



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 November 2019

by R Sabu BA(Hons) MA BArch PgDip ARB RIBA

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5th December 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/W/19/3236442
252 St Albans Road, Watford WD24 4AX

- 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 Stefano Lobban against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/00634/FUL, dated 31 May 2019, was refused by notice dated 6 August 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as, 'additional dwelling unit and extension and internal revisions to an existing house. Refer 19026 DAS - design and access statement'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the erection of first floor side/rear extension and internal revisions to existing residential unit and to create 1 no. 2 bed dwelling at 252 St Albans Road, Watford WD24 4AX in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 19/00634/FUL, dated 31 May 2019, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: PL01 Rev P2, PL02 Rev P2, PL03 Rev P1, PL04 Rev P1, PL05 Rev P1, PL06 Rev P2, PL07 Rev P1, PL08 Rev P1 and PL09 Rev P1.
 - 3) All the external surfaces of the development shall be finished in materials to match the colour, texture and style of the existing building.
 - 4) The refuse, recycling and cycle storage as shown on drawings PL-01 Rev P2 shall be made available for use prior to the occupation of any part of the development. The storage shall be retained as approved at all times thereafter.

Procedural Matter

2. I have used the description of development in the decision above from the decision notice rather than the application form as it more accurately describes the proposed development.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:

- the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and
- whether the proposed development would provide a suitable living environment for future occupiers with particular regard to internal space provision.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. St Albans Road is a street with mixed commercial and residential uses characterised primarily by two storey buildings with pitched roofs and rear outriggers. The appeal property is part of a two-storey terrace with a commercial use at ground floor and residential above. The terrace has a mixture of pitched and flat roofs and has a number of extensions with varying heights and forms such that the rear of the terrace has a varied character and appearance.
5. The proposal would consist of first floor rear and side extensions and the conversion of an existing outbuilding to ground floor residential use. The extensions would include areas of flat roof. The adjacent property at No 250 St Albans Road (No 250) and others along the terrace also have areas of flat roof such that flat roofs form part of the character and appearance of the area. I note that nearby flat roof elements may not be recent development or approved under the current design guidance. However, they nevertheless form part of the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, the proposed flat roofs would not appear incongruous in this respect.
6. The proposal would also include a dual pitched roof to the rear first floor extension. While I note the offset position of this part of the extension in relation to the main host building and the three sections of first floor flat roof and angled shape of the extension, given the varied roof forms along the rear of this terrace, this aspect of the proposal would not be out of keeping when viewed against the host property or surrounding area. Since the proposed dual pitched roof form would be at a significantly lower height than the main roof of the host property, it would not detract from the character of the original building.
7. I note the Residential Design Guide Adopted July 2014 Amended August 2016 (RDG). Since the proposal would be significantly lower than the host building, and the materials are proposed to match the existing property, the proposal would respect the character and scale of the host building. In addition, given the varied character and appearance of the terrace, the proposal would respect the scale and character of the properties within the street as a whole.
8. Consequently, the proposed development would not harm the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, it would not conflict with Policy SS1 of Watford's Local Plan Part 1 - Core Strategy 2006 - 31 Adopted 30 January 2013 (CS) which expects high standards of sustainability and design and a positively integrated approach to development. It would also not conflict with CS Policy UD1 which among other things requires new development to respect

and enhance the local character of the area in which it is located. In addition, the proposal would not conflict with the RDG.

Living environment

9. There is a dispute between the main parties regarding the size of the proposed additional dwelling. The Council considers the Gross Internal Area (GIA) to fall short of the requirement of Technical housing standards- nationally described space standards (NDSS) which are set out in the RDG and confirmed in its statement that it measured the GIA in accordance with the definition stated within the NDSS. While the appellant has not disputed this, from the evidence before me, the sizes of the rooms, while not spacious, would provide enough internal space to allow varied and domestic activities to take place comfortably. Therefore, while there may be conflict with the NDSS, the proposal would accord with the aims of the RDG.
10. Consequently, the proposed development would provide a suitable living environment for future occupiers with particular regard to internal space provision. Therefore, it would not conflict with CS Policy UD1 which seeks among other things spaces which can adapt to changing social, technological and economic conditions and would not conflict with the aims of the RDG.

Other Matters

11. I acknowledge concerns regarding the service provided by the Council. However, I have assessed the scheme based on its planning merits and this has not altered my overall decision.

Conditions

12. I have considered the conditions suggested by the Council and made amendments having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) and the Planning Practice Guidance. I have also made minor changes in the interests of precision and clarity.
13. In addition to the standard time related condition, a condition specifying the approved drawings is necessary in the interests of certainty. A condition requiring external materials to match the host building is necessary to safeguard the character and appearance of the area. However, given the variety of materials at the rear of the terrace the latter part of the suggested condition is not necessary.
14. The condition relating to refuse and recycling storage is necessary to safeguard the character and appearance of the area and has been amended to avoid repetition.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above the appeal should be allowed.

R Sabu

INSPECTOR