



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 October 2019

by Thomas Bristow BA MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 13 November 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/N5090/D/19/3238289

101 Russell Lane, Whetstone, London N20 0AZ

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Haikesh Sharma against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
 - The application Ref 19/2589/HSE, dated 30 April 2019, was refused by notice dated 11 July 2019.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as the 'erection of two-storey side and rear extension and single storey rear extension (including relocation of entrance to front).'
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Policy context

2. Notwithstanding the planning history to the property,¹ each proposal must be determined on its merits in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance the development plan includes policies of the London Plan, and of the Council's Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Development Plan Document ('LP', 'CS', 'DMP' respectively).² I have also had regard to the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF'), and to the Council's Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (October 2016, the 'SPD').

Main issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the development proposed on the character and appearance of the host property and that of the surrounding area.

Reasons

4. No 101 is a two-storey semi-detached property. It occupies a corner plot of Russell Lane (B1453) and Hereford Avenue, facing the former. As with many others nearby, it appears inter-war in origin. Despite some alterations to No 101 and its attached neighbour, No 103, their principal elevations remain

¹ Noting that planning permissions, or certificates of lawful development have been approved for various alterations to No 101 (Ref 18/5158/HSE, B/04045/08, N15456A/08), along with a previously unsuccessful application for a two storey extension Ref N15456/07 dismissed at appeal in 2007 (Ref App/N5090/A/07/2050026).

² The LP adopted in March 2016, notwithstanding a review recently subject to examination, with the CS and DMP both adopted in September 2012.

broadly symmetrical. Symmetry is inherently visually pleasing. It is also a characteristic feature of many semi-detached properties in this location.

5. Nos 101 and 103 are, however, of uncommon design. The ridgeline is along the party wall between the two. Their roofs pitch steeply to that point, such that there is significantly lesser floorspace at first floor than at ground floor. There is a step-down from the pavement adjacent to the driveway of No 101, and a slight east-to-west rise in the topography here along the B1453. Aside from a lean-to car port, the side elevation of No 101 towards Hereford Avenue is well set into the plot.
6. Those features, alongside the spacing between properties in the area more generally, are visually pleasing. They result in an ordered, comfortable and relatively open suburban character (albeit that this area is not formally protected in respect of its character or heritage). The parade of shops on the opposite side of Hereford Avenue to No 101 is something of an exception, rather than representative of broader character. I saw in particular how the form and setting of No 101 presently allows for expansive views along Hereford Avenue towards the leafy periphery of London.
7. I acknowledge that the original design of nearby properties varies, and many have been altered in diverse ways over time. Some of those alterations have disrupted the symmetry between pairs of properties, such as alterations to the roof at No 76, or do not contribute positively towards the street scene. However that does not justify allowing incongruous development in the present, there is little information before me as to the planning circumstances that justified other alterations, and such changes are not so prevalent as to have fundamentally altered the characteristics of the area as described above.³
8. Whilst there is a similar extension to the proposed scheme at No 66 opposite, I understand that relates to a decision taken in 1993, at which time the planning policy context differed. I note in particular that the SPD dates from 2016. That extension also appears to be further set back from the principal elevation of the original property, and of lesser overall bulk than the development proposed here. I accept that the maximum height of the extension proposed would be slightly below the existing ridgeline, the window detailing proposed would broadly replicate that of the existing property, and that matching materials could in theory be secured via appropriately-worded condition.
9. However the proposal would represent a substantial addition. It would increase the width of the property by in excess of half that of No 101 at present. As shown on drawing No 3 in particular, the extension would effectively subsume the original elements of the property, rather than compliment them or represent a subordinate addition.⁴ That would clearly unbalance the symmetry of the existing pair, with the extension proposed being set close to the pavement (and thereby impeding views along Hereford Avenue from certain perspectives). As the extension would comprise two storeys and extend beyond the existing rear elevation, the incongruous increase in bulk and relationship would likely also be readily apparent from Hereford Avenue.

³ Some may fall within the limitations of permitted development rights for which specific planning permission is typically not required.

⁴ Noting that the latter is advocated by paragraph 14.9 of the SPD.

10. Undoubtedly the proposal would be beneficial to the appellant and the occupants of No 101 by virtue of providing additional accommodation of a modern standard. However the extension proposed would in my view be excessive, asymmetric and detrimental to local character. I also note that the development proposed is far more substantial than that which may be achievable, individually or collectively, were the proposals referenced in paragraph 2 implemented. The proposal therefore conflicts with the relevant provisions of CS policy CS5, DMP policy DM01 and NPPF paragraph 127(a) and (c). In brief those policies seek to ensure that all development is informed by an understanding of local character and integrates appropriately with that context. That would not be the case here.

Conclusion

11. For the above reasons, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the NPPF, and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Thomas Bristow

INSPECTOR