



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 10 August 2021

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 August 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/W/21/3274675

9 Holtsmere Close, Watford WD25 9NG

- 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 R Cowling against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00080/FUL, dated 20 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 13 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is single storey rear extension and attached two bedroom house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Since the appeal was submitted, the Government published a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The main parties were given the opportunity to comment on any implications for the appeal of this change, and I am therefore satisfied that no prejudice would be caused by my consideration of the appeal in light of the revised Framework.

Main Issue

3. From the evidence before me and my observations at my visit, I agree with the Council that the single-storey extension to 9 Holtsmere Close would be acceptable. The main issue is therefore the effect of the proposed dwelling on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The majority of buildings on Holtsmere Close are semi-detached, although there are also some detached properties. The dwellings are typically arranged on strong building lines set back from the street, and while the gaps between buildings vary in size, they are for the most part relatively generous with the set in of dwellings from the boundaries at their sides providing for views through towards open rear garden backdrops. Despite some diversity in the architectural style and external materials to buildings and a number of visible extensions and alterations, the common hipped roof forms and regular patterns of fenestration result in fairly similar appearances to the predominant semi-detached pairs. They are also of usually similar overall scale. While the street scene is not uniform, these factors together provide for a generally spacious character and an overall sense of coherence to the area.
5. The appeal proposes a dwelling attached to the side of the 9 Holtsmere Close. This would result in the creation of a small terrace which would be an unusual feature on Holtsmere Close, and would alter the balance of the existing dwelling pair. Nevertheless, nearby detached dwellings as well as flats at

Pheasant Court already provide for appreciable variety in the form of buildings in the vicinity of the site. In this context, I do not consider that the presence of a terrace in this location would in itself be conspicuous.

6. The dwelling's hipped roof design and fenestration pattern would also be in keeping with other buildings nearby. However, while the dwelling would be of similar width to neighbouring properties, its plot would be unusually narrow. I appreciate that the adjacent single-storey garage and access would provide some separation to the two-storey part of the maisonettes at 5 and 7 Holtsmere Close, but the set in of the development from the boundary with these neighbours would be minimal. This relationship would deprive the dwelling of a proper setting, and would result in two-storey built form effectively infilling the space to the side of No 9 within the appeal site. While I acknowledge that the degree of spacing around nearby buildings varies somewhat, the exceptionally close proximity of the dwelling to its side boundary and lack of spacing within the site would be strikingly at odds with the more generous plots and characteristically spacious settings of other dwellings nearby. Despite being set back from the front of No 9, I find that the dwelling would therefore appear cramped on its plot, and it would restrict views through to the rear of the site compromising the distinctive spacious quality of its surroundings.
7. The appellant asserts that permission has been granted for other developments in Watford which are out of character with their surroundings on narrower plots than the appeal site, but while I note submitted photographs, I do not have full details of the sites concerned or the circumstances which led to their approval. I am accordingly unable to draw any direct comparisons with the scheme before me which I have in any event considered on its own merits.
8. For these reasons, I find that the dwelling would be an incongruous and intrusive feature in the street scene, and I conclude that it would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. Accordingly, the proposal would be contrary to Policies UD1 and SS1 of Watford's Local Plan Core Strategy 2013 which require, amongst other things, that development respects and enhances local character. It would similarly conflict with the Framework insofar as it seeks development that responds to local character and adds to the quality of an area.

Conclusion

9. The proposal would make effective use of the appeal site, adding one dwelling to the supply of housing locally. The site is in an accessible location, and I am satisfied that the dwelling would offer suitable living conditions for occupiers. I also note the appellant's suggestion that environmental impacts would be minimised including through use of sustainable construction techniques. However, the contribution that the development would make in these regards is limited on account of its very modest scale, and even taken together, I find that the benefits of the development would not outweigh the adverse impacts that it would have on the character and appearance of the area.
10. For these 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