



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 24 May 2021

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4th June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/21/3270214

102 Church Road, Watford WD17 4QB

- 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 D Birke against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01227/FULH dated 5 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 29 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is single storey rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The Council's decision notice describes the proposal as 'erection of a single storey rear extension with a new roof over entrance door facing Manor Road', but neither of the main parties has provided written confirmation that a revised description of development from that stated on the planning application form has been agreed. I have therefore used this description in the banner heading above.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling, a Locally Listed Building, and the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located at the corner of Church Road and Manor Road and includes a detached dwelling which the Council has identified as a Locally Listed Building. The Local List entry records that the building is of architectural interest as a bespoke designed residential property from the Edwardian period, and notes that it is unusual to find such a well-designed building of this style in the town. The listing also highlights streetscape quality as a reason for the nomination of the building, commenting that the house and environs provide character to the prominent corner plot and that its form and materials complement the complex of listed buildings opposite the site.
5. The dwelling is finished in roughcast white render, and has a pitched roof form with striking chimneys and prominent gable ends to the side facing Manor Road and to the rear of a modest two-storey rear projection closest to the corner. Windows are for the most part timber casement style with leaded lights. At first-floor level, windows to the front of the building project partly above the eaves level breaking up the roof, and those within the side and rear gables also extend above the height of the eaves. Although the building has been previously extended, these additions are of relatively modest scale and the

dwelling has largely retained its original material, form and proportions as well as generous spacing around it, and it has a distinctive character and appearance. Together with the architectural interest and streetscape qualities noted within the Local List entry, these factors contribute to the building's significance as a non-designated heritage asset, and add to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

6. The proposed extension would in part replace a single-storey larder projection and garage outbuilding to the rear of the dwelling, but would be of larger footprint overall. In comparison to the existing garage, there would be a slight increase in spacing to the boundary with 2 Manor Road. However, the extension would attach to the dwelling, and at its maximum would be of greater depth than the host building. It would also extend across nearly the full width of the dwelling to occupy a considerable proportion of the space immediately to its rear. The crown roof design would further add to the large overall bulk and mass of the extension, and while single storey, it would be of greater height than the existing larder projection and significantly greater height than the outbuilding. As a contiguous extension to the dwelling, I find that these factors in combination would result in an oversized and disproportionate addition that would dominate the appeal building to the detriment of its character and appearance.
7. Moreover, while the appellant comments that the roof would be only around 300mm higher than the existing projection, its ridge would be higher than the level of the sills to the first-floor rear windows. Irrespective of the rooms served by these windows, I consider that the resulting relationship would be awkward and visually jarring. The proposed glazed roof section to the extension would also contrast with the predominantly traditional materials to the dwelling and others nearby. I accept that this fact in itself is not necessarily an indication of harm, but when taken together with the design of the side door with rooflights below, it would in this case draw unwelcome emphasis to the secondary entrance. While I acknowledge that the main entrance to the dwelling from Church Road is not in general use by the appellant, the more conspicuous side entrance would compete with it, disrupting the overall composition of the building.
8. The site is outside of the nearby Nascot Conservation Area, and I note that the street scene is fairly varied and includes a number of dwellings with extensions. Be that as it may, it is in a prominent location and the development would be apparent in views from Church Road. It would also be readily visible from Manor Road, albeit that as a private no-through road, levels of passing traffic here would be likely to be lower. Irrespective of the use of matching materials and that the front elevation would be unchanged, the development would disrupt the character and proportions of the host building and would in my view be a discordant and incongruous element in these street scenes.
9. For all of these reasons, I find that the proposal would detract from the character and appearance of the Locally Listed Building and surrounding area, and it would undermine the significance of the appeal building as a non-designated heritage asset. The National Planning Policy Framework therefore requires a balanced judgement having regard to the scale of harm to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset.

10. The appellant describes the existing garage as unsightly, but it is of modest height and is set back from the street with the larger projection also providing some screening. It is therefore relatively unobtrusive, and I did not find that it detracts significantly from the character or appearance of the dwelling or area. The visual impact of the slight increase in spacing to 2 Manor Road would also be largely offset by the increased height and mass of the development, and given the harm that I have identified above, I am not persuaded that removal of the garage represents a benefit in favour of the proposal.
11. I am sympathetic to the appellant's desire for additional living space with provision for natural light, and for a more convenient layout and improved access arrangements into the dwelling from Manor Road. I have also noted comments that the garage is in a poor state of repair with a leaking roof. While I have very limited information regarding any specific need for a ground floor bedroom or bathroom, providing accessible accommodation and improving wheelchair access to the property would be a benefit. There could also be a benefit through reducing opportunities for crime and antisocial behaviour arising from the current set back of the garage in accordance with one of the objectives of Policy UD1 of Watford's Local Plan Core Strategy 2013 (CS). However, the weight that I afford to these benefits is limited by the absence of substantive evidence to demonstrate that the appeal proposal would be the only solution to secure these outcomes.
12. In this context, I find on balance that the benefits of the proposal, even taken together, would not outweigh the harmful effect of the proposal on the significance of the Locally Listed Building, nor the harm to the character and appearance of the area.
13. I therefore conclude that the proposal would cause harm to the character and appearance of the Locally Listed Building and the surrounding area. It would therefore conflict with Policies UD1 and UD2 of the CS which together broadly seek development that respects and enhances local character and that conserves and enhances the historic environment. There would also be conflict with guidance within the Residential Design Guide 2016 seeking extensions that respect the character and scale of the host building.

Other Matters

14. I note the appellant's concerns that pre application engagement with the Council led to positive comments without the heritage officer having been consulted. However, the Council's procedures or quality of the advice given are not matters that are before me to consider as part of the determination of an appeal under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, and would be for the appellant to pursue with the Council. While I can understand the appellant's frustration, I must consider the appeal proposal on its own merits according to the evidence before me, and have made my own assessment as to its impacts.
15. I am mindful that section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The Council has not raised concerns over the effect of the proposal on the Salters' Company Almshouses listed building complex opposite the site, and from the evidence before me and given the scale of the development and its position to the rear of the building, I see no

reason to take a different view. However, the absence of harm weighs neither for nor against the proposal.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above, I find that the proposal would conflict with the development plan when it is read as a whole, and material considerations do not indicate that a decision contrary to the development plan should be reached. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR