



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 July 2024

by J Somers BSocSci (Planning) MA (HEC) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 08 August 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/Y1945/D/24/3343601

32 Bucks Avenue, Watford WD19 4AS

- 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 Ms Sarah James against the decision of Watford Borough Council.
 - The application Reference is 23/01160/FULH.
 - The development proposed is described as 'The erection of a first-floor extension at the rear, and the addition of a loft conversion to the existing dwelling. With the removal of one chimney breast on the side of the property.'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Planning Officer Report notes that the main contention is with the loft conversion which includes a hip to gable roof extension and dormer roof extension to the rear roof and removal of the chimney stack. The Planning Officer's Report states that the proposed first floor rear extension is made in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan. With this in mind, I have no reason to dispute the opinion of Council officers regarding the acceptability of these elements of the scheme with this letter being focused purely upon the matters in dispute. Whilst I have also considered the possibility of a split decision, as the first floor rear extension is not both physically and functionally severable from the proposal in this particular arrangement, a split decision in this particular case would not be possible.

Main Issue

3. Taking the above into account, the main issue is the effect of the loft conversion, removal of chimney stack and rear dormer window upon the appeal property and the character and appearance of the locality.

Reasons

4. The appeal property is located along Bucks Avenue, a residential road that appears to be part of an urban expansion that contains a speculative development of semi-detached dwellings which appear to date from the mid-twentieth century. The dwellings are quite regimented in their design and layout with similar designs, setbacks and layout. Dwellings are typical of their age in terms of design with simple and functional design forms with hipped roof forms with large chimney stacks to the edges, concrete roof tiles and dwellings constructed of brick and some dwellings clad in pebbledash. The dwellings

along the street have similar front and side setbacks with front gardens and low boundary walls which give an openness in and around the dwellings with the tops of large mature vegetation visible between gaps along the street. These elements contribute towards the positive characteristics, appearance and local distinctiveness of the locality. Whilst there is evidence of roof extensions, they are generally subservient to the form of the roof and do not result in a loss of the distinctive hipped roof. Where there has been isolated cases of a loss of the hipped roof form, the asymmetrical appearance does cause negative impacts upon the character and appearance of the street scene.

5. The appeal dwelling contains many of these positive characteristics, being one of the characteristic halves of the semi-detached dwellings with hipped roof, two large chimney stacks which contributes to the positive elements of the character and appearance of the area and enables one to acknowledge the original design as part of the planned estate.
6. In undertaking an assessment of design and character, the Watford Local Plan (LP) Policies QD6.1, QD6.2 and QD6.4 list a number of design related principles such as ensuring high quality design, having regard to the local context, conserving and enhancing character, amongst others. These policies are also supported by the Watford Residential Design Guide (RDG) which specifically mentions considerations regarding roof extensions such as always harmonising with the existing building; respecting the character of the existing building, with considerations around size, shape, pitch, detailing, and proportion, amongst others.
7. Given that the appeal site is half of a pair of semi-detached dwellings, the proposed hip-to-gable roof extension would give an a-symmetrical appearance which would appear awkward and out-of-keeping within this particular area, particularly given that the hipped roof form is a prominent and positive characteristic of the area. The roof extension would also result in the removal of one of the chimney stacks which is a positive design feature for these particular dwellings that informs their local character and distinctiveness. I also note commentary within the RDG whereby in order to present subservience, that dormer windows should be set down from the ridge in order to be subservient, which is not the case here with the apex of the proposed rear dormer window meeting the ridge of the existing roof.
8. I also note comments in the Appellant's Statement of Case (SoC) with regards to Lawful development Certificates (LDC) granted for dormer windows at 24 and 52 Talbot Avenue.¹ LDC's are granted under the provisions of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (GPDO) and are not assessed against the policies of the Development Plan. In other words, just because development is permitted under the GPDO, does not mean that they are acceptable when assessed against the policies of the Development Plan which is a separate process to the LDC. I also note discussion with regards to the first floor rear extension at No.13 Talbot Road,² however the hipped roof form and chimney stacks are maintained within this scheme. I can also appreciate that there are examples of hip-to-gable roof extensions in the area as indicated in the Appellant's SoC, however these were likely undertaken under permitted development, and illustrate the poor visual relationship to the street scene with the asymmetrical appearance. As such, the examples provided do not illustrate

¹ Council Planning Refs: 22/00229/LDC & 23/00253/LDC

² Council Planning Ref: 22/00460/FULH

the acceptability of the proposed scheme when considered against the policies of the Development Plan and any relevant material considerations.

9. Consequently, and in conclusion of this matter, the proposed roof form combined with the loss of chimney stack and dormer roof extension would present as an incongruous form of development which harms the character and appearance of the area and would be contrary to LP Policies QD6.1, QD6.2 and QD6.4, which is supported by the RDG as explained above.

Conclusion

10. For these reasons and having considered all matters raised in evidence and from what I saw during my site visit, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Somers

INSPECTOR