



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 February 2023

by J Wellstead BA(Hons) MA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21st March 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/W/22/3305216

58 Radlett Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD24 4LL

- 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 Cormac McGarvey against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00410/FUL, dated 25 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 17 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is for the demolition of a single storey garage to provide a new 2 bedroom 3 person house with associated parking and garden space. The new building is to be single storey with additional accommodation within the roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. Since the planning application was determined, the Council adopted the new Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 on 17 October 2022, which replaces the policies cited on the original decision notice. The appellant had the opportunity to respond to the new Local Plan policies in its final comments. Therefore, I have determined the appeal on this basis.
3. The appellant has submitted a plan (0105-2060-P01) as part of the appeal showing a cross-sectional drawing of the proposed internal space. In considering whether to accept this amended plan, I have had regard to the '*Wheatcroft Principles*'. That is to say, if I were to accept the amended plan, would my doing so deprive those who should have been consulted over the changed development the opportunity of such consultation.
4. In this case, the Council has reviewed the amended plan and is satisfied that it addresses the second reason for refusal. Consequently, I have no reason to disagree with the Council's assessment, and it is in my view that to accept the amended plan would not prejudice the interests of third parties. I have therefore proceeded to determine the appeal on the basis of the amended plan. As such, the second reason for refusal falls away.

Main Issue

5. Therefore, having regard to the above, the remaining main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

6. The appeal site currently comprises a garage on a parcel of land to the side of the host property, No.58 Radlett Road.
7. The site is bounded on one side by existing development with a side garden/driveway to the other side. It fronts onto Radlett Road with residential gardens to the rear. The proposal would replace the existing garage with a small, detached dwelling.
8. The pattern of development in the immediate area is predominantly uniform in terms of layout, following clearly defined building lines with consistent plot widths and frontages used for car parking. The properties within Radlett Road include both bungalow and two-storey dwellings, but the street scene surrounding the appeal site predominantly consists of two-storey semi-detached houses with garages. Although some of these dwellings have had hip to gable extensions and other alterations, there is a strong prevailing pattern with most properties in general harmony with each other in terms of their character and appearance.
9. The appeal site is constrained in size and scale by No.58 abutting the shared boundary and the gap to the building at No.56 Radlett Road is relatively narrow. When compared to other plots in the area, the appeal site is narrower in width than that of the prevailing size. The proposal would cover the majority of the site width leaving a small gap between it and the adjacent properties. Because of its very close proximity to the boundary within the narrow plot, the proposed development would appear to be cramped in a manner that would conflict with the prevailing pattern in Radlett Road and this would result in harm to the character and appearance of the street scene.
10. The design, scale and proportions of properties in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site are generally in harmony with each other. The front elevation of the proposed development significantly contrasts with the scale and proportions of the adjacent properties which are taller and wider. These differences would be accentuated by the close proximity of the adjacent properties, making the proposed development stand out in the street scene in an incongruous manner.
11. The ridge line of the proposed development would be aligned with the eaves of adjacent properties No.56 and No.58. Therefore, the significant difference in scale of the proposal in comparison to the much larger scale of the adjacent buildings would be emphasised and look at odds with the character of the street scene. In addition, although the flat roof would be largely concealed from casual view, the proposed large flat section of the scheme's roof, with pitches to front and rear, would be at odds with the prevailing character of roof forms on adjacent properties, resulting in an incongruous addition to the street scene.
12. Although the proposal would use similar material to adjacent properties, the proposed part single storey front elevation height of the development contrasts with the adjacent two-storey properties, resulting in the proposed development being out of proportion with the houses on either side. Although it would be a low-profile addition to the street scene and is modest in height, size and scale, it does occupy a prominent position when viewed from the street scene as the appeal site directly faces onto Radlett Road. There are large-scale commercial uses nearby, however, these are separated from the residential character of

the street by a well-established green buffer which helps to divide the residential from the commercial use.

13. The appellant sets out that the proposal is for infill development and therefore subject to compromise due to the inherent constraints of this type of development. Nevertheless, the proposal is still subject to the policies in the development plan.
14. The appellant also quotes the Council's Residential Design Guide (RDG) as stating that, in the case of infill development, it is important that proposals respect, but not necessarily in all instances replicate, the height and scale of nearby buildings. I consider that the addition of a narrower, detached dwelling with a lower roof ridge, set amongst a pattern of semi-detached buildings on wider plots with gaps between each set of two dwellings, would look incongruous and not respect the height and scale of the existing development, and therefore fails to meet the standards of the RDG.
15. Although the appellant maintains that the appeal site is an anomalous gap, my site observations indicate that there is a predominant pattern of gaps at first floor level between pairs of semi-detached dwellings within the immediate vicinity of the appeal site. Therefore, I do not consider it to be an anomaly in the street scene.
16. The appellant proposes to provide landscaping to the front of the property to soften the hard surfaces. My site observations indicate that the street scene is generally hard surfaced, and landscaping would add a positive benefit to the quality of the visual appearance of Radlett Road. However, this would not outweigh the harms identified above.
17. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policies QD6.2 and QD6.4 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 which require developments to respond to design principles and reflect the character of the area. In addition, Chapter 12 of National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) seeks to ensure that developments add to overall quality of the area, be visually attractive and are sympathetic to local character.

Other Matters

18. The Council cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites and the shortfall is described as "substantial". Consequently, the provisions of footnote 7, paragraph 11 d) ii. of The Framework should be applied.
19. Set against the harm identified there would be limited social and economic benefits associated with the proposal. An additional residential unit would make little difference to the overall supply of housing and the support one extra household would provide to the local economy would also be insignificant. And although the site is within easy walking and cycling distance of local facilities, parks and public transport, these benefits are tempered by the small scale of development. Consequently, the adverse impacts on the character and appearance of the area would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole. As a result, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not apply.

Conclusion

20. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the development conflicts with the development plan, read as a whole. No material considerations have been shown to carry sufficient weight to warrant a decision otherwise than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

J Wellstead

INSPECTOR