
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 June 2020

by L Page BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/19/3242554
205 The Harebreaks, Watford WD24 6NX

- 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 I Hussain against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01185/FULH, dated 11 October 2019, was refused by notice dated 25 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is first floor side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The site is in a residential area characterised by semi-detached dwellings with open frontages. These dwellings are largely symmetrical in form and appear well balanced in the street scene. The host dwelling is semi-detached, and when viewed from the front, is largely symmetrical with its neighbour. Both comprise pitched roofs to front, which are well balanced and in keeping with the character and appearance of the area.
4. The host dwelling faces onto a junction at the corner of The Harebreaks and Leggatts Way where its open frontage is prominent despite intervening mature soft landscaping. The existing ground floor side extension preserves open views through the site and along the Harebreaks and does not interrupt the building line. Given its siting and the presence of other dwellings behind, the rear appearance of the host dwelling and its neighbour are much less visible by comparison and do not contribute to the character and appearance of the area to the same positive extent.
5. The development would represent a significant addition at first floor level, which would negatively affect the balance currently apparent at the frontage of the site, and the pitched roofs in particular. It would also change the building line and obscure views along the Harebreaks. Given the prominent position of the frontage of the dwelling within the street scene these adverse impacts would be particularly noticeable.

6. Extensions to the rear of the neighbouring dwelling appear much less prominent in the street scene and have been accommodated without unduly harming the symmetrical qualities of the frontage. In principle, rear elements of the proposal could potentially be delivered in a similar context. The development would not extend the footprint of the host dwelling nor would its bulk be so significant to negatively impact on the sense of openness and space within the plot. Materials and other fenestration details would also be appropriate, remaining in keeping with the host dwelling. Even so, the frontage of the dwelling is prominent in the street scene and the aforementioned visual change and negative effects of the development would be unacceptable.
7. Three storey flats nearby are set away from the site and comprise a different form of development that do not help justify the proposal, which adversely impacts a pair of semi-detached dwellings.
8. The appellant contends that decision makers should not become involved in detailed design issues and that this is explained in the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). It is not apparent that the Framework specifically says this. Rather, it does in fact seek to achieve good design and proposals which function well and add to the overall quality of the area. For the reasons outlined above, it is not considered that the proposals achieve such an aim.
9. It is concluded that the development would have a significantly adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would not therefore accord with Policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2013; Paragraph 8.5 of the Watford Residential Design Guide 2016 or with Chapter 12 of the Framework, which seek to deliver high quality design that respects and enhances local character.

Other Matters

10. The appellant mentions that the proposal would help improve personal circumstances by allowing a growing family to remain at the site. Whilst having given this careful attention, the advice contained in Planning Practice Guidance states that in general, planning is concerned with land use in the public interest. It is also probable that the proposal would remain long after the current personal circumstances cease to be relevant.
11. Matters relating to non-designated heritage assets are not disputed by the council. There is no evidence to suggest the development would comprise a benefit to be weighed against the harm to character and appearance.
12. The absence of objection does not in itself mean that the development would be acceptable. The appeal has been determined based on the development plan, material considerations and the evidence presented.
13. None of the other matters raised alter or outweigh the conclusions on the main issue of character and appearance.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given, the appeal should be dismissed.

Liam Page

INSPECTOR