



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 June 2022

by P J Staddon BSc, Dip, MBA (Distinction), MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14th July 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/W/22/3290039

The Imam Hussein Foundation Centre, 205 North Approach, WATFORD WD25 0ES

- 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 Hashim Nawrozzadeh against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 21/01279/FUL, dated 20 August 2021, was refused by notice dated 10 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is 'retention of an infill canopy with front entrance doors.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the retention of an infill canopy with front entrance doors at The Imam Hussein Foundation Centre, 205 North Approach, Watford, WD25 0ES, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 21/01279/FUL, dated 20 August 2021, subject to the following condition:
 - 1) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following drawings: 205NA/01; 205NA/02; 205NA/03; and 205/NASP.

Preliminary matters

2. The drawings submitted with the application are not entirely representative of the detail of the buildings I observed on my site inspection, as there are a number of window openings on the former church and No. 207 North Approach which are not shown on the plans. However, as the appeal proposal relates to development already carried out, and the drawings appear to accurately reflect the new works, I am satisfied that I have sufficient information to assess and determine the appeal.

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the design of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Character and appearance

4. The appeal site includes the former Kingswood Baptist Church and a residential property, No. 207, on North Approach in Watford. It is within the built-up area and about 2 miles to the north of the town centre. The former church is now

occupied by The Imam Hussein Foundation and I understand that the house is occupied by its religious leader.

5. The main building is of a simple but attractive traditional design, being constructed in brickwork with a hipped tiled roof. The front wall contains a feature entrance porch and a number of windows and includes a parapet feature, giving it a height comparable with the front wall of the 2-storey house (No. 207) to its south-west, which appears to be of a later construction. The house is of a simple design, constructed in brickwork with a pitched roof. The place of worship and the house are set back from North Approach behind a forecourt and garden. There is a row of traditional bay fronted semi-detached houses running north-eastwards from the site, and a primary school to the south-west. There is a belt of trees opposite the appeal site which screens views of the A405 beyond. The area has a suburban and primarily residential character and appearance.
6. There is a gap between the place of worship and No. 207 North Approach. This gap has been filled with a canopy structure which is rectangular in shape and, I am informed, measures 6.7 metres wide by 15.8 metres in length¹. The front of the canopy is constructed in timber and this spans the gap between the 2 buildings. This timber structure includes some doors and a series of infill panels which are formed of decorative fretwork backed with glass. When I visited, the timberwork appeared to have been recently stained.
7. Although the canopy is relatively large, it is not be prominent in any public view and appears intended to serve a purpose related to the use of the place of worship. With regard to the front elevation, the top of the structure sits well below the height of the parapet wall of the place of worship and below the cill level of the first floor window of No. 207, such that it is subservient to each and not imposing. The gates and timber work appear to have been improved and finished with a dark staining since Watford Borough Council's (the Council) decision, and I assessed the appearance to be neat and acceptable and not out of character with the adjacent buildings or the character of the surrounding area.
8. On the main issue, I therefore find no conflict with policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006-31 (adopted 2013) and paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework, which require developments to be of an appropriate standard of design that, amongst other matters, respects local character.

Other matters

9. I have noted and considered the views of interested parties concerning the canopy and wider matters relating to the site, including alleged further development at the site and the suggestion that the intention is to fully enclose the sides of the canopy to create a function room. However, my consideration is limited to the specific planning merits of the appeal proposal, as defined in the submitted plans and documents. Other matters, outside and beyond this scope, fall to be considered, as may be appropriate, by the Council.

¹ Figures cited in the Appellant's Design and Access Statement

Conditions

10. A planning condition listing the approved drawings is necessary to provide certainty and clarity. The Council suggested a further condition requiring the timberwork at the front of the canopy to be stained within one month. However, as the timberwork has now been stained to an acceptable standard, such a condition is not necessary.

Conclusion

11. For the reasons stated above, the appeal is allowed subject to the condition set out in paragraph 1 of this decision.

P. Staddon

INSPECTOR