



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 February 2021

by Eleni Randle BSc (hons) MSc FRICS FAAV MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 February 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/20/3261690

8 Wiggenghall Road, Watford, WD18 0AL

- 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 J Tabor against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/00439/FUL dated 28 April 2020, was refused by notice dated 27 July 2020.
 - The development proposed is proposed loft conversion to existing HMO.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for the proposed loft conversion to existing HMO at 8 Wiggenghall Road, Watford, WD18 0AL in accordance with the terms of the application ref: 20/00439/FUL dated 28 April 2020 subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development to which this permission relates shall be begun within a period of three years commencing on the date of this decision;
 - 2) The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: site plan (0420-01) and proposed general arrangement (0420-03);
 - 3) The external materials for the dormer roof extension shall match that of the existing building only. Any alteration to the approved materials will require submission to, and approval in writing from, the Local Planning Authority prior to use.

Procedural Matters

2. The appellant's description, on the original application form, refers to a loft extension and single storey rear extension to the appeal site. The Council's description, on the decision notice, refers to a proposed loft conversion to the existing HMO (house in multiple occupation). The submitted plans¹ specifically refer to the proposal as a loft extension and state that the rear extension has been omitted. The refusal reason only refers to the rear dormer.
3. As a result of the above I find that neither description realistically describes the proposal before me but I have utilised the Council's description of the proposal as out of the two I feel it more concisely describes the development. For the avoidance of doubt this appeal will solely focus upon the proposed rear dormer as per the plans before me, and as confirmed within paragraph 6.3 of the Council's report, which would in turn allow the loft conversion as proposed.

¹ Drawing no. 0420-02 and 0420-03

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the appearance of the host building and street scene and the character of the area.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is a two-storey end of terrace property which has a two-storey outrigger and single storey additions. The appeal site is currently occupied as a house in multiple occupation (HMO) and is not subject to any designations. The proposal seeks to undertake a loft conversion, incorporating a loft extension in the form of a rear dormer.
6. The Residential Design Guide 2016 (RDG) advises that a dormer should be in proportion to the size of the original roof, not exceed half the height of the roof and should not be more than half of the width of the existing roof on which it is intended to be situated. The guidance goes on to outline maximum sizes of dormer windows including being set a minimum of 0.5m below the ridge-line and a minimum of 0.5m above the eaves as well as generally encouraging pitched roofs to be in harmony with the roof of the host building. There can be some flexibility in the application of design guides, however, their overarching objective is to achieve high quality, appropriate, design.
7. The height and width of the proposed dormer would be in excess of the guidance set out within the RDG, particularly in relation to its height. Despite this I find the proposal is only just in excess of half of the existing roof width and it would in fact match the width of the two-storey outrigger projection to the rear. I find that matching that width, viewed from the rear elevation, to be of logical design. I consider that in the case of this site a dormer designed to entirely match the guidance within the RDG would look more awkward within the rear roof slope, and in turn, would be prominent as an addition considering the existing additions to the property.
8. I do not find the proposal dominates the roof, taking into account the proportion of the original roof which remains unaffected by the proposal retaining its original shape, nor do I find the proposal harms the appearance of the host building so significantly it would warrant refusal.
9. The appellant has submitted aerial images which demonstrate a number of rear dormers within the immediate area. I do not have information before me as to how the photographed dormers came to be in terms of consent, or permitted development. Given the fact that I find the proposal appropriate for the host dwelling and there is evidence of visually similar development in close proximity I do not find the proposal to have an unacceptable impact upon, or cause harm to, the character of the area or appearance of the street scene.
10. The proposal would be consistent with Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2013 (CS) Policy UD1 which seeks to deliver high quality design and requires development to respect and enhance the local character of the area within which it is located and CS Policy SS1 which seeks high standards of design.
11. Whilst the proposal would be contrary to some elements of the guidance within the RDG I find that it is consistent with the general requirement that extensions should complement the shape, size and character of the property and should normally be subordinate to it.

Conditions

12. The Council has not suggested any conditions in relation to this appeal. A condition requiring the development to be in accordance with the approved plans is required in order to control and define the development which is granted consent. A time condition is attached to comply with section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004. In order to ensure a satisfactory appearance, I have attached a condition requiring the materials for the proposed dormer to match that of the host dwelling.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons outlined above, and taking account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed subject to conditions.

Eleni Randle

INSPECTOR