

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 August 2016

by P Jarvis Bsc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 20 September 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/N5090/W/16/3147416
229-231 Hale Lane, Edgware, HA8 9QF

- 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 County Homes Herts (Ltd) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
 - The application Ref 15/06807/FUL dated 6 November 2015 was refused by notice dated 6 January 2016.
 - The development is the demolition of the existing dwellings and erection of nine two bed apartments with associated parking and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site is currently occupied by two detached dwellings, No. 229 is a chalet bungalow with pitched roof dormers in a hipped roof and No. 231 is of similar height but with a large mansard style roof. The site lies on a bend in the road and No. 229 is set slightly further back than No. 231, reflecting this. They both have open front gardens with low walls along the road frontage.
4. The immediate area is residential and comprises a mix of dwelling styles and sizes. A three storey apartment block, Lavender Court, lies to the west of No. 231 occupying a position slightly further forward in the streetscene. A similar size apartment block, Limeleaf Court, lies on the opposite side of the road, with further apartment blocks and large detached dwellings further to the west. To the east of the appeal site, the dwellings are predominantly two storey semi-detached providing a fairly uniform pattern, set back slightly further from the road frontage than No. 229. Hale Lane also slopes down from west to east.
5. My attention has been drawn by both parties to a previous appeal decision relating to the site for a similar description of development¹. The proposed design and appearance of the proposed apartment block was very different to that now before me, the Inspector noting its bold, modern, vibrant design. However, he found it aesthetically unsuitable for this location as well as resulting in a visually uncomfortable form of building. He concluded that it would be overly dominant, appear cramped on the site and visually obtrusive.

¹ APP/N5090/W/15/3132710

6. As noted above the current scheme would be of a different design, more traditional in appearance with a mansard style roof over two floors of brick and render elevations. This would be more in keeping with its surroundings, in particular reflecting the design of the adjoining Lavender Court. However, it would still be a very large building of deep form with a central flat 'crown' roof. Furthermore, its siting would not follow the general building line established by the existing dwellings, with the western half of the building being set back further into the site than the existing dwelling on that part, and the eastern element sited much closer to the road frontage than the existing chalet bungalow (No. 229).
7. The forward siting of the building, taken together with its much greater height compared to the adjoining two-storey semi-detached properties to the east, to which it would appear to be sited closer than the previous appeal scheme, would in my view result in an overly dominant and intrusive form of development. This would be particularly the case when viewed in the streetscene from the east where the forward siting of the building would be evident, exacerbated by the rising nature of the road and by the appearance of the side elevation of the building which contains no windows to relieve its stark, blank appearance. The considerable depth of the building compared to the existing adjoining dwellings would also be clearly evident as a result of its forward siting. Although planting would be provided along the street frontage to help soften the appearance of the building, I consider that it would do little to mitigate the impact of the building in these views.
8. Overall, I consider that, despite its more sympathetic external appearance compared to the previous appeal scheme, the proposal would still be overly dominant and visually intrusive. Furthermore, it would appear disproportionately large in relation to the adjoining semi-detached property at 227 Hale Lane. Whilst the design incorporates ancillary flank wings of lower overall height, they are small in size, with the same eaves height as the main, element of the building. This would provide little 'stepping down' of the height of the building to reflect the much lower adjoining dwelling and the slope of the lane, as is the case currently with the Lavender Court building. I consider that this would result in a poor visual relationship with that dwelling and the wider streetscene.
9. I therefore find that the proposal would have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would thus fail to comply with Policy DM01 of the Barnet Development Management Policies DPD (2012) which seeks development of high quality design, which demonstrates high levels of environmental awareness, based on an understanding of local characteristics that respects local context, including the scale, mass, height and pattern of surrounding buildings. It would also fail to meet the guidance in the Council's Residential Design Guidance SPD (2013) which seeks residential development that responds to distinctive building forms and patterns of development, respects the scale, massing and height of the surrounding physical context and reflects existing building lines and rhythm of the street.
10. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) seeks good design that functions well and adds to the overall quality of the area. Whilst the proposal seeks to optimise the development of the site, it would be in a way that would fail to respond to local character and in my view would not be visually attractive as a result of its intrusive appearance in the streetscene.

11. Whilst I agree that the proposal would contribute to the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development, by assisting local businesses and creating investment in the local economy particularly through construction related jobs and would contribute towards the supply of local housing, for the reasons given above, it would fail to satisfy the environmental role. Overall, I do not consider that the proposal would represent sustainable development.
12. I have noted the concerns expressed by many local residents in respect of highway safety and parking levels. However, I note that the proposed parking would satisfy the relevant standards which reflect the availability of local public transport. In addition, the proposed access would be located in a safe position and the Council's highways officer raised no objection. In my view, taking these points into account and from what I observed on site, I do not consider that these matters raise further concerns.
13. However, overall, I consider that the proposal would be unacceptable for the reasons set out above.

Conclusions

14. I therefore conclude that this appeal should be dismissed.

P Jarvis

INSPECTOR