



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 June 2017

by Geoff Underwood BA(Hons) PGDip(Urb Cons) MRTPI IHBC

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 27 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N5090/W/17/3171384

141 Bell Lane, Hendon, London NW4 2AP

- 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 Bell Lane (Hendon) Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
- The application Ref 16/7925/FUL, dated 12 December 2016, was refused by notice dated 3 March 2017.
- The development proposed is to convert and add an additional flat into the roof space with a new dormer to rear elevation with roof light and part one and part two storey rear extensions and 2 off street parking spaces to the front. The existing garage in the rear garden is to be demolished and rebuilt.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue raised by this appeal is the effect the development would have on the character and appearance of the host property, the pair of semi-detached properties and the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property forms one half of a pair of semi-detached buildings, each comprising two flats, and they have a symmetrical appearance to front and rear. Although their detailed design differs from that of neighbouring semi-detached properties on Bell Lane they have hipped roofs in common with many of the surrounding buildings.
4. The proposal would extend the ground and first floor flats with a two storey, flat roofed rear extension and add an additional flat at roof level, partly accommodated in a 'hip to gable' extension to the side of the roof and a flat roof dormer to the rear roof slope. The alterations to the rear would be conspicuous from Hillview Gardens viewed across the relatively open gardens to the rear of 139 Bell Lane and through the gap between the rear of that property and 87 Hillview Gardens.
5. The large, flat roofed rear extension would appear as a bulky and awkward feature to the rear as a result of its mass, scale, design and siting. This incongruous effect would be exacerbated by the bulky flat roof dormer which would be located above it, but offset from the upper storey of the rear extension. The replacement of the hipped end of the roof would make the

appeal building appear noticeably unsymmetrical and unbalanced with No 139, as would the rear extensions.

6. Large rear dormers and 'hip to gable' roof extensions are present on a number of properties in the surrounding area. However, from my observations and noting those illustrated on the appellant's aerial photograph, some of the rear dormers are situated in less visible locations than the appeal proposal. Also, those dormers and 'hip to gable' extensions are not so prevalent as to appear as a defining or predominant feature of the area's roofscape, particularly that which exists on Bell Lane between Hillview Gardens and Kings Close. They have consequently not created a context within which the appeal proposal would sit comfortably.
7. Nevertheless, the large dormer and gable end at 143 Bell Lane next door provide a context next to which the proposal would appear slightly less incongruous. However, the combined effect of this and the proposal would narrow the gap between the two at roof level, altering the relationship between the two pairs of semi-detached properties. Moreover, the alterations at No 143 serve to confirm the detrimental effects such alterations can have on a host property, a pair of semi-detached buildings and the area. The appellant has drawn my attention to a dormer on the gable of 151 Bell Lane but this is of a materially different design with a lower ridge and inset dormer cheek to the front. These other developments have not resulted in a roofscape within which the effects of the appeal proposal would be significantly diminished.
8. Considered in the context of the host property, the pair of buildings of which it is a part and the wider streetscape, the combined effect of the proposals would have a harmful effect on their character and appearance. Whilst the proposal may not conflict with every one of their criteria it would nevertheless be contrary to London Plan Policies 7.4 and 7.6, Core Strategy¹ Policy CS5 and Development Management Policies² Policy DM01. Together these require development to protect and respect local character and context, and demonstrate high quality design.
9. Furthermore the proposal would not accord with Council guidance³ which supports those policies. In particular this advises that 'hip to gable' extensions should not unbalance a pair of semi-detached properties, reduce the degree of visual separation between properties nor appear out of character within the streetscape. It goes on to advise that dormers should be subordinate features on the roof and not occupy more than half the width or depth of the roof slope, and that rear extensions should not look too bulky and prominent compared with the main building. The proposal would not comply with the National Planning Policy Framework's (the Framework) requirements that development is of high quality design which responds to local character.
10. The proposal would have the benefit of providing an additional, single bedroom flat which would contribute to delivering a choice of homes in the area, which is an approach supported by national and development plan policies. However, these benefits would be limited as a result of only one additional unit being provided and would not outweigh the considerable harm the proposal would cause to character and appearance.

¹ Barnet's Local Plan (Core Strategy) Development Plan Document, 2012.

² Barnet's Local Plan (Development Management Policies) Development Plan Document, 2012

³ Local Plan Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Design Guidance, 2016.

Other Matters

11. The appellant contends that the proposals would be permitted development if the property was a house. However, even if the appellant is correct on his interpretation of the permitted development position, the property comprises two flats, as does the other property in the pair. Therefore such a theoretical scenario does not offer a compelling justification in favour of allowing the appeal. The appellant points out that the development has been designed to avoid negative effects on neighbouring occupiers and considers that it would accord with the development plan policies in that regard. However the absence of harm in this respect does not amount to a positive consideration in favour of the proposal.
12. I note that the Council's Delegated Report is contradictory to its reason for refusal. However, having considered this reason and the Council's statement, and for the reasons set out above, I do not concur with the Delegated Report's conclusions with regard to the proposal's effects on character and appearance.
13. When visiting the site I noted that a 'hip to gable' roof extension was under construction at 153 Bell Lane. However, this has not been referred to by either main parties and I have no details about this scheme nor the circumstances which led to its construction. I have consequently not given this any weight in reaching my conclusion.

Conclusion

14. For the above reasons, and having had regard to all other matters raised, the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the host property, the pair of semi-detached properties and the area contrary to the development plan, supplementary guidance and the Framework. The appeal is therefore dismissed.

Geoff Underwood

INSPECTOR