



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 May 2025

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

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 02 June 2025

Appeal Reference: APP/Y1945/W/25/3359472

119 St. Albans Road, Watford WD17 1RD

- 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. P. Fisher (A. A. Fisher (Properties) Limited) against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 24/01056/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as a "Single storey rear extension to the building to form a new studio flat at ground floor level".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. There are two main issues in this appeal. The first is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings in the Nascot Conservation Area. The second is the effect of the proposed development on the pressure for on-street parking in the vicinity of the appeal site.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located in a central area of Watford, with a frontage to the A412 St Albans Road and close to Watford Junction railway station. St Albans Road is a busy route into the town centre and the frontage is continuously built up along most of the western side of the road, predominantly with commercial premises on the ground floor. Upper floors appear to be occupied by flats in many cases.
4. The Nascot Conservation Area covers an area to the west of St Albans Road, including the appeal site itself. In character, this is predominantly an area of nineteenth century housing, closely built up and including some interesting buildings. It retains its Victorian character and urban pattern, although the area has continued to evolve and now exhibits a variety of architectural styles.
5. Number 119 St Albans Road incorporates a shop on the ground floor, opening off the footpath, with a two-storey building set further back, shared with number 117. The two-storey building is identified as a "locally listed building". As a residential building, it dated from the mid-nineteenth century, with commercial development having been inserted in front of the original building, although the upper floor appears to have been used as offices in the past. Currently, the submitted plans as

existing show that the building is laid out with a flat on the ground floor (behind the shop unit), with two flats on the first floor. Each of these flats has a single bedroom. The floor plans include a rear outshot that projects into the garden, alongside its neighbour.

6. It is now proposed to add an extension at the rear of the existing outshot, to create a new studio flat, with a single living area providing a kitchen, bedroom and living space, together with its own bathroom.
7. Provisions in the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 impose obligations on those considering whether to grant planning permission for development that would affect a conservation area. In such cases, decision makers are required to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of conservation areas affected by development proposals.
8. Those formal requirements are reinforced by the 'National Planning Policy Framework', especially at Section 16, which emphasises the importance of conserving or enhancing the historic environment, though it also points out the desirability of putting a heritage asset to its "optimum viable use" as does the 'Planning Practice Guidance'.
9. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' also emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" more generally (notably at Section 12). It is aimed at achieving good design standards 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, making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity.
10. An emphasis on the importance of protecting heritage assets and of encouraging good design is also to be found in the Development Plan.
11. Notably, Policies HE7.1 and HE7.2 of the 'Watford Local Plan 2021-2038' emphasise the need to protect the historic heritage, especially designated heritage assets, including conservation areas (Policy HE7.2). Policy HE7.3 focusses on preserving and enhancing the character, appearance and setting of non-designated heritage assets. Policies QD6.2 and QD6.4 of the 'Watford Local Plan 2021-2038' draw attention to the need to achieve high quality design, more generally.
12. The 'Watford Residential Design Guide' (which was adopted in 2014 and amended in 2016) is also relevant, although it does not have the force of the statutory Development Plan.
13. In relation to the parking issue, and under the broad heading "Promoting sustainable transport", Section 9 of the revised 'National Planning Policy Framework' deals with a number of transport related issues, including parking. Similarly, Policy ST11.1 of the 'Watford Local Plan 2021-2038' promotes sustainable travel behaviour and includes reference to traffic-demand management measures.
14. The proposed new single-storey extension would make use of traditional materials, being of brickwork with a pitched roof, but it would amount to an awkward addition to the rear of the existing locally listed building, not well related to its architectural form. The new extension would intrude into the original garden space and it would

- be out of keeping with the historic pattern of development and inimical to the established character of the area.
15. The proposed extension would not be visible from public viewpoints but, nonetheless, it would fail to preserve or enhance the character of the Nascot Conservation Area and would harm the architectural qualities and the immediate setting of the locally listed building at numbers 19 and 17 St Albans Road. Thus, it would conflict with national and local policies that are intended to protect the historic heritage and to promote good design.
 16. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is “sustainable” in planning terms, and the contribution that the appeal scheme would make to the provision of residential accommodation in the locality, by the creation of a new dwelling, weighs in favour of the appeal. On the other hand, the scheme would leave the existing ground floor flat with a poor outlook, while the new flat would be rather small. I am convinced that the objections which I have identified outweigh the benefits of the project.
 17. Turning to the parking issue, I have noted that there is obvious pressure for on-street parking provision in the vicinity of the appeal site. If the project were otherwise acceptable, a Unilateral Undertaking would be required, to remove parking permit entitlement for future occupiers of the proposed new flat, in order to prevent further pressure on parking. In the light of the appellant’s submissions on this issue, I acknowledge that this matter could have been resolved by the completion of a suitable Unilateral Undertaking, if there had been no other objections to the project.
 18. Notwithstanding the possibility that the parking issue could be resolved, however, I am convinced that the objections to the proposed development clearly outweigh the benefits. The proposals would harm the locally listed building and its setting and would detract from the character of the Nascot Conservation Area. It would fail to either preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area and would conflict with national and local planning policies, including the Development Plan.
 19. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme ought not to be allowed and, although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR