
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 May 2017

by Michael Boniface MSc MRTPI

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

Decision date: 12th May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/17/3170978
113 Hempstead Road, Watford, WD17 3HE

- 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 Mr & Mrs Philip Nelson against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 16/01746/FULH, dated 14 December 2016, was refused by notice dated 10 February 2017.
 - The development proposed is a detached garage, alterations to existing decking and conversion of existing garage to gym.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. There is no dispute between the parties as to the acceptability of the proposed alterations to the existing decking or the conversion of the existing garage. As such, I have confined my considerations to the proposed garage.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is a substantial detached dwelling standing within a row of similarly sized dwellings. Properties in the vicinity tend to be set back from the highway behind generous front gardens and driveways creating a spacious appearance despite the presence of some tall boundary treatments. The appeal property is consistent with this character.
5. The proposed garage would be sited close to the front of the site, around 1.8m from the boundary with the public highway. Whilst the existing boundary wall would screen the proposed garage to some extent, its scale and height mean that it would be clearly visible above the level of the wall. Although the building would match the existing house in terms of its materials, it would become a prominent and visually intrusive addition that would significantly reduce the spacious character of the site frontage and the wider street scene. The visual impact of the building would be further compounded by its orientation, turning its back to the public realm and presenting a stark and unappealing expanse of blank brick work.

6. I have had regard to the potential for securing landscaping by condition but this would need to be substantial and would be unlikely to successfully mitigate the harm that I have identified given the scale and position of the proposed building. The existing planting on the site boundary would also have very limited screening effect.
7. The appellant has highlighted a number of examples of garages to the front of properties in the local area including at Nos 109, 125, 151, 155 and 183 Hempstead Road and I acknowledge that garages are not uncommon in the area. However, many of these examples are set further away from the road, are smaller in scale or are effectively screened by boundary treatments and landscaping. Those that are prominent in the public realm are not features that contribute positively to the character of the area as I have described above. I do not have sufficient information to know the circumstances under which these developments were granted planning permission but in any case, I saw none that was directly comparable to the appeal proposal.
8. I have noted the benefits to the appellant, including improved security, but these personal benefits are not sufficient to outweigh the significant harm that would arise to the character and appearance of the area. As such, the development would be in conflict with Policies SS1 and UD1 of Watford's Local Plan, Core Strategy 2006-31 (January 2013), which seek high quality design which respects and enhances local character; and the Council's Residential Design Guide, which resists stand-alone buildings in front gardens.
9. In light of the above, and having considered all other matters, the appeal is dismissed.

Michael Boniface

INSPECTOR