



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: 26th June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/20/3245129

1 Roundway, Watford WD18 6LB

- 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 David Goodfellow against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 19/01049/FULH, dated 9 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 1 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is to replace section of existing chain link side fence with new 2m high fence to incorporate section of side garden into rear garden.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on:
 - (a) the character and appearance of the area; and
 - (b) highway safety and access at 26 Roundway.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The site is in a residential area where most dwellings exhibit front and side garden areas that create separation with the street. There are a number of open spaces in close proximity to the site featuring trees and other soft landscaping. Altogether, the area is of a leafy and open character and appearance.
4. The site comprises a side garden of a corner dwelling, largely delineated by a low and unobtrusive chain link fence. It is contiguous with the front garden of the corner dwelling, which has a low and unobtrusive brick wall that at the time of the site visit was in the process of being constructed. These gardens are typical of others in the area, creating space between the street and the dwelling, leading to a feeling of openness. To the back of the side garden is a high closed board fence, which delineates the rear garden area. It is softened by hedgerows and other landscaping but is largely a hard edged boundary.
5. Introducing a high closed board fence directly adjacent to the street would erode the side garden and the feeling of openness at the site. The use of landscaping could soften the boundary and improve its appearance, but the fundamental loss of openness would persist.

6. The appellant has referenced a similar development nearby, but it appears an isolated example at odds with the otherwise leafy and open character of the area; the context within which the development should be assessed.
7. Even though the front garden would remain, taken as a whole, the loss of side garden and negative effects on openness would make the corner dwelling discordant with the wider character and appearance of the area. Consequently, the development would not accord with Policies SS1 and UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2013 (WLP:CS), which among other things seek to secure high quality design and preserve continuity of street frontages and boundaries.

Access and Highway Safety

8. Delineating the site and driveway at 26 Roundway is a brick wall and soft landscaping, which together are relatively high and obstruct the views of vehicles on entry and exit. The closed board fence would create a similar obstruction, but it would not be more harmful.
9. During the site visit, visual cues available to pedestrians indicating the presence of driveways (open frontage and dropped kerb line) were clear, generating extra hazard awareness to mitigate potential conflicts. In the same context, visual cues available to vehicle users indicating a residential area and presence of pedestrians (dwellings and walkways) were also clear and had similar effects.
10. Consequently, in an area where pedestrians and vehicle users are likely to demonstrate higher levels of hazard awareness, it is unlikely that the development would affect access and highway safety to an unacceptable degree. The development would accord with Policy UD1 of the WLP:CS and saved Policy T21 of the Watford District Plan 2000, which among other things require that development is designed to account for safe access.

Other Matters

11. The support from an interested party which together with an absence of objection, do not in themselves mean that the proposal is acceptable. The appeal has been determined based on the development plan, material considerations and the evidence presented.
12. Comments relating to the council's administration of the application do not relate to the planning merits and as such are outside the scope of this appeal.
13. None of the other matters raised above are determinative in the appeal and do not alter or outweigh the conclusions on the main issues.

Conclusion

14. Whilst the proposal would not be harmful to highway safety this would not outweigh the harm identified in respect of the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, the appeal is dismissed.

Liam Page

INSPECTOR