



# Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 January 2024

**by Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge BA (Hons) MTP MRTPI IHBC**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 07.02.2024**

---

**Appeal Ref: APP/N1540/W/23/3327087**

**20 South Road, Harlow, Essex CM20 2AP**

- 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 Derek Lawless of D P Lawless Ltd against the decision of Harlow District Council.
  - The application Ref HW/FUL/23/00155, dated 6 April 2023, was refused by notice dated 4 July 2023.
  - The development proposed is additional storey to an existing single storey building to provide offices above a warehouse.
- 

## Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

## Preliminary Matters

2. A revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 19 December 2023. There were no substantive changes of relevance to this appeal. Amended paragraph numbers are referenced below.

## Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.

## Reasons

4. The appeal site is located on the corner of South Road and Central Road in an industrial estate on the northern edge of Harlow. The site contains a single storey building at the end of a long terrace of industrial units as well as an area of hardstanding to one side. The main building has a gable ended roof which is replicated along much of the terrace and on the terrace opposite in a zigzag fashion. A flat roof extension is positioned to the side adjacent to the hardstanding. Like much of the terrace, the building is constructed from brick with a metal roof and metal cladding at the rear.
5. Due to its corner location, the existing building is prominent from the surrounding streets. It forms part of a coherent street scene along this part of South Road in terms of building heights and materials. Nevertheless, there have been alterations to units within the terrace. Some have front porches. There are flat roof units at Nos 9 and 10, metal cladding on the front gable at No 8, and two storey units at Nos 4 to 7 with brick and render at ground floor and metal cladding at first floor. Buildings to the north, east and south-east of the site are two storey with a mix of brick, render and metal cladding. Therefore, while the character and appearance of the area is varied, it benefits from a range of materials including the use of brick on most buildings.

6. The proposed development would remove the gable roof in favour of a shallow pitched roof set behind parapet walls. The building would be around half a metre taller than the apex of the existing roof with a larger box-like form. A front porch would be added. The external materials would be silver and dark grey metal cladding and uPVC windows.
7. While the proposed development would be taller than much of the remaining terrace, the overall height would be similar to Nos 4 to 7 and other buildings nearby and the addition of porch would not be out of keeping. However, the use of only metal cladding with no brick or even render would result in a stark and uncompromising appearance. There would also be an awkward castellated design where the silver cladding meets the dark grey cladding that would be at odds with buildings in the surrounding area. Thus, the proposed development because of its materials would be overly prominent, incongruous and unattractive and result in harm to the character and appearance of the area.
8. Materials can often be conditioned to match the existing building or be approved via the submission of samples. However, the plans and application form clearly show metal cladding and so it would not be reasonable to significantly alter the design within the parameters of what has been applied for. The appellant could discuss suitable materials and design with the Council as part of any resubmission.
9. The enlarged building would provide more office and workshop space to benefit future occupants. Although the evidence before me is limited, I note that the building dates from the early phase of Harlow New Town and could benefit from refurbishment. It could also encourage the renewal of other units in this terrace. However, these benefits could be realised through a better overall design and so they do not outweigh the harm I have identified.
10. In conclusion, the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. Therefore, it would not accord with Policy PL1 of the Harlow Local Development Plan 2020 which, amongst other things, seeks a high standard of urban and architectural design for all development that responds to the scale, height, massing, architectural details, materials and front boundary treatments of the surrounding area and is visually attractive. It would also not adhere to NPPF paragraph 139 which says that development which is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies.

### **Conclusion**

11. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

*Tom Gilbert-Wooldridge*

INSPECTOR