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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 June 2022

**by P J Staddon BSc, Dip, MBA (Distinction), MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 14TH July 2022**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/W/22/3293387**

**32C Rickmansworth Road, WATFORD WD18 7HT**

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
  - The appeal is made by Mr Krishan Pattni against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
  - The application Ref 21/01448/FULH, dated 30 September 2021, was refused by notice dated 29 November 2021.
  - The development proposed is 'first floor rear extension and roof extension, facilitating the conversion of the existing roof with 2 No. dormers'.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Main issues

2. The main issues are:
  - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.
  - The effect of the proposal on the living conditions of occupants of No 34 Rickmansworth Road with regard to its physical impact.

### Reasons

#### *Background*

3. No 32C is a 1-bedroom flat situated on the first floor of a sub-divided former detached dwelling house. I understand that there are 3 other flats within the building. Whilst internally subdivided, the property retains its external appearance as a traditional style detached house, with a projecting full height bay on the front and a pitched roof, with hipped roof elements to the front and back.
4. It is part of a row of houses on this side of the road which includes differing styles, but seemingly dating from the same era. The dwellings along this stretch are set back from the road by modest front gardens of similar depth, a number of which, including the appeal property, have been hard surfaced to provide off-street parking.
5. The appeal property, and the row of dwellings running south-westwards, are all detached units but they are quite closely spaced, with separating distances limited to a few metres. To the north-east of the appeal property is York

House, which has a wide built frontage and appears to comprise residential accommodation operated by Watford Community Housing. To the rear of the row, the appeal property and its neighbours have mature gardens which back on to gardens of properties on Cassiobury Park Avenue to the north, creating a mature and leafy suburban character.

6. No. 32 has been extended at the rear with an addition which is part 2-storey (the north-eastern half) and part single storey (the south-western half). Part of the roof to the single storey element comprises a small balcony, which is accessed from a glazed door at first floor level (No. 32C).
7. Watford Borough Council (the Council) has granted planning permission<sup>1</sup> for a development described as 'erection of a first floor rear extension and roof extension, facilitating the conversion of the existing roof with 2 No. dormers'. That scheme involved retaining the hipped roof form, but slightly extending it rearwards, and introducing a wider 2-storey rear extension which spanned about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the width of the rear of the property. The permission was granted on 15 January 2021 and remains extant.
8. The appeal proposal would involve a full width rear extension which would accommodate a kitchen at first floor level and a large<sup>2</sup> bedroom and shower room at second floor level, lit by dormer windows which would be obscure glazed and a main window facing the rear garden. The existing rear roof hip would be replaced by an extended roof form, with the rear elevation of the addition being in the form of a full height gable.

#### *Character and appearance*

9. The roof form of the property, which involves full width hips at the front and rear, is a notable character feature of the original house. Whilst there are differing dwelling designs in the vicinity and varying roof forms, I observed that, where there are extensions, these typically appear to retain and respect the prevailing roof form, and the additions are generally subservient to the host property.
10. The full width rear extension with its full height gable design would remove the rear hip element entirely. This would be uncharacteristic and at odds with its traditional design and proportions. I noted on my site inspection that the addition would not be prominent in public views from Rickmansworth Road or from Cassiobury Park Avenue to the north, but it would be visible from neighbouring properties and their gardens and, in any event, being out of public view does not provide a basis for allowing poor and unsympathetic design.
11. I have noted the appellant's submission concerning the approval of a similar depth extension at the property, but the Council's refusal reason 1 referenced depth as one element, alongside siting, design and height. It is the combined effects of these parameters that leads to the harm I have identified.
12. On this main issue, I conclude that the appeal proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. This would conflict with policy UD1 of the Watford Local Plan Core Strategy 2006 – 2031 (adopted 2013) (the CS) and paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the

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<sup>1</sup> Watford Borough Council Planning Application Reference 20/01383/FULH

<sup>2</sup> Drawing No 212-002 Rev D notates the internal dimensions of the proposed bedroom as 6,795mm by 4,740mm

Framework), which require proposals to respect and be sympathetic to local character. It also conflicts with the Council's Residential Design Guide (2016) (the RDG) which requires extensions to be in harmony with the host building.

*Living conditions – No. 34 Rickmansworth Road*

13. The side wall of the appeal proposal would be in close proximity to the boundary with No. 34, the neighbouring property to the south-west. It would extend some distance beyond the rear wall of the main part of No. 34 (it has been extended in part) and would comprise a blank 2-storey wall with a pitched roof above, rising to the full height of the existing roof ridgeline.
14. The main parties do not disagree that the Council's 45° guideline is met with regard to impact on No. 34's windows. However, the extension, by virtue of its mass and proximity to the boundary, would have an enclosing and overbearing effect. When I visited the site, I noted that the garden area of No. 34 appears to be quite limited in depth, such that the appeal proposal would present a high wall in close proximity along a significant length of its garden amenity space. This would have the effect of making this garden space feel hemmed in by an imposing structure. Similar overbearing effects would be felt when viewed from ground floor windows.
15. On this main issue, I conclude that the appeal proposal would be harmful to the living conditions of No. 34 Rickmansworth Road. This would conflict with the RDG which requires extensions to respect neighbourliness and not adversely affect neighbours' amenity, including matters of outlook and avoiding the creation of an overbearing and oppressive sense of enclosure. It similarly conflicts with paragraph 130(f) of the Framework which requires developments to achieve a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.
16. I have noted that the Council has referred to policies UD1 and SS1 of the CS in its second reason for refusal. However, these do not appear to relate specifically to the consideration of amenity impacts and I therefore find no conflict with these policies.

*Other matters*

17. I have noted the appellant's submission that the appeal proposal would result in the removal of the existing balcony which currently allows overlooking of parts of No. 34's garden. Whilst acknowledging that this may be of some benefit to the living conditions of No. 34, that outcome would also be the case with the earlier approved scheme. In any event, it would not provide a basis for allowing development that I have assessed as being unacceptable for other reasons.

**Conclusion**

18. For the reasons stated above, the appeal is dismissed.

*P. Staddon*

INSPECTOR