



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 November 2021

by Victor Callister BA(Hons) PGC(Oxon) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9TH December 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/W/21/3279893
70 Estcourt Road, Watford WD17 2PZ

- 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 Mushtaq Hussain against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/00639/FULH, dated 26 April 2021, was refused by notice dated 24 June 2021.
 - The development is External Wall Insulation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for External Wall Insulation at 70 Estcourt Road, Watford WD17 2PZ in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 21/00639/FULH, dated 26 April 2021.

Procedural Matters

2. For clarity I have used the description of development from the Watford Borough Council's (the Council) decision notice, as the source of funding does not constitute development.
3. The development described has been implemented and, accordingly, I have determined the scheme on this basis.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and that of the Estcourt Conservation Area (the CA).

Reasons

5. The appeal property is a two storey end of terrace house, that is smaller in scale and dissimilar in design to the other houses in the terrace are that of a uniform design. Estcourt Road is characterised by these terraced rows of two storey brick built Victorian palisaded artisan houses. The appeal property is located at the heart of the CA contributing to its significance. The CA is a heritage asset to which I have a statutory duty under section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. I must pay

- special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.
6. The development has resulted in the application of a proprietorial external insulation material in the form of a render to the front elevation of the appeal property.
 7. Prior to the application of this render the appeal property had been the subject of earlier roughcasting with a mixed brown and grey aggregate over its front and side elevation, which appears to have been implemented prior to the designation of the CA. Whilst this roughcasting was extensive, it would appear from the material submitted for the purposes of this appeal that it did not cover the original, but very plain arch and keystone detailing over the front recessed entrance vestibule, or the lintel over the first floor windows. These original details of the house had been painted in a mixture of sky blue and white.
 8. These original door and window details, although plain and rather mean in design, did reflect the character of the original house as a simple artisan dwelling and made a small contribution to the appearance and character of the CA. The loss of these details has, therefore, resulted in a slight harm to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and that of the CA.
 9. However, the plain untextured white render over the front elevation, as an alternative to the previous roughcasting has resulted in an improved appearance to the overall finish to the appeal dwelling. I do not find that there is any evidence of this having been poorly applied, or resulting in an unsatisfactory or unfinished visual appearance.
 10. This white plain rendered white finish is to be found on other houses in the street and wider CA, many of which have been brought to my attention by the appellant, many of which appear, like the appeal property, to be single terraced dwellings that are dissimilar in scale and design to other houses in their terrace.
 11. Whilst many of these other plain rendered properties do retain some original features, that does not always appear to be the case. Overall, it would appear that this plain rendered finish on these occasional and dissimilar houses, does form part of the overall character and appearance of the CA. I therefore find that this element of the development is an improvement to the character and appearance to not only of the appeal dwelling, but also to that of the CA.
 12. When both the harm caused by the development to the character and appearance of the CA by the loss of original features and the improvement in this regard resulting from the new rendered finish are considered as a whole, I find that, on balance, the development results in a very slight enhancement to the appearance of the CA, which reflects its established character and respects its significance as a designated heritage asset.

Other Matters

13. Whilst the applicant has raised the cost of reversing the development and reinstating architectural details and previous finishes, this is not a matter that is material to my planning considerations and I have considered the proposal

on its merits, which is a fundamental principle that underpins the planning system.

14. Therefore, for the reasons given above, the development accords with Policies SS1 and UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Part 1-Core Strategy 2006-31 (2013) (the CS), the guidance given in the Watford Residential Design Guide 2014 (as amended 2016) and Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2021), which collectively seek to ensure that development is of high quality design, a key aspect of sustainable development, and are sympathetic to local character, having due regard to the importance of preserving or enhancing heritage assets.

Conclusion

15. As the development has been carried out in accordance with the terms of the application Ref 21/00639/FULH, dated 26 April 2021, no conditions are therefore necessary, and the appeal is accordingly allowed.

Victor Callister

INSPECTOR