
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 February 2017

by Helen Cassini BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 06 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N5090/W/16/3160450

1 The Approach, Hendon, London NW4 2HT

- 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 Create REIT against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
 - The application Ref 16/4460/FUL, dated 6 July 2016, was refused by notice dated 15 September 2016.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of the existing 2no.semi-detached dwellings and erection of a building to provide 6no. self-contained flats with associated car and cycle parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site consists of a pair of substantial two-storey semi-detached dwellings, located in a prominent position at the junction of Brent Street, The Approach and West Avenue. From observations made during my site visit The Approach and West Avenue are predominantly residential in nature, and although the architectural style of dwellings has some variance, dwellings are mainly of a two-storey or two and a half storeys, semi-detached design. In contrast, Brent Street is a busy road, comprising of a number of flatted developments and commercial uses. The appeal site is visible from Brent Street, however due to the design and scale, I consider that The Approach is viewed as a continuation of the residential character of West Avenue.
4. I am mindful of the fact that the site has been the subject of a previous refusal for planning permission¹ and a subsequent dismissal at appeal². Following pre-application discussions with the Council³, I acknowledge that the appellant has amended the proposal with the aim of addressing the reasons for refusal of the initial scheme.

¹ Council reference H/03122/14

² Appeal reference APP/N5090/W/15/3004638

³ Council reference 16/8128/ENQ

5. The amendments made to the proposal before me have been made with the aim of reducing bulk and overall scale. I consider that the design of the development to appear as three separate wings has resulted in a moderate reduction in terms of scale and bulk.
6. With particular reference to the siting of the projecting wing adjacent to 2 West Avenue, the wing would appear to generally follow the existing building line. As such, whilst I accept that this wing would be visible on the southern approach, I do not consider that its location would result in it appearing as an overly dominant feature within the street scene.
7. With regard to the relationship with the dwelling at 2 West Avenue, due to the reduction in height and subsequent bulk of this wing, the introduction of features such as a chimney and a dormer window and the use of sympathetic materials, I find that the side wing would generally reflect the existing residential character of the street scene. Within the evidence submitted by the Council, it is considered that further amendments should be made to this wing in terms of height and design features. As the majority of dwellings on West Avenue are at least two-storey, in my opinion a single storey wing with a catslide roof in this location would represent a discordant feature within the street scene.
8. I have had regard to the concern raised by the Council in relation to the width of the ridge on the front elevation, in particular that the increase in height of the two outer sections has resulted in the bulk and massing being exacerbated at roof level. As previously stated, the majority of dwellings on West Avenue are either two or two and a half storeys. However, the height of the buildings varying significantly on Brent Street and on West Street there are dwellings with development within the roof. As such, I do not find that this aspect of the design would appear in stark contrast to the existing residential character.
9. In relation to the connecting section of the building between the side wing adjacent to 2 West Avenue and the main building, the appellant contends that the glazed staircase section has been incorporated following the previous Inspector's comments with relation to the initial proposal infilling of the existing gap, which exists between the appeal site and 2 West Avenue. This design feature would emphasise the separation between the main front elevation and the wing on West Avenue. Notwithstanding this, the glazing would be a highly visible feature on the approach from the south. Accordingly, despite its set back location, I consider that the connecting section would not appear subtle in nature and would represent an incongruous design which would fail to connect with the existing character of the street scene.
10. Although the roof at the rear of the proposal is hipped, the pitch of the roof does not reflect the design of the front of the proposal. I acknowledge that given the scale of the proposal, it is not possible to view the proposal in its entirety from any one view point within the public realm. The architectural designs of buildings on Brent Street are significantly varied in contrast to those on West Avenue. Notwithstanding this, in contrast to the front elevation, I find that the pitch would represent a significantly bulky design feature when viewed from Brent Street. Furthermore, the glazed stairwell would project significantly further forward into the garden space than the rest of the rear of the proposal. Despite the lack of uniformity in terms of design on Brent Street, I find that the glazed section would represent a highly visible and alien feature.

11. Due to the mixed residential character of the area, the council accepts that the principle of flatted development on the appeal site is acceptable. Despite the amendments made in relation to the bulk and scale of the proposal, the harm I have identified in relation to the effect of the glazed stairwell and pitch of the rear roof on the character and appearance of the surrounding area is decisive. Accordingly, the proposal fails to comply with the design objectives of Policy CS5 of the London Borough of Barnet Local Plan Core Strategy: Development Plan Document 2012, Policy DM01 of the London Borough of Barnet Development Management Policies: Development Plan Document 2012 and Policies 3.5, 7.4 and 7.6 of The London Plan 2016. The proposal would also run contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework's (the Framework) core planning principle of seeking to secure high quality design.
12. I have also had regard to the presumption in favour of sustainable development. The Framework sets out three dimensions to sustainable development, being economic, social and environmental, which should be jointly and simultaneously sought. I accept that in terms of the economic strand the potential use of local construction companies would contribute to the local economy, albeit to a limited extent.
13. There is no doubt in my mind that the dwelling is located within a sustainable location, with relatively good access to services and facilities required to meet daily living needs. In addition, the proposal would contribute to the Boroughs housing targets. Nevertheless, as a result of the harm I have identified in terms of character and appearance, the proposal would not fulfil the environmental strand of sustainable development. Therefore the proposal cannot be considered to represent sustainable development.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Helen Cassini

INSPECTOR