



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 September 2025

by Julian Shirley DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/W/25/3366111

73 Sandringham Road, Watford, Hertfordshire WD24 7BD

- 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 Domenico Calabrese against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 25/00006/FUL
 - The development proposed is described as “conversion of existing garage into a 1 bed single dwelling”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant has included a revised plan as part of the appeal showing internal and external changes to the proposal. I consider this would materially change the proposal subject of the original application. Therefore, I have considered this appeal based on the plans submitted with the planning application. The Procedure Guide for Planning Appeals (England) is clear that it is not the purpose of the appeal process to evolve a scheme from that upon which the Council made its decision.

Main Issues

3. The Council gave four reasons for refusing the proposed development. Based on what I have seen and read, the main issues are:
 - the effect that the proposed development would have on the character and appearance of the wider area.
 - the effect of the proposed development on the living conditions of occupants of the proposed dwelling and also neighbouring occupiers.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal property comprises a single storey garage with a pitched roof located to the rear of 73 Sandringham Road. The building has two garage doors fronting the pavement and provides access onto Windsor Road and side windows facing into the rear garden of 73 Sandringham Road. A two storey building at 3 Windsor Road

is located immediately adjacent to the property. This section of Windsor Road is generally characterised by rear gardens and side entrances to properties.

5. The surrounding area is characterised by a mix of semi-detached and terraced two storey houses. Terraced houses with front and rear gardens are generally located in Sandringham Road and further along Windsor Road to the east of the junction with Sandringham Road.
6. Whilst a large footprint, the appearance and siting of the property is typical of ancillary single storey garages and storage buildings sited within gardens at the rear of dwellings in the surrounding area.
7. The proposed development would introduce a new dwelling into a single storey building in the rear garden of an existing two storey property. External changes to the building would be required and a new access gate inserted into the existing boundary wall of 73 Sandringham Road. The proposal would also take up existing garden space of 73 Sandringham Road to provide amenity space, as well as a bin and bike store.
8. Ancillary buildings of differing sizes and appearance within the rear gardens of properties contribute to the established residential character of the surrounding area. Such buildings include garages and garden sheds and generally used for storage purposes associated with the main dwelling. The proposal would not read as part of the existing pattern of development and would appear as a jarring feature that would not be well integrated into the surrounding context. Therefore, a dwelling within the single storey converted garage would appear as an inappropriate form of residential development in the street scene.
9. For these reasons, therefore, the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the surrounding area. Consequently, it would conflict with Policies QD6.1, QD6.2 and QD6.4 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038. Taken together these policies require, amongst other matters, that proposals make a positive contribution to high-quality design that enhance the spaces between buildings and reflect the surrounding character and local context.

Living Conditions

10. I do not consider that the submitted plans show sufficient evidence to suggest that the dwelling would be occupied by two persons and thus the proposed dwelling would exceed minimum standards for a one person dwelling.
11. Notwithstanding the insertion of roof lights, the proposed dwelling would be served by only two windows giving direct outlook from the bedroom and kitchen area. The open plan main living area would be single aspect only from the kitchen window fronting Windsor Road. The limited proposed openings would not provide sufficient outlook thus creating a harmful sense of enclosure in what would be habitable rooms.
12. The boundary of the garden would comprise the wall of the property and a 2m high boundary fence on two sides. Due to its limited size, the outlook from this space would be poor and would feel enclosed. The amount of proposed private amenity space would, even on the basis of one person occupation, provide insufficient space for activities such as drying clothes or hosting visitors which you could reasonably expect a private amenity space to do. Therefore, I conclude that the

outside space in this instance would not be sufficient to provide adequate living conditions for the future occupants of the proposed dwelling.

13. I consider that the proposal would fail to secure acceptable living conditions for future occupiers of the proposed dwelling. It would therefore not accord with Policy QD6.4 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 which seeks that new residential buildings provide attractive internal and external environments and should receive good light and ventilation.
14. The distance between the proposal and the rear of the existing dwellinghouse at 73 Sandringham Road would fall short of the Council's Residential Design Guide 2014 (Amended 2016). This sets out a requirement of 11m between upper level habitable rooms and property boundaries to minimise overlooking of private gardens. Given the close proximity of the property to the main dwelling, this would harm the living conditions of future occupiers of the proposed dwelling and that of the existing occupiers at 73 Sandringham Road by way of the effect on privacy and overlooking.
15. I therefore find that the proposal would conflict with Policies QD6.2 and QD6.4 of the Watford Local Plan 2021-2038 and the Council's Residential Design Guide 2014 which promote the principles of well designed development with attractive internal and external spaces.

Other Matters

16. The appellant refers to backland development adjacent to the property at 3 Windsor Road granted under application reference 14/01708/FUL and its failure to comply with amenity standards. The issue of whether the policies were correctly applied at the time of that decision being taken, is not determinative to this appeal. Moreover, the current appeal must be determined on its merits against relevant policies and based on its individual circumstances, with regard to the evidence before me.
17. Notwithstanding, there are key differences with the appeal proposal, including the appearance and built form of the site. As such the adjacent site differs to the appeal site and I am unable to draw any direct comparisons with the matters raised in the appeal scheme before me. Accordingly, this example is of limited weight in my decision.
18. The Council's fourth reason for refusal refers to the failure of the proposal to demonstrate that the parking needs of the occupiers of the proposed dwelling could be met on site. During my site visit I observed that there were reasonable levels of available parking on the street near to the property. I am aware that my site visit was a single snapshot in time and parking levels may fluctuate during the day. However, I consider that the level of parking arising from this development would be low. Nevertheless, as I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons this is not a matter I need to consider further and does not need to be a main issue of the appeal.

Conclusion

19. For the reasons given above, the proposal would conflict with the development plan and there are no material considerations that would outweigh that conflict. I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Julian Shirley

INSPECTOR