



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 May 2023

by A. J. Boughton MA (IPSD) Dip.Arch. Dip.(Conservation) RIBA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 28 June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/W/22/3309487

1 Trefusis Walk Watford WD17 3BP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant outline planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mrs Alka Patel against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 22/00714/FUL, dated 10 June 2022, was refused by notice dated 4 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is Demolition of existing dwelling replaced with new 5-bedroom property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. Subsequent to the issue of their decision notice, the Council adopted the Watford Local Plan 2021-38 on 22 October 2022. I have determined this matter accordingly.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the host dwelling and street scene.

Reasons

4. Trefusis Walk is a relatively short residential road containing some 23 dwellings of which 10 are semi-detached in pairs, being, with a proportion of the detached houses, including No.3 Trefusis Walk (No.3) and the appeal site largely in their original form. Although the appellant suggests the detached houses are 'all of...different design/architectural detailing' this is to dismiss the contribution of design variation within a dwelling typology that achieves a unified character from consistent use of materials and a palette of distinctive details. Many of these houses retain distinctive architectural features associated with its mid-twentieth-century origins not subsequently found.
5. But for some recent changes, Trefusis Walk (The Street) is characterised by steep-pitched plain-tiled hipped roof forms with swept eaves, and some distinctive bespoke details such as the chamfered recessed entrances found in the 5 pairs of semi-detached houses in the centre of the street. Where there are projecting wings (variously gabled or hipped) these are of shallow projection and narrow in width. Detailing, where original, is evocative of a period where external use of joinery timber was avoided or minimised. Such

details are found in 1 Trefusis Walk (No.1) where creased-tile gable brackets appear in the entrance gable and can be associated with eaves details found on many of the original buildings. For the same reasons it is likely that the original windows would have been Crittall-type metal windows such as (or similar to) those which appear in No.11 Trefusis Walk.

6. Overall the street presents a significant degree of consistency in height, frontage alignment and use of material with details evocative of the period except for a few recent insertions or changes to the street scene which have affected the dominant architectural form and its calm suburban character. Although a number of dwellings are of individual design which do not display the distinctive detailing I have referred to, these are not prominent or obtrusive, being located mostly in the sweep of plots at the far (northern) end of the Street. These do not deplete the prevailing character of the Street, however the most recent developments opposite the appeal site¹ are prominently placed, eroding the distinctive character of the street and relating poorly to the appeal site and its neighbours.
7. The appeal site, No.1 is a detached house of modest scale which exemplifies the characteristics I have identified with symmetry and balance and a finesse of construction details. Whilst No.1 has no statutory protection, Policy QD6.4 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-38 (Local Plan) requires new buildings to 'positively contribute to the local area' and (at (a)) that '...where local character and identity has been eroded, the design of new buildings should reinforce the positive and enhance the negative qualities of the area'. The Watford Residential Design Guide 2016 (Design Guide) refers at Section 7 to understanding a site's context as being 'a key aspect of achieving good quality design' and that it is 'essential to ensure that the proposed development reinforces local characteristics.
8. The appellant seeks to justify the scale and size of the proposal, stating that the proposal 'follows a language that is present in the street scape' and using 'traditional construction methods' but what is proposed would not only place a building of much greater height and width than the one it replaces such that No.3 would be dominated by the bulk and mass of its neighbour, it would do so with little reference to the prevailing character of the street. The Design and Access statement explains a response to the pre-application comments as providing 'more detailing so that the scheme has greater street appeal' however, to my mind, what is proposed would introduce a 21st-Century ubiquity of appearance which pays little attention to what is currently found.
9. I conclude the proposal would further erode and not enhance local character and would, due to its substantial height, width and prominent location, inappropriately dominate and, by its design and detailing, harm the character and appearance of the street scene. This would, as I have reasoned, conflict with the relevant policies of the development plan including the Design Guide such that, taking all matters raised into account, the appeal cannot succeed.

Andrew Boughton

INSPECTOR

¹ No.2 and 2a Trefusis Walk