



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 October 2020

by James Taylor BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 October 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/T5150/W/20/3244985

126A-C Inc, Brondesbury Road, London NW6 6SB

- 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 Dodgson (126 Brondesbury Ltd) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Brent.
 - The application Ref 19/3991, dated 8 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 9 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Basement extensions with front and rear light wells, rear ground floor extension, 1 front dormer window, 1 rear dormer window and enlargement of rear dormer window, second floor side extension, and alterations to fenestration to reconfigure existing and create additional unit comprising 2 x 3 bedroom and 2 x 2 bedroom units, provision for car and cycle parking, bin stores and associated landscaping'.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. I have taken the site address from the appeal form as this appears to more accurately describe the site location than the application form.
3. The description of development in the heading above has been taken from the planning application form. However, in Part E of the appeal form it is stated that the description of development has changed, and a different wording has been entered. Neither of the main parties has provided written confirmation that a revised description of development has been agreed and I do not find the revisions to be significant. Accordingly, I have used the description given on the original application.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed basement extensions, front and rear light wells and rear fenestration on the character and appearance of the host building and the surrounding area.

Reasons

5. Policy DMP 1 of the London Borough of Brent Local Plan, November 2016, Development Management Policies (LP) sets out a permissive approach to development subject to a number of criteria. These include that the development is of a siting, layout, scale, density, detailing and design that

compliments the locality. Furthermore, the Council's Basement Supplementary Planning Document, Adopted June 2017 (SPD) provides guidance that is a material consideration primarily in the determination of basements as householder extensions. This proposal involves extensions and alterations to a building to reconfigure the existing accommodation. Whilst this results in an additional unit being created, the guidance remains relevant and I afford significant weight to the SPD.

6. The appeal site is located within an urban residential street characterised by linked semi-detached buildings set-back from the road. The linking elements appear subservient on the principal elevations due to their recessed siting and lower height. Whilst many of the front gardens have hard standing to the front, a pleasant verdant and relatively spacious character remains.
7. The front light well and external stairs sited within the front recess would be substantial in size, projecting significantly from the principal elevation and beyond the primary entrance. Whilst no further forward than the front bay, this would not be modest in scale. Furthermore, this reduces the available space at the front of the site leaving few options for accessible waste and cycle storage. Consequently, the storage enclosures would be located prominently in the front garden with very little opportunity for meaningful soft landscaping. As such, the proposed layout and density would result in visual clutter. Cumulatively, such development would not compliment the locality.
8. To the rear, whilst the habitable accommodation within the basement would be broadly consistent with the ground floor extensions, the proposed basement would project significantly beyond the existing rear elevation. Moreover, the proposed lower patio areas would effectively be the rear light wells serving the basement. These would not be modest in scale and would occupy a notable proportion of the remaining rear garden area. The extent of the basement extensions, with the lower patios, would not reflect the context of the building or its well-proportioned rear garden. The subterranean development to the rear would not be visually prominent, but it would reduce the garden. This space contributes to the verdant appearance and spatial character at the rear of Brondesbury Road. Consequently, such development cumulatively would diminish the qualities of the area.
9. Whilst there are a number of front lightwells within the street scene, none appear so similar to the proposal such as to present a context for the development. Furthermore, I afford the infill developments on Woodville Road and Donaldson Road limited weight as they have a different context, are located some distance from the appeal site and were approved before the adoption of the SPD. This specific guidance on basement development seeks to supplement the more general local and national policies. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) establishes in general terms the importance of good design, including innovation. However, whilst contemporary, the proposal is neither innovative nor outstanding in design terms.
10. The Council have not found harm with the angular ground and first floor extensions and the dormers. I have no reason to reach a different conclusion on these. Furthermore, despite the Council's concern over the proposed fenestration at the rear, including a subservient additional dormer window, first-floor bay and balustrades, these would be complimentary to the contemporary detailing created by the extensions. Additionally, the rear

fenestration would satisfactorily assimilate with the various detailing and design to the rear of Brondesbury Road. However, this does not mitigate the effect of the proposed basement development.

11. Therefore, in conclusion on the main issue the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. As such, the proposal would be contrary to Policy DMP 1 of the LP and guidance at section 2.4 of the SPD. This policy and guidance are consistent with the aims of the Framework. This sets out at paragraph 130 that permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area, taking into account supplementary planning documents.

Other matters

12. The appellant states that the proposal ensures that the development would be less reliant on artificial lighting and would provide better quality living conditions. The sustainability of, and living conditions within, basement developments are factored into the SPD guidance. This acknowledges that basements do not provide quality residential accommodation in isolation. Given that the proposed basement accommodation is supplementary to the ground floor accommodation, the benefit of less artificial lighting and more daylight has less significance and does not outweigh the identified harm.
13. Whilst paragraph 59 of the Framework refers to the objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, the provision of one additional unit would make little meaningful difference. When judged against some of the core planning principles the proposal would perform well in that it would be in an urban area with good access to services and facilities. However, as set out at paragraph 124 of the Framework, good design is also a key aspect of sustainable development. Furthermore, the evidence sets out that an alternative planning permission exists¹. This would provide similar benefits to housing supply. As such, I afford this nominal weight.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

James Taylor

INSPECTOR

¹ LPA ref: 19/2639