

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 February 2022

by K E Down MA(Oxon) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th February 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/21/3289323

56 Fern Way, Watford, WD25 0HG

- 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 Paul Lloyd against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01418/FULH, dated 24 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 19 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is demolition of garage and new two storey side extension and three parking spaces.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for demolition of garage and new two storey side extension and three parking spaces at 56 Fern Way, Watford, WD25 0HG in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 21/01418/FULH, dated 24 September 2021, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Site location plan, mma.477, mp.244, mp.2444, mp.2444444.
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 4) Notwithstanding the provisions of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order, 2015, no first floor side windows shall be inserted in the western side elevation of the extension hereby permitted.

Main Issue

2. There is one main issue which is the effect of the proposed extension on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the street scene of Fern Way.
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Reasons

3. The appeal dwelling is a traditional, semi-detached house with a hipped pitched roof. It is situated close to a bend on a plot with a wide street frontage which narrows to the rear. Fern Way is characterised by similar properties set in mainly short terraces with some semi-detached pairs. A number have been extended at two storeys to the side. In some cases, these extensions have been set down and back from the front elevation. However, in a significant proportion of cases, including on prominent corner plots and at Nos 58 and 60, the semi-detached pair next door to the appeal dwelling, the extensions are seamless with the front elevation and roof. These have assimilated well into the street scene.
4. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) makes clear that new development should add to the overall quality of the area and respond to local character, reflecting the identity of local surroundings. Moreover, development should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture. Policies SS1 and UD1 of the adopted Watford Local Plan (Core Strategy) 2006-31 (LP), taken together, expect new development to be of a high quality design. The Council's Residential Design Guide (RDG) 2014 states that extensions should complement the size, shape and character of the existing property and normally be subordinate to it. Moreover, the roof form pitch and angle should respect that of the host dwelling.
5. The proposed extension would be flush with the main front elevation of the dwelling and have a matching hipped roof. It would be some 3.5m wide which would be noticeably less than the width of the host dwelling, although more than the 50% standard set out in the RDG, thereby achieving subordination. It would be of almost identical scale, proportions and design as the existing extensions to Nos 58 and 60. These earlier extensions appear to be well established and may pre-date the guidance in the RDG. Nevertheless, they are well designed, sympathetic to the host dwellings and complement the immediate street scene of terraced houses. Moreover, they form part of the established character and appearance of the area.
6. There is no reason why the proposed extension would not assimilate equally well into the street scene. Although it would widen one half of a semi-detached pair, the design of the dwellings, with a continuous canopy above ground floor level which would extend across the proposed extension, would ensure that the loss of symmetry would not appear awkward, and the characteristic horizontal emphasis of the façade was maintained. A significant gap would remain between the front corner of the proposed extension and the side boundary with No 58 and although this would reduce to the rear, a minimum 1m gap would be maintained.
7. The proposed extension would thus harmonise with the host dwelling and respect the street scene of Fern Way, including in terms of space between buildings, as set out in sections 8.2 and 8.3 of the RDG. It would not comply with detailed guidance in section 8.7 which expects, amongst other things, that side extensions should be set back from the main front wall. However, this is normally to avoid a "terracing effect" and to maintain symmetry. Owing to the specific design of the host dwelling and its semi-detached pair and the character of the street scene, such a set back would not be essential in this case.

8. It is concluded on the main issue that the proposed extension would have no materially detrimental effect on the character or appearance of the host dwelling or the street scene of Fern Way. In consequence, it would comply with the NPPF and Policies SS1 and UD1 of the LP. It would also comply with the wider objectives of the RDG despite conflict with detailed guidance.
9. The proposed development includes the creation of three car parking spaces on the frontage. The Council does not object to this and I agree that it would be consistent with the pattern of off road parking in the street.
10. In addition to the statutory commencement condition, the Council suggests three further conditions. I agree that for the avoidance of doubt the development should be carried out in accordance with the approved plans. I also agree that in order to protect the character and appearance of the host dwelling the extensions should be carried out using matching materials. Finally, a condition restricting new windows in the first floor of the side elevation of the extension is proposed. I agree this is necessary in order to prevent potential overlooking of and loss of privacy to the adjacent garden.
11. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

KE Down
INSPECTOR