



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 February 2023

by P Storey BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 2nd May 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/N5090/W/22/3305079

27 Hillcrest Avenue, Golders Green, Barnet, London NW11 0EP

- 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 C/O UPP Architects + Town Planners against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
 - The application Ref 22/1986/FUL, dated 12 April 2022, was refused by notice dated 18 July 2022.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing dwelling and erection of a replacement dwelling including basement and rooms in the roof space, together with associated external amenity space, car parking, cycle storage and refuse & recycling facilities.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area.
 - Whether the proposed development would provide future occupiers with an adequate quality of outdoor amenity space.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is a detached dwelling on the northwest corner of the junction between Hillcrest Avenue and Eastside Road. The dwelling is a dormer bungalow design. The immediate neighbouring properties include 2-storey detached and semi-detached dwellings, as well as other dormer bungalows. Some neighbouring properties include loft conversions, such as those on the opposite sides of Hillcrest Avenue to the south and Eastside Road to the east. A wider variety of dwelling types and architectural styles exist slightly further afield, particularly on the streets of Hillcrest Avenue and Decoy Avenue.
4. The site is located on a prominent corner, due to its location close to the junction and the topography of the area. The site and surrounding land generally slopes downwards towards the north. Due to the position of the existing dwelling standing alone at the end of Hillcrest Avenue, it is prominently visible when travelling from both the north and south directions along Eastside Road.

5. The existing site makes a positive contribution to the character of the area, which is derived in part from its greenery, modest proportions and low density, which contrasts with the higher density and more tightly packed development found in much of the surrounding area.
6. The varying architectural styles found on dwellings throughout the immediate area form a key part of its character. Accordingly, whilst different to the existing dwelling, I do not find the contemporary style employed by the proposed development to be unacceptable per se. I also find no specific harm would arise through the basement element of the scheme, on the basis this would not be visible from the street or neighbouring dwellings.
7. However, the overall scale, massing and proportions of the proposed development would be excessive and would introduce a scale of development that would be incongruous with the locality. Whilst the elements above ground floor would not project beyond the related building lines of the adjacent dwellings, the existing relationship between these dwellings would be significantly eroded by the scale and massing of the proposed dwelling and its dominant gable roof. Whilst gable roofs are characteristic of the area and would not be unacceptable in principle, the roof proposed in this instance would be excessive and cumbersome in the context of the surroundings. These adverse effects would be exacerbated by the topography of the surrounding area, with the site's elevated position at the end of the street enhancing its prominence, leading to its appearance as a cramped form of development.
8. The projecting gable features incorporating windows to the rear roofscape would result in a dominant and visually overbearing appearance that would contrast awkwardly with the prevailing form of development in the immediate vicinity. These features would be prominently visible from public vantage points as well as the neighbouring gardens and properties on Hillcrest Avenue and Decoy Avenue.
9. Moreover, whilst the works to the Hillcrest Avenue frontage would visually open the front of the site, this would require the removal of landscape features. Even if secured by a landscape strategy, the positive contribution of the existing landscape features could not be easily replaced in the short term, and the omission of mature soft landscaping alongside the close boarded fencing to the side boundary would lead to a stark and visually dominant appearance. Furthermore, whilst the fencing would screen the ground floor side extension to an extent, its overall scale, massing and dominant footprint would remain apparent from outside of the site, particularly when approaching from elevated positions along Eastside Road to the south.
10. There are some examples of roof level extensions that result in 3-storey dwellings in the vicinity, as well as many dwellings being significantly extended and altered. However, I observed no examples to convince me that the proposed development would relate well to its surroundings or contribute positively to the visual character of the area. In addition, whilst I have considered the examples cited by the appellant of similar developments in the vicinity, I find the matters applicable to the appeal subject are specific to this site and not comparable to the examples quoted. Accordingly, I have identified no matters through these examples that would alter my previous findings.
11. For the above reasons, the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area and would conflict with Policy DM01 of

Barnet's Local Plan (Development Management Policies) Development Plan Document (September 2012) (the DMP), Policies CS1 and CS5 of Barnet's Local Plan (Core Strategy) Development Plan Document (September 2012) (the CS), and Policies D1, D3 and D4 of the London Plan (March 2021) (the LP2021). Together these policies seek, among other objectives, the highest standards of urban design, to ensure development respects and enhances local context and distinctive local character, to take account of topography, and to ensure the quality of development is maintained through to completion. The proposals would also conflict with the Barnet Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Design Guidance (October 2016) (the RDGSPD), which has similar aims.

Outdoor amenity space

12. The proposed development would involve construction on the existing garden areas of the dwelling, and accordingly the outdoor amenity space afforded to future occupiers would be comparably less than existing.
13. The Barnet Supplementary Planning Document: Sustainable Design and Construction (October 2016) (the SDCSPD) sets standards for the provision of external amenity space for dwellings. Although the SDCSPD is guidance only and does not form part of the development plan in itself, it is specifically referenced in Policy DM02 of the DMP in relation to standards for the provision of outdoor amenity space. I therefore attach significant weight to the standards it prescribes.
14. Outdoor amenity space would be provided in two main areas: the garden to the rear, and the external lightwell adjacent to the basement at the side of the property. Although it would be smaller than the existing garden area, the rear garden alone would provide sufficient space to meet the requirements of the SDCSPD. It would be a usable square shape and would appear to provide occupants with an acceptable quality of outdoor amenity space. Whilst the lightwell would be in a largely enclosed area and would provide a limited quality of usable outdoor space, the acceptable provision of good quality space elsewhere would overcome these matters.
15. For the above reasons, the proposed development would provide future occupiers with an adequate quality of outdoor amenity space, which would comply with Policies DM01 and DM02 of the DMP, Policy CS5 of the CS, and Policy D6 of the LP2021. Together these policies seek, among other objectives, to retain outdoor amenity space having regard to its character and in accordance with specific standards, and to protect and enhance the gardens of residential properties. The proposals would also comply with the guidance contained in the SDCSPD, which has similar aims.

Other Matters

16. Whilst the proposed development would improve the living accommodation for occupiers, it would generate no net provision of additional dwellings. I therefore attach limited weight to the benefits it would provide, and accordingly I identify no material considerations that would lead me to depart from the development plan for the purposes of my decision.
17. I note several submissions have been made from neighbouring residents in support of the proposed development, with the matters raised broadly aligning

with those cited by the appellant. The submissions raise no matters that would lead me to alter my previous findings.

Conclusion

18. Whilst I have identified no harm in relation to the provision of outdoor amenity space, the harm I have identified to the character and appearance of the area leads to conflict with the development plan as a whole. There are no material considerations that would lead me to a decision other than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

P Storey

INSPECTOR