



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 1 June 2021

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7th June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/21/3269618

46 Orchard Drive, Watford WD17 3DY

- 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 Rupesh Purohit against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01388/FULH, dated 8 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 29 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is rear two storey extension, conversion of garage to form annex and part two storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. The description of development in the banner heading above is taken from the application form, but Section E of the appeal form provides a revised description of 'erection of a two storey rear extension, conversion of garage to form annex and part two storey side extension and rear roof dormer extension'. This reflects the description stated on the Council's decision notice, and because I consider it a more accurate representation of the proposal, I have dealt with the appeal on the basis of this amended description.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on (i) the character and appearance of the host dwelling and area; and (ii) the living conditions of the occupiers of 48 Orchard Drive with particular regard to outlook.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. Orchard Drive is predominantly characterised by semi-detached dwellings of a few original designs which are set on strong building lines fronting the street. I observed varied roof alterations as well as assorted extensions or outbuildings to the rear of many of the dwellings. However, spacing between buildings at first-floor level and above is for the most part generous and of fairly regular width allowing for views towards long rear gardens. Together with common design elements such as two-storey front bays, these factors result in a spacious setting to the buildings and a distinctive rhythm to the street scene, and a sense of an overall coherent pattern to the development.
5. Given the variety in roof forms of nearby buildings including examples of semi-detached pairs with asymmetric roofs, I agree with the Council that the

visual impact of the hip-to-gable roof alteration element of the appeal proposal would be acceptable. My decision therefore focuses on the rear dormer and extensions to the side and rear of the dwelling.

6. Contrary to guidance within the Council's Residential Design Guide 2016 (RDG) that dormers should not be more than half the width of the existing roof on which it is intended to be situated, the dormer would span much of the width of the extended rear roofslope. However, it would be set significantly back from the eaves and set down from the ridge, and there would also be appreciable spacing to both sides. Notwithstanding its width, I therefore consider that it would appear proportionate and sympathetic to the host roofslope overall. Moreover, it would not be inconsistent with the assorted and in many cases large dormers that I observed to dwellings on and around Orchard Drive and so would not result in a prominent or out of keeping feature. Taking these factors into account, I am satisfied that the dormer would assimilate appropriately with the existing building and area, and that a departure from the detailed guidance within the RDG is therefore justified in this regard.
7. However, while the depth of the two-storey extension beyond the rear of the dwelling would be fairly modest, it would be of greater width and would wrap around to its side to infill the space between the dwelling and the boundary. I acknowledge that the extension would be set back from the front of the building and that there would remain space within the neighbouring site, but it would nevertheless restrict views through to the rear of the site and would disrupt the characteristic pattern of broadly regular gaps between buildings. It would also conflict with guidance within the RDG that at least 1m space should be provided between first floor side extensions and the side boundary.
8. In addition, the flat roof form to the extension would project higher than the eaves of the main roof resulting in an awkward relationship that would be visually jarring, and a bulky appearance that would dominate the host dwelling. Although the appellant refers to flat roof dormers and crown roof features nearby, these are generally set within sloping sections of roof and are often to the rear of buildings softening their visual impact. In contrast, the projection of the extension beyond the side of the dwelling means that it would be readily visible from the street scene, and the fully flat roof form at first-floor level would be an unusual and conspicuous feature in the surrounding area.
9. For these reasons, I find that the two-storey extension would integrate poorly with the appeal dwelling, and it would be a discordant and intrusive feature that would erode the spacious quality and distinctive pattern of the area.
10. Notwithstanding my findings in relation to the rear dormer, I therefore conclude on this main issue that the proposal would result in unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and area. It would accordingly conflict with Policy UD1 of Watford's Local Plan Core Strategy 2013 (CS) which requires, amongst other things, that development respects and enhances local character. It would similarly be contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which seeks well-designed places and development that responds to local character.

Living Conditions

11. The two-storey part of the side and rear extension would be of similar depth to the closest part of the neighbouring dwelling at 48 Orchard Drive, but the

proposal includes a further single-storey section which would project significantly beyond the rear of No 48. This would be positioned up to the boundary, and although it would be no deeper or closer than the existing outbuilding, it would infill the current space between this structure and the rear of the appeal dwelling resulting in a continuous spread of built form. It would also be of increased height than the outbuilding, with a parapet wall to the side that would be notably higher than the existing boundary fence. In my view, the height combined with the considerable total depth of the extension in such close proximity to No 48 would be dominant and overbearing, and would result in a significant loss of outlook for the occupiers of this dwelling.

12. I therefore conclude on this main issue that the development would cause unacceptable harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of 48 Orchard Drive. As a consequence, the proposal would be contrary to the Framework which requires a high standard of amenity for existing and future users, and I do not consider that it would comprise high quality design as required by Policy UD1 of the CS.

Other Matters

13. I am sympathetic to the appellant's desire to adapt the dwelling to meet the needs of his family and to provide additional living space in order to remain at the property. However, I am mindful of advice within the Planning Practice Guidance that in general, planning is concerned with land use in the public interest. The development would also be likely to remain long after the current personal circumstances cease to be material. I therefore find that this factor is not sufficient to outweigh the harm that I have identified, and the resulting conflict with the development plan. Although only one objection was received from a neighbouring occupier, this is not a factor that weighs positively in favour of the proposal.

Conclusion

14. 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. For the reasons given above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR