The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 March 2020

by Nicola Davies BA DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/19/3243244
161 Sandringham Road, Watford WD24 7BH

- 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 Aiden and Helen Byfield against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
- The application Ref 19/01072/FULH, dated 9 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 7 November 2019.
- The development proposed is a side extension to a three bedroom, end of terrace dwelling.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have taken the appellants' names from the planning application form although I note that initials are provided on the appeal form. In addition, I have taken the description of the proposed development from the planning application form although it is expressed differently on other documents.

Main Issues

3. The main issues raised in respect of the appeal are the effect of the proposed development on: -

   (a) The character and appearance of the host property and the area; and

   (b) The living conditions of the occupiers of 159 Sandringham Road.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The Council has referred to Section 8.7 of the Watford Residential Design Guide 2016 (the Guide) that requires single storey side extensions to allow no more than a 50% increase in width of the property prior to extension. The Guide indicates that side extensions should respect the design and character of the main house and to ensure the property has a balanced street frontage. Image 25 within the Guide provides an example relating to a front elevation. The Council comment that the enlargement would fail to comply with these guidelines and would result in an unbalanced rear elevation that fails to respect the design and character of the main house. However, it appears to me that

Section 8.7 of the Guide aims to ensure that side extensions would be subordinate in their visual relationship with the host property when viewed from the front of the property as opposed to the rear.

5. The side extension would be constructed up to the boundary of the site and would project beyond the existing side elevation of the property. Whilst it would be partially visible from Sandringham Road, the extension would be set some distance back from the main front wall of the house. Being single storey, I consider the proposal would be a subordinate side extension in views from Sandringham Road and would respect the street scene as required by Sections 8.3 and 8.7 of the Guide.

6. Notwithstanding the above, the proposed extension would be wider than the existing dwelling at the rear of the property. As such it would not respect the design and form of the main property and would visually unbalance the rear elevation. The proposal would not harmonise with the host building as required by Section 8.2 of the Guide. The extension would be visually harmful for this reason. The visual harm arising from the proposal would be apparent to the neighbouring occupiers of 159 Sandringham Road as the extension would be clearly visible in their outlook.

7. I note that a Lawful Development Certificate issued by the Council would allow for a loft conversion incorporating rear dormers at the property. The Council has referred to the collective harm that would occur if that development were to take place. That certificate confirms permitted development rights for rear dormers that the appellants could carry out. However, such alterations may or may not take place. I consider that development proposed at a different part of the property can and should be considered on its own merits.

8. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the host property, albeit it would not have a significant impact upon the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would, therefore conflict with Policies SS1 and UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 (the Core Strategy), Section 8.2 of the Guide and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). These policies and guidance seek, amongst other matters, development to complement the size, shape and character of the existing property and deliver high quality design. It has been highlighted that the Guide is not formally part of the development plan. However, its purpose, as I see it, is to assist in achieving high quality design and offers support in achieving the aims of development plan policies in this respect.

Living conditions

9. There is a narrow alleyway between the appeal site and 159 Sandringham Road. I observed that there is a ground floor window in the rear elevation of No 159 in extremely close proximity to the side boundary of that site. There is also a large window and glazed door at ground floor within the side elevation of the outrigger that have outlook toward the appeal property. The proposed extension would be in close proximity to these windows.

10. The proposed extension would be clearly visible in the outlook from the habitable living space of No 159 above the fence with trellis that runs along the side boundary and the side boundary fence at the appeal site. The separation would, in my opinion, retain light to the habitable internal living space of No

159. However, given the height, length and close proximity of the proposed extension, it would be extremely dominant in the outlook of No 159 and particularly in the outlook from the large window in the side elevation of the outrigger. Placing such a large extension this close to habitable living space would fail to provide a satisfactory outlook for the occupiers of No 159 and would create a sense of being enclosed by built development. This would substantially detract from the occupier's living environment making their property a less pleasant place in which to reside.

11. I acknowledge that in the outlook from the large side window the extension would be framed in the backdrop by the existing larger property with its outrigger. However, this does not overcome my concerns that arise from placing new built development significantly closer to No 159. I also note that the large side window is one of three glazed openings in the outrigger. However, the large ground floor window would provide the main outlook for the living space within that part of the dwelling. The effect of the proposal would, therefore, have a considerable impact in the outlook from this living space, whether or not views of the rear garden can be achieved from other windows.

12. Although no objection has been raised to the proposal by the occupiers of No 159, there remains the requirement to consider the proposal in terms of the living conditions of the existing adjoining occupiers.

13. For these reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the living conditions of the occupiers of 159 Sandringham Road. The proposal would, therefore, conflict with Policies SS1 and UD1 of the Core Strategy, Section 8.4 of the Guide with regard to neighbourliness and the provisions of the Framework. These policies and guidance seek, amongst other matters, development to protect residential amenity by ensuring that an extension does not adversely affect the level of amenity enjoyed by the occupiers of neighbouring properties. In regard to daylight I do not consider the proposal would materially conflict with Section 8.4 of the Guide.

Conclusion

14. Having regard to the above findings, the appeal should be dismissed.

Nicola Davies

INSPECTOR