. The architectural symmetry and proportions of its main façade and its well preserved, original features make an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as a whole.
4. I understand from the evidence that the appeal dwelling at 32 Park Road replaced an earlier smaller scale annexe to no. 30. I note therefore that no. 32 has been carefully designed to appear as an extension to no. 30, subordinate to it as the main building in the pair. No. 32 is set well back from the front elevation of no. 30, with a lower roof eaves and ridge line. The design of its roof and the balanced proportions of its front elevation respect the Victorian architecture and features of the main building, and are of a scale and dimension which are subservient to no. 30. As a result, the appeal property as currently built respects the setting of no. 30, as a non-designated heritage asset, and preserves the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

5. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that in the exercise of planning powers in conservation areas, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area. Paragraph 132 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) requires that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, such as a conservation area, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Policies UD1 and UD2 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy (2013) (the CS) also seek to safeguard and preserve the borough's historic environment and expect new development to respond to features of historic value.
6. The proposed side extension would elongate the front elevation of the existing dwelling to approximately the same width as the main front façade of no. 30. Although set back slightly from the existing front elevation to no. 32 at first floor level, the extension would be built to the same ridge and eaves height as the roof of the existing dwelling and, as a result, would appear as a continuation of the existing frontage. It would also introduce an additional lean to roof at ground floor level to one side of the new front elevation, which is uncharacteristic of the design of nos. 30 and 32. At the side and rear, the proposed extensions, whilst largely reflecting the fenestration and hipped roof design of the existing dwelling, would considerably increase the size and scale of the building, altering its overall proportions in relation to no. 30. This would be particularly evident at the side, where the length and height of the side wall would overwhelm the existing dwelling.
7. The effect of the proposed extensions would be to unbalance and overwhelm the symmetrical design and proportions of the appeal property, in particular its roof and front elevation. As a result, the extended dwelling would no longer appear as a subordinate addition to the building at no. 30. This would cause harm to the setting of no. 30 as a non-designated heritage asset and harm its contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area as a whole.
8. Paragraphs 133 and 134 of the Framework expect that where a proposed development will lead to either substantial or less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, consent should be refused, unless outweighed by public benefits. Paragraph 135 of the Framework states that in weighing proposals that affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm and the significance of the asset.
9. In this case given that the proposal affects a modern extension to a non-designated heritage asset, the harm caused to the overall character and appearance of the Conservation area would be less than substantial. However, no. 30 is an important building in the Conservation Area and the proposal would fail to respect the symmetry and proportions of the existing dwelling attached no. 30 as a key part of its setting.
10. There are no public benefits cited which weigh in favour of the proposal. I note the benefits to the appellant of increased living space and the potential to return rooms back to no.30. However, these do not amount to public benefits nor would they outweigh the harm to the significance of the heritage assets.

11. I have considered the extensions to other properties in the Conservation Area, which were referred to me as examples comparable to the appeal proposal. However, it is a core principle of the planning system that each application is determined on own merits. In each case, the other extensions appeared to have been designed to be subordinate to the main dwelling, set well back from principal elevations or below the eaves height of the existing roof and as such do not cause harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
12. Accordingly, I conclude that the proposed extensions would cause unacceptable harm to the setting of 30 Park Road, as a locally listed building and non-designated heritage asset, and fail to preserve the character and appearance of the Nascot Conservation Area. Consequently, the proposal would be contrary to Policies UD1 and UD2 of the CS and conflict with paragraphs 132, 134 and 135 of the Framework.

Other Matters

13. I note the concerns raised by neighbouring residents about the potential effects of the extension on daylight and sunlight to the living room of 54 Park Road and on trees at no. 32. Whilst there are windows in the side elevation of no. 54, they are secondary and the main windows to habitable rooms facing to the front and rear would not be affected by the proposals. From my assessment on site, the proposed extensions also would not result in the loss of any protected or mature trees. Therefore, neither of these concerns adds any further weight against the proposal. However, neither does the absence of harm on these two matters, outweigh the harm to heritage assets.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above and taking all other matters into account, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Hayden

INSPECTOR