



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 15 June 2021

by Luke Simpson BSc MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/W/21/3269569

78 High Road, Watford WD25 7LJ

- 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 New Agenda against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 20/01379/FUL, dated 4 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 2 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is for 'demolition of existing house and construction of a terrace of three, 3 bedroom, 2-storey houses, with attic accommodation with six parking spaces at front, including bin stores and cycle sheds'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. After this appeal was made, the Council confirmed that the proposed development was not advertised as required by Regulation 5A of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 (as amended). The Council subsequently advertised the proposed development retrospectively by Site Notice dated 11 June 2021 and Newspaper Advertisement dated 21 May 2021. The Council has confirmed that no responses were received in relation to these advertisements.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area, including the setting of the Grade II Listed Manor House.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal site comprises of a relatively large detached two-storey dwelling which has a fairly traditional design, albeit it has been clad in tiles and timber, such that it has a more contemporary appearance than surrounding properties. The surrounding area is characterised by residential development, which typically comprises of large detached and semi-detached buildings, set back from High Road with parking provided to the front.
5. Both parties refer to the Watford Character Area Study (2011) (WCAS) which outlines that the surrounding area, including High Road, is characterised by a mixture of architectural styles. This area comprises the former village of Leavesden. There are some surviving buildings of the original village, including Manor House, but the majority of the original buildings have been replaced over time. I noted the variation in the architectural style of the buildings.

However, their scale and massing are more consistent, as is recognised in the WCAS.

6. Manor House is a grade II listed building, which is located directly opposite the appeal site. Under section 66 (1) and section 16 (2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, I am obliged to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting and any features of special architectural or historic interest. The National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) glossary advises that 'significance derives not only from the asset's physical presence but also from its setting'.
7. Manor House was constructed in circa 1700 and comprises of a large two storey brick house with a plain tile hipped roof. There are distinctive features, including the panelled door, large sash windows and front facing dormer windows. The building derives its significance from its architectural quality and historical importance, as the only survivor of a group of older buildings on High Road, which formed the original village of Leavesden.
8. The setting of Manor House comprises of the immediately surrounding area, including the appeal site. The setting of the building has changed over time, with the erection of more modern buildings of varying architectural style. However, the scale and appearance of buildings, many of which are detached and semi-detached, contribute to the setting of the listed building, as they reflect the scale and appearance of the Listed Building as a large single dwelling. The development, which would involve the demolition of the existing dwelling and introduction of a more prominent block of three terraced properties, would create a cramped and incongruous appearance, which would fail to sustain or enhance the setting of the listed building. I give this harm considerable importance and weight, in accordance with Framework paragraph 193.
9. I acknowledge that the existing building on the appeal site is harmful to the setting of Manor House. I also consider that the proposed fenestration and dormer windows would be in keeping with the design of this listed building. However, the cramped nature and increased prominence of the development would be more harmful to the setting of the listed building than the existing building on the appeal site. This harm would be particularly noticeable given the proximity and intervisibility of the appeal site to Manor House.
10. I recognise that the architectural character of the area is varied, including the recent residential development at Privet Drive. However, the appearance of the proposed building, which would present as three separate properties with narrow frontages, would be at odds with the prevailing pattern of larger semi-detached and detached dwellings with wider frontages. The three proposed front porch and bay window projecting elements would further emphasise the cramped appearance of the development. The increased height of the development would also exacerbate the harm, giving more prominence to the overcrowded appearance of the front elevation.
11. For these reasons, the development would conflict with Watford's Local Plan Part 1 – Core Strategy 2006 (the Core Strategy) policies SS1 and UD1 and the Residential Design Guide 2014, which seek in part to ensure that new development respects and enhances local character. The development would also conflict with Core Strategy policies UD1 and UD2, which seek in part to ensure that new development conserves features of historic value.

Other Considerations

12. I have concluded that the development would conflict with the development plan as a whole. In considering whether there are any other material considerations which indicate that a decision should be made other than in accordance with the development plan, it is necessary to consider the test set out at Framework paragraph 196. Framework paragraph 196 requires that, where there would be less than substantial harm to a heritage asset, the public benefits are weighed against this harm.
13. In the case of the proposed development, there would be economic and social benefits associated with a net increase of two dwellings on a previously developed site. These benefits are afforded significant weight. There would also be social and economic benefits in terms of jobs supported or created through the construction of the proposed development. These benefits can also be given some weight, albeit they would only be temporary.
14. Whilst these benefits can be afforded significant weight, this would not be sufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the setting of the listed building, to which I afford considerable weight and importance.

Conclusion

15. I conclude that the development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area and would result in less than substantial harm to the setting of Manor House, a grade II listed building. There are no other matters raised which would outweigh this harm. I therefore consider that the appeal should be dismissed.

Luke Simpson

INSPECTOR