
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 July 2017

by Elaine Gray MA(Hons) MSc IHBC

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

Decision date: 04 August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/T5150/W/16/3162277

121 Chalkhill Road, Wembley, London HA9 9AL

- 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 Mr Danny Richards against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Brent.
 - The application Ref 16/0124, dated 11 January 2016, was refused by notice dated 9 August 2016.
 - The development proposed is change of use from 2 Flats (Class C3a) to a Residential institution/Family Assessment Centre (Class C2) and to erect a single storey rear and side extension.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary matters

2. The appellant has appealed against the refusal of the planning application Ref 16/0124, and states on the appeal form that the Council issued their decision on 9 August 2016. However, I have not been provided with a copy of that decision notice. I have therefore based my consideration on the information contained in the draft decision notice, which is dated 8 May 2017.
3. Copies of the relevant local plan policies have been requested from the Council, but these have not been made available. In the absence of these, I have considered the appeal against the policies set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
4. The plans submitted with the planning application have formed the basis of my consideration of the appeal. However, the appellant has submitted amended plans, referred to as the 'Final Planning Permission' set of drawings, to address some of the issues raised, and I have also taken these into consideration.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are: the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the surrounding area; whether the development would meet a known need in the borough, and; whether the loss of housing stock would be justified.

Reasons

Character and appearance

6. The appeal site at 121 Chalkhill Road is currently divided into two flats. The proposal would convert the building for use as a family assessment centre, with associated extensions to the rear and to the roof. The Council's concern relates primarily to the proposed dormer extensions to the roof.
7. No 121 has a pyramidal roof with a flat ridge. New dormers would be constructed on the side roof slopes. These would be set slightly down from the ridge on each side. No 121 forms one of a row four detached buildings of a similar design, which share this distinctive roof form.
8. The proposed dormers would be large additions which would dominate the side roof slopes. They would result in an uncharacteristic roof form which would be at odds with the prevailing architectural style of No 121 and its neighbours. The extensions would not be subordinate to the original form of the building. Instead, they would add considerably to the overall bulk and scale of the building, and would be out of proportion to its existing size. The proposal would therefore be an incongruous form of development that would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
9. On my visit, I saw that side dormers have been installed on the roof of the building adjacent to the appeal site (marked No 123 on the submitted location plan). However, these side dormers are in a minority in the area, and serve to demonstrate the harmful effect of unsympathetic development of this kind. The roofs of the other three buildings in the row remain intact, and thus their form remains the prevailing architectural style in the vicinity of the appeal site. I saw that the building marked Nos 125 to 127 on the location plan has a central dormer on the front roof slope. Whilst prominent, this example is relatively small in relation to the overall scale of the roof, and so it would not lend support for the appeal proposal.
10. I therefore conclude that the proposal would unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area. It would thus conflict with the NPPF, which seeks to secure high quality design. I have taken indeed account the revised plans reducing the number of proposed dormers from two to one. However, a large single dormer would, for the same reasons, be unacceptably harmful to the appearance of the appeal building and the surrounding area. The proposed amendments to the scheme would therefore not lead me to a different conclusion on this issue.

Whether the development would meet a known need in the borough

11. The NPPF states that planning should take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.
12. The proposed facility would provide services for vulnerable families. The appellant makes reference to a general need for such services in the borough, which is not disputed by the Council. However, the Council is concerned by the lack of information addressing known needs in the borough. Despite being aware of the Council's concerns, the appellant has not shown why the facility is required in this location, or what catchment area the facility would serve.
13. I have had regard to 'Appendix 1 – The aim of the business', which is included in the appellant's Appeal Statement. However, this short document provides only a brief overview of the proposed facility and its operation. It provides

little further specific information as to the qualifications of staff, the management arrangement within the facility, or the catchment area it would serve. I note from the appellant's appeal statement that they are planning to work with surrounding boroughs, which, by definition, would not meet needs within Brent.

14. I note the appellant's concern that details of the scheme may need to be changed in line with the requirements of OFSTED. However, this would not preclude the provision of the information which the Council has identified as being necessary. I therefore conclude that it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that the proposal would meet a known need in the borough. The proposal would thus conflict with the requirements of the NPPF, which seeks to deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.

Loss of housing stock

15. The proposal would result in the loss of two flats from the housing stock in the area. Whilst this loss would undoubtedly be modest, the NPPF nonetheless requires local authorities to boost significantly the supply of housing. In the absence of sufficient evidence to show that the proposal would satisfactorily meet known needs in the borough, I conclude that the loss of the two flats would not be justified. The proposal would therefore conflict with the aims of the NPPF.
16. The appellant states that plans were in place to rehome the tenants of the existing flats. However, this is a private matter between the relevant parties, and has not had a bearing on my decision. The appellant also refers to the Council's strategy for the provision of housing in its area. They argue that an increased population would lead to an increased demand for the services they would provide. Whilst that may be so, in view of the lack of sufficient evidence to show that the proposal would satisfactorily meet known needs in the borough, this circumstance would not lend support to the appeal scheme.

Other Matters

17. I note that there have been no objections from neighbours in respect of the proposal. However, this has not led me to a different conclusion on the main issues.

Conclusion

18. For the reasons above, and taking all other matters into account, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Elaine Gray

INSPECTOR