



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 November 2023

by L Reid BSc (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/23/3323326

13 Church Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD17 4PY

- 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 Miss Sharanpreet Heer against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 23/00263/FULH, dated 27 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 18 May 2023.
 - The development proposed is described as replacing existing single glazed Sash Windows with double glazed sash windows, for Front upstairs Bedroom and downstairs Lounge, rear upstairs bedroom and downstairs lounge. Replacement of existing uPVC patio door with new uPvc door - size mm x 2160mm
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Nascot Conservation Area, having particular regard to the significance of the host building as a non-designated heritage asset.

Reasons

3. As the appeal site is within the Nascot Conservation Area (the CA), I have had regard to Section 72(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which requires that special attention be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.
4. The Nascot Conservation Area Character Appraisal (the CA Appraisal) identifies that most of the buildings in the area date from the mid to late 19th century, resulting in general similarities in terms of materials and features. The significance of the CA primarily derives from the mostly intact Victorian suburban form and character of the area.
5. The host building is a two storey house that is part of a terrace that is locally listed and is a non-designated heritage asset. The house's distinctive external features are largely replicated on the adjoining houses which gives a pleasing appearance. The significance of the terrace is derived from its age and broadly uniform form and appearance, preserving an example of later Victorian architecture and by virtue of this, it also positively contributes to the significance of the CA.

6. The house has original timber framed sash windows in the front and rear elevation which are of a traditional appearance with a distinctive glazing bar pattern. These windows contribute to the significance of the house through their intricate detailing and historic origins. The Local List designation also makes specific reference to these windows.
7. The CA Appraisal highlights examples of the loss of building features through unsympathetic alterations to the external elevations and references the replacement of original wooden framed windows with poorly suited uPVC windows as a particular problem.
8. It is indicated that the proposed windows would be a like for like design with the existing ones. However, the window order invoice shows that the design of the replacement windows in the front elevation would not match the glazing bar detailing of the existing windows. The windows at No. 15 Church Road are referred to as an example of how the windows would be designed. I was able to observe these windows and they appear to have a thicker frame, and thicker glazing bars and are in contrast with the slender profile of the design of the timber framed windows and do therefore not match the appearance of these windows.
9. It is not clear whether the replacement windows would reflect the slenderness of the existing timber frame with integral glazing bars, which is reflective of traditional joinery. Typically, uPVC window frames have a shiny and manufactured finish and lack the 'woodgrain effect' of traditionally constructed timber framed windows. As such, based on the evidence before me, I cannot be certain that the replacement uPVC windows would replicate the appearance of the existing timber framed windows.
10. I recognise the age of the windows and the impact that this has on the appellant in terms of difficulty opening the windows and safety risks. However, from my observations of the windows and that there is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate otherwise, the existing windows could be repaired, and the glazing refurbished and upgraded to overcome these issues. Nonetheless, even if I were to accept the existing windows cannot be repaired and upgraded, it has not been robustly demonstrated that appropriately designed timber framed windows would be an unviable option.
11. The proposal would result in the loss of remaining historic features of the house. The introduction of non-traditional materials, particularly on the front elevation, which is visible from public views, would noticeably alter and modernise the house's overall appearance. This would diminish the positive contribution the house makes to the character and appearance of the terrace and the CA. As the effect would involve a single house in the CA, the harm that would arise would be 'less than substantial', within the meaning of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). The Framework is clear that where a development would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a heritage asset, that harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
12. I have taken into account the appellant's desire to improve the energy efficiency of the windows. However, this would be a benefit mostly to the appellant and would not be of a scale to the benefit of the public at large. I appreciate the appellant's previous alterations and intentions to improve the appearance of the house, however, this would not amount to a public benefit

that would be capable of overcoming the harm that I have identified above. I therefore find that there are no public benefits of the proposal that would outweigh the less than substantial harm.

13. For these reasons, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Nascot Conservation Area and would cause harm to the significance of the host building as a non-designated heritage asset. It would therefore conflict with Policies HE7.1, HE7.2 and HE7.3 of the Watford Local Plan 2021 – 2038 and the Framework. These policies, amongst other things, require alterations to preserve the character and appearance of designated and non-designated heritage assets with clear and convincing justification for any harm to their significance.

Other Matters

14. There are examples of other windows in the terrace which do not replicate the appearance of the original windows, however, I have not been provided with the full details of these windows and I am not aware of the planning status of these alterations. In any event, I must base my decision on the merits of the appeal proposal before me. Modern replacements are not justified by other pre-existing modern alterations. As such, these examples alone do not justify the loss of the original windows and the design proposed and do not alter my findings on this appeal.
15. I note that the appellant wishes to discuss alternative proposals to overcome the reasons for refusal and get clarification on the differences with the neighbouring properties. However, this is a matter for the appellant to address directly with the Council.

Conclusion

16. The proposal would fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and it would not be in accordance with the development plan when read as a whole. There are no other relevant material considerations, including those of the Framework, that have been shown to carry sufficient weight to indicate a decision otherwise than in accordance with it. Therefore, the appeal should be dismissed.

L Reid

INSPECTOR