
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 March 2017

by Elaine Gray MA(Hons) MSc IHBC

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

Decision date: 24 March 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/N5090/W/16/3165806

313 Colney Hatch Lane, Colney Hatch, London N11 3DH

- 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 Rebecca Thomas against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
 - The application Ref 16/5511/FUL, dated 17 August 2016, was refused by notice dated 25 October 2016.
 - The development proposed is described as 'existing garage to be demolished and replaced with a two storey single family dwellinghouse with rooms located within the roof space'.
-

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 surrounding area is characterised by a number of distinct building typologies, including the commercial buildings to the north-west, a long terrace of dwellings on the opposite side of Colney Hatch Lane, and the semi-detached pairs of dwellings on the south side, of which 313 Colney Hatch Lane is the last. These dwellings share some typical original features such as double-height bay windows, central chimneys, and hipped roofs. Despite some unsympathetic alterations, for example, the change from hips to gables in some cases, the original form of the dwellings remains legible. The appearance of the property at No 313 is characteristic of this local architectural style.
 4. The development would result in the subdivision of the plot at No 313, and the construction of a new two storey dwelling which would adjoin the existing property. I accept that the proposed house would broadly reflect the design of No 313, using matching materials and incorporating similar features such as the bay window.
 5. However, the new frontage would be narrower than those of its neighbours, and the features would be reproduced at a smaller scale, resulting in a cramped appearance. The front door would lack the distinctive brick door surround of the neighbours, giving rise to a lack of visual consistency in terms of the design. The development would substantially extend the existing pair of
-

- dwellings, departing significantly from their distinctive original form. By matching the roof level of No 313, the proposal would also disrupt the visual progression of the dwellings as they step up in response to rise of the land to the north-west along Colney Hatch Lane.
6. By infilling the plot, the development would remove the gap between No 313 and the neighbouring commercial building at 321 Colney Hatch Lane. The gaps are an important characteristic of the original layout of the semi-detached houses on this side of Colney Hatch Lane. They provide rhythm and definition to the streetscape, and allow a degree of spaciousness between the dwellings in an otherwise quite densely built-up area. By contrast, the new development would appear confined within the gap, and would be significantly at odds with the prevailing layout of the area.
 7. No 321 is a much taller building of a clearly different character and appearance to the adjacent dwellings. Whilst the south-east elevation of No 321 is mostly blank, a number of factors suggest that it was intended to be visible, for example, the continuation of the brick type and bond from the front elevation, and the inclusion of different coloured bands to give aesthetic relief to the façade. Therefore, whilst the elevation lacks the character of the frontage of No 321, I do not consider its appearance to be harmful to the area. Thus, there would be no significant benefit in its partial concealment by the new dwelling.
 8. Similarly, the appellant states that the removal of the existing garage would enhance the character of the area, but I disagree. Whilst not of any significant design merit, the existing garage has a low-key, understated appearance which accords with its function as an ancillary building and is in keeping with its surroundings. I am thus unable to find that the replacement of the garage would be a benefit to the area in this instance.
 9. The appellant argues that the proposal would create a visual transition between the dwellings and the commercial buildings. However, much of the character of the area derives from the fact that the different building typologies are visually discreet and distinct from one another. The proposal would blur this distinction, and so would diminish the visual qualities of the area, to its detriment.
 10. Drawing these factors together, I conclude that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would therefore conflict with Policy DM01 of Barnet's Local Plan Development Management Policies Development Plan Document (September 2012), insofar as it requires development to preserve or enhance local character and respect the appearance, scale, mass, height and pattern of surrounding buildings, spaces and streets. It would further conflict with Policy CS5 of Barnet's Local Plan (Core Strategy) Development Plan Document (September 2012), which seeks to create high quality places.
 11. I have had regard to the planning permission¹ which was granted in 2009 for a side extension at No 313. However, I note from the information before me that this extension would have been subservient to the main house, and moreover, would have left a clear gap at the side, albeit small but increasing in size at the first floor and roof levels. I therefore consider that that case does

¹ B/03403/09

not offer a direct parallel to the appeal scheme before me, and so it has not led me to a different conclusion.

12. The appellant argues that the proposal would contribute a family dwelling to the housing supply in the area, and would optimise the use of the site. I agree that residential development in this sustainable location would be acceptable in principle, and that the proposal would make a contribution, however modest, to the housing supply. However, this small benefit would not be sufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified above. Furthermore, the aim of optimising the use of the site would not strike an acceptable balance with that harm.
13. For the reasons above, and taking all other matters into consideration, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elaine Gray

INSPECTOR