
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 January 2025

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 05 March 2025

Appeal Reference: APP/Y1945/D/24/3351779

52 Leggatts Way, Watford, Hertfordshire WD24 5ND

- 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. J. Dobos against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 24/00688/FULH.
 - The development proposed is a two-storey side extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a two-storey side extension, at 52 Leggatts Way, Watford, Hertfordshire WD24 5ND, in accordance with the terms of the application (reference 24/00688/FULH), subject to the conditions set out in the attached Schedule of Conditions.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr. J. Dobos (the Appellant) against Watford Borough Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Preliminary points

3. The National Planning Policy Framework was revised in December 2024 but, in this instance, the issues most relevant to the appeal remain unaffected by the revisions that have been made to it. I am therefore satisfied that there is no requirement to seek further submissions on the revised Framework, and that no party would be disadvantaged by such a course of action. In this appeal, I have had regard to the most recent version, of course.

Main issue

4. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings.

Reasons

5. The appeal site is located in an extensive residential area of north Watford. This part of the suburban area is characterised by wide roads and generous verges that create an open and attractive townscape. Specifically, the appeal site faces a roundabout at the junction of Leggatts Way and The Harebreaks, set back from the roundabout itself by an area of open grassy space, set with some mature trees, with a large park immediately to the north-east, across The Harebreaks. Number

52 Leggatts Way and number 205 The Harebreaks form a pair of semi-detached houses, facing the roundabout.

6. The semi-detached pair, of which number 52 Leggatts Way is one, are both rendered externally, although they are differently finished. They retain the original main structural form, with a pitched roof covering both properties, but they have both been altered over the years and the original symmetry of the design has been eroded. The two houses are at the same level, but there is a significant difference in ground level between Leggatts Way and The Harebreaks, at this point, with the result that the ground floor of number 52 Leggatts Way is below the level of that road.
7. It is now proposed to add a two-storey side extension to number 52 Leggatts Way, enlarging the ground floor living space by the addition of a new kitchen and utility room, with an extension to the main bedroom on the first floor.
8. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, by adding to the overall quality of the area and being visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history, although it is also recognised that appropriate change may include increased densities. The achievement of good design includes providing good standards of accommodation in new development.
9. An emphasis on the importance of encouraging good design more generally is also to be found in the Development Plan. In particular, Policy QD6.4 of the 'Watford Local Plan 2021-2038' sets out specific criteria for achieving well designed buildings that reflect the character of the area.
10. The Council's 'Residential Design Guide' (which was adopted in 2014 and amended in 2016) is also relevant but it does not have the force of the statutory Development Plan. It does, however, reinforce the principle that proposed house extensions should "respect the character and scale of the host building" as well as "the scale and character of properties within the street as a whole" (at paragraphs 8.2 and 8.3).
11. The appeal site and its neighbour occupy a prominent position facing the roundabout at the junction of Leggatts Way and The Harebreaks, but the properties are set well back from the road junction, behind an area of open space and some mature trees. Thus, they merge into the streetscene, without being unduly intrusive. It is clear that the proposed new side extension would further erode the asymmetry of the semi-detached pair of houses, but the symmetry in itself is not, in my opinion a crucial element of the design or of the streetscene.
12. The proposed development would add a new two-storey side extension to the existing house, that would be subservient to the main structure and in keeping with the traditional design. The finished scheme would be traditional in character, constructed of appropriate materials and creating a harmonious overall design that would not harm the character and appearance of the host building and would be in keeping with its surroundings. Evidently, there would be some further erosion of the symmetry of the original semi-detached pair but that is not necessarily

- objectionable in my view, provided that the finished scheme achieves a good standard of design.
13. It is also the case that the side extension would project forward of front elevations along Leggatts Way, but it would not harm the character or appearance of the surroundings and it would not be so substantial as to appear intrusive in the streetscene, especially bearing in mind the fact that number 52 is sited well below the adjacent road level.
 14. The new hipped roof would be somewhat less attractive, in my view, than the alternative gable end that has been suggested in the submissions, but it does not significantly undermine the design consistency of the scheme, and it is acceptable in design terms. It is not necessary for a condition to be imposed to require a change to the submitted design.
 15. I have taken account of all the material that has been submitted in this case, including the outcome of the appeal relating to number 205 The Harebreaks that was dismissed in 2020. I have formed my own view of the design issue in respect of this site, however, and I have concluded that the proposed development would not harm the existing building or the surroundings. On the contrary, I find that the finished scheme would be in harmony with its surroundings and that it would comply with policies that are intended to promote good design, including with the Development Plan.
 16. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is “sustainable” in planning terms, and the proposed extension would be a useful addition to the accommodation at 52 Leggatts Way. The contribution that the appeal scheme would make to the provision of residential accommodation in the locality, even though it would be limited, weighs in favour of the appeal and increased densities are not to be ruled out as a matter of course.
 17. In short, I am persuaded that the scheme before me can properly be permitted, subject to conditions, and, although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the appeal submissions, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.
 18. I have, however, also considered the need for conditions and, in imposing conditions, I have taken account of the conditions suggested by the Council in the usual way (without prejudice to their main arguments in the appeal). In particular, I have concluded that conditions are necessary, to define the planning permission and to ensure that quality is maintained.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR

SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings:
 - unnumbered Ordnance Survey site plan (1:1250);
 - drawing number 000 (Separation Plan);
 - drawing number 001 (Site Location Plan, Existing and Proposed Block Plans);
 - drawing number 002 (Existing Ground and First Floor Plans);
 - drawing number 003 (Existing Loft Floor and Roof Plans);
 - drawing number 004 (Existing Front, Rear and Side Elevations);
 - drawing number 005 (Proposed Ground and First Floor Plans);
 - drawing number 006 (Proposed Loft Floor and Roof Plans);
 - drawing number 007 (Proposed Front, Rear and Side Elevations);
 - drawing number 008 (Existing and Proposed Street Scene Elevations).
- 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.