



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 November 2024

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th November 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/W/24/3345802

227 St Albans Road, Watford WD24 5BH

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Gowda against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 23/00954/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the erection of a mansard roof with dormer windows and skylights.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matter

2. The appellant has confirmed that the existing brick chimneystack on the elevation of the appeal property facing Regent Street is to be retained, with revised plans also referred to. The appellant has explained that this feature was omitted from the existing and proposed drawings that accompanied the planning application due to software problems. I have taken this intention into account in my assessment of the proposal.

Background and main issue

3. The Council has recently granted planning permission for a dormer extension on the side roof slope of No 227 and 6 rooflights, which I am advised are similar to those sought as part of the proposal before me. The Council also raises no objection to the 7th rooflight, as sought. From the submitted evidence, I have no reason to reach a different conclusion on these elements of the appeal scheme.
4. Therefore, the main issue is the effect of the new mansard style roof extension on the character and appearance of the host building and the local area.

Reasons

5. A new mansard style roof extension is to be introduced at the rear of the appeal property, which is a 2-storey end terrace building in mixed use. It occupies a prominent corner position at the junction between St Albans Road and Regent Street, within the St Albans Road District Centre, which is mixed in character.
6. The new addition would be set back from the edges of the host roof and include several dormer windows on its slopes. The proposed fenestration would be appropriate, as would be the external materials to match those of the existing building. There would, however, be a significant increase in the size and

volume of the host building and a resultant gain in prominence within the local street scene with the new built form in place.

7. Although the flat roof of the new mansard would not be readily evident at ground level, it would be considerable in extent. The long, unbroken ridgeline running broadly parallel to Regent Street would be visible from the road, the visual effect of which would be to emphasise the depth, scale and mass of the new addition. When seen from Regent Street, the new roof would draw the eye as substantial in-built form. It would appear overly large, bulky and, as a result, visually dominant, even with tall and substantial buildings in the vicinity of the site such as 188-196 and 261 St Albans Road. By also raising the height of the host building, the appeal scheme would also be noticeably taller than, and so relate more awkwardly to, the adjacent 2-storey residential terrace on Regent Street. For all these reasons, the proposal would be an unsympathetic and an unwelcome addition to the local area. The retention of the existing chimneystack at the side of No 227 would not overcome the identified harm.
8. The proposed roof design would set the new addition apart from most other buildings in the locality, where dual pitched roofs predominate. Nevertheless, a contrasting roof shape would not necessarily look out of place especially given the corner position of the site next to a road junction, which provides an opportunity to establish a focal point. Furthermore, the area within which the site is located is capable of successfully accommodating a variety of buildings in terms of style, size and height. I observed examples of roofs on buildings near to the site that differ in shape with neighbouring properties including those to which the appellant has referred. In my experience, developments that contrast in style can contribute to the diversity of an area and add visual interest to the street scene to which they belong. However, in this case, the excessive scale, mass and proportions of the new mansard style roof together with its prominent position in views along Regent Street, would result in a form of development that would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the host building and the local area.
9. To my mind, the existing flat roofs towards the side and rear of the existing appeal building, contribute little positively to its intrinsic character and appearance. It is also possible that the appeal scheme would prompt improvements to other parts of the property, such as restoring the existing brick walls and tidying up the Regent Street elevation, which includes a fire escape, air conditioning units, exposed wiring and an external flue. However, there would be other ways to secure these improvements than introducing an inappropriate roof level extension, as proposed.
10. The appellant has drawn my attention to the Council's decisions to approve mansard roofs at 3-5 Acre House Hyde Road, and along St Albans Road, at Nos 188-196 and 261. Few background details of these schemes have been provided and so I cannot be sure that their circumstances are the same or very similar to those of the proposal. While I saw some examples of mansard roofs in the local area, their relationship to the host building and within their street scene differ to those of the proposal. Consequently, these cases are not directly comparable with the appeal scheme. In any event, each development should be assessed on its own merits, as I have done.
11. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) supports the use of airspace above existing residential and commercial premises for new homes.

However, that support is qualified. The Framework explains that mansard roof extensions should be allowed on suitable properties where their external appearance harmonises with the original building. It also states that new development should be sympathetic to local character and add to the overall quality of the area. For the reasons given, that would not be the case with the proposal before me.

12. On the main issue, I conclude that the proposed mansard style roof extension would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the host building, and the local area. As such, it is contrary to Policies QD6.2 and QD6.4 of the Watford Local Plan 2021–2038. These policies require development proposals to show how they would positively contribute to high quality design and place making, and how their scale and massing relates to the context.
13. The appeal scheme would make more efficient use of space available at roof level. The living conditions of others would not be adversely affected by the new development. The finished building would be energy efficient. The construction process would also create jobs and boost the local economy. These matters do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified.

Conclusion

14. Overall, the development conflicts with the development plan, when read as a whole. There are no material considerations, including the policies of the Framework, which indicate that the decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan.
15. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR