



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/25/3358348

Flat 2, Hilton House, Leavesden Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD24 5ED

- 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. A. Natarajan against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application reference is 24/00759/FULH.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as the construction of an outbuilding for use as a home office.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the residential amenities of neighbours (whether unacceptable harm would be caused to the outlook from the neighbouring property).

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located to the north of Watford town centre, in a closely built-up part of the urban area. Leavesden Road branches off the A412 St Albans Road, which is a major route out of from the town centre, and both are busy roads.
4. Hilton House is located near to the junction of the two roads, with its main frontage to Leavesden Road. It is a two-storey brick building, comprising two flats with a shared external area at the rear. This area is laid to gravel, with space for refuse wheelie bins near to the entrance into the site, as well as a small wooden storage building at the rear, behind the main bulk of Hilton House.
5. It is now proposed to remove the existing store and to construct a new outbuilding, which would be used by the occupier of Flat 2 as a “home office”.
6. 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, although it is also recognised that appropriate change may include increased densities. The achievement of good design includes protecting existing residential amenities.

7. Policies in the Development Plan also share these basic principles. In particular, Policies QD6.1, QD6.2 and QD6.4 of the 'Watford Local Plan 2021-2038' draw attention to the need to achieve high quality design in broad terms.
8. 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. In the Design Guide, Paragraph 8.4.1 reinforces the requirement that new development should not adversely affect neighbours' amenities.
9. Rear windows in Flat 1 look into the existing shared area, which does not provide an especially attractive outlook. The proposed new outbuilding would replace the existing store, although it would be rather larger. In particular, it would be higher and more bulky than the existing structure and it would amount to a very significant and intrusive feature in the shared open space.
10. In consequence, the new outbuilding would have a markedly greater impact on the outlook from habitable accommodation at the rear of Flat 1. I am convinced that the new structure would have a seriously detrimental effect on the residential amenities of Flat 1, because of its bulk and intrusive appearance, and that it would clearly conflict with planning policies that are intended to encourage good design. It would also conflict with the guidance that is expressly concerned with protecting neighbours' residential amenities.
11. I am conscious that the current occupier has not objected to the scheme, although I am aware that subsequent occupiers may take a different view and I have formed my own opinion of the proposal, therefore.
12. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is "sustainable" in planning terms, and the proposed development would be a useful facility. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the harm that would be done to the amenities of the occupier at Flat 1 clearly outweighs the benefits of the project. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan) and that it ought not to be allowed. 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