



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 July 2024

by J Somers BSocSci (Planning) MA (HEC) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/24/3342521

26 Coates Way, Watford WD25 9NS

- 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 P McEwan against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Reference is 23/01051/FULH.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Proposed rear dormer loft conversion, redesign of front porch, reposition of front window and internal alterations.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed insofar as it relates to the proposed rear dormer loft conversion.
2. The appeal is allowed insofar as it relates to the redesign of the front porch, and repositioning of front window, and planning permission is granted for the redesign of the front porch, and repositioning of front window; at 26 Coates Way, Watford WD25 9NS in accordance with the terms of the application Reference 23/01051/FULH, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall be commenced within a period of no later than three (3) years from the date of this decision notice.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drawings listed below:
 - Proposed Plans and Elevations, Drawing No. BD/23/08/2A, Dated August 2023;
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Preliminary Matters

3. The application description on the Appellant's application form notes that permission is sought for 'internal alterations.' For the avoidance of doubt, internal alterations in this particular scheme does not require planning consent and are therefore not considered as part of this decision.
4. The Planning Officer Report notes that the main contention is with the dormer roof extension to the rear roof plane, with the Planning Officer's Report stating that the proposed porch and window relocation is made in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan. With this in mind, I have no reason to

dispute the opinion of Council officers regarding the acceptability of these elements of the scheme with this letter being focused purely upon the proposed rear dormer roof extension. As the porch and windows are both physically and functionally severable, I consider a split decision would be a logical outcome.

Main Issue

5. Taking the above into account, the main issue is the effect of the rear dormer window upon the appeal property and the character and appearance of the locality.

Reasons

6. The appeal property is located along Coates Way, a residential road that appears to be part of an urban expansion that contains a speculative development of terraced and semi-detached dwellings which appear to date from the mid-twentieth century. The dwellings follow a very organised and planned estate with curved roads, and dwellings set amongst large areas of greenspace. Dwellings have a homogenous appearance with similar designs, setbacks and a layout that responds to the greenspace surrounding. There are groups of terraces which front greenspace instead of Coates Road, with these groups of dwellings having a prominent appearance which acts as a gateway into the greenspace. These dwellings whilst simple and functional in their design form with pitched roof forms, the ends of the terrace contain hipped roof forms, which protrude past the front and the rear of the terrace.
7. Materials within the area are similar with two storey red/brown brick construction with coaxial chimney stacks and concrete roof tiles. The dwellings along the street have similar front and side setbacks with front gardens and low boundary walls which give an openness in and around the dwellings with the tops of large mature vegetation which is visible between gaps along the street and set within well planted mature vegetation and greenspace which dominates the experience of the area. These elements contribute towards the positive characteristics, appearance and local distinctiveness of the locality. Whilst there is evidence of roof extensions, they do provide a distraction to the positive elements of the street scene. I disagree with the Appellant's Statement of Case (SoC) that these roof extensions represent a 'significant transformation of the area' with these types of extensions being the minority and not part of the positive character and appearance of the area.
8. The appeal dwelling contains many of these positive characteristics, being a mid-terraced property as part of the characteristic groups of terraces which front the large areas of greenspace. The dwelling is quite visible from the greenspace with all three sides of the dwelling quite visible. Whilst the appeal site is now mid-terraced, it is evident that the dwelling was once an end terraced property that has since been extended to form another dwelling, with the appeal dwelling maintaining the characteristic forward and rear protruding hipped roof form. Whilst the side extension to the appeal site does form a distraction to the overall design of the terrace, the presence of the hipped roof form enables one to acknowledge the original design as part of the planned estate.
9. In undertaking an assessment of design and character, the Watford Local Plan (LP) Policies QD6.2 and QD6.4 list a number of design related principles such

as ensuring high quality design, having regard to the local context, conserving and enhancing character, amongst others. These policies are also supported by the Watford Residential Design Guide (RDG) which specifically mentions considerations regarding dormer windows such as always harmonising with the existing building; respecting the character of the existing building, with considerations around size, shape, pitch, detailing, and proportion, amongst others.

10. Given the design of the appeal dwelling with a forward and rear protruding roof form, the proposed dormer window would remove this roof detail by the erection of a relatively large dormer window. Given that the roof form is designed to project past the remainder of the terrace, the dormer window would be very large and also project past the roof form of the remaining terrace giving an awkward and overly bulky appearance when seen amongst the remaining dwellings as part of the terrace. I disagree with comments in the Appellant's SoC which suggest that the roof is not visible due to being on the rear; due to the row of terraces being positioned side-on and fronting the greenspace, the rear is very visible from the street scene. I also note comments that there are other roof extensions in the area, and whilst I have not been given any examples, from my site visit I did not see any roof extensions of this size or bulk located to the characteristic end of terraced properties in this location. Despite this, it is noted by the Council that some large roof extensions may have been constructed under permitted development rights, which is a separate consideration from the assessment of a scheme in accordance with the Development Plan.
11. Consequently, and in conclusion of this matter, the proposed roof form of the dormer roof extension does present as an incongruous form of development which does harm the character and appearance of the area and would be contrary to LP Policies QD6.2 and QD6.4, which is supported by the RDG as explained above.

Conclusions and Conditions

12. For these reasons and having considered all matters raised in evidence and from what I saw during my site visit, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed in relation to the front porch and relocation of window, and planning permission be dismissed in relation to the rear dormer window.
13. The Council in their Appeal Form response detailed that should the appeal be allowed, that conditions regarding time limit, approved plans and materials which match existing be placed on any decision notice. I have considered the conditions as specified in the beginning of this letter in accordance with the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). Suggested Conditions 1, 2 and 3 are standard conditions which notes the approved plans which are necessary for the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning and enables the development to fit in with the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the locality.

J Somers

INSPECTOR