

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 July 2023

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16th August 2023

Appeal Reference: APP/N5090/D/23/3318550

Land at 215 Edgwarebury Lane, Edgware HA8 8QJ

- 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 E. Levy against the decision of Barnet London Borough Council.
 - The application (reference 22/5228/HSE, dated 10 November 2021) was refused by notice dated 21 December 2022.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as “construction of single storey side and rear extensions; roof extension to facilitate loft conversion”.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and/or its surroundings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located in an extensive residential area of Edgware, to the west of the M1 and north of Edgware Way. The residential estate is characterised by two-storey houses in traditional forms on good sized plots, in a meandering road layout.
4. Edgwarebury Lane is a long curving residential road on the western edge of the residential area, with open land beyond. The road is set with trees and shrubs in the wide verges and in front gardens, creating a soft townscape. The houses in the road vary in size and style but are typically substantial detached and semi-detached houses, in traditional forms with pitched roofs.
5. Number 215 is on the western frontage of the curving road and the plot widens towards the rear. The existing house is traditional in style, mainly two-storey and constructed of brickwork with hipped roofs. It is built close up to its northern boundary (with a single-storey element) but is offset from the southern boundary, where a driveway provides access to the land at the rear.

6. The modest front garden includes a parking area and some planting. At the rear, however, there is a large area that is shown to be included within the appeal site. There is a small domestic garden area immediately behind the house and clearly associated with it, within a garden fence. Beyond that, however, there is a much larger area, separated from the house, with a side gate but a main access directly from Edgwarebury Lane, alongside the southern boundary of the appeal site. This area is occupied by various materials and paraphernalia, mainly having the appearance of building materials and the like (including some waste materials).
7. The house appears to have been altered over the years but it retains its original character. Approval has recently been granted for extensions to the house, but those proposals have not yet been carried out.
8. Planning permission is now sought to construct extensions to the side and rear of the existing house.
9. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense (notably at Section 12), while making effective use of land and encouraging economic activity. It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, by adding to the overall quality of the area and being visually attractive and sympathetic to local character and history (while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change). At the same time, it is recognised that appropriate change may include increased densities in urban areas.
10. An emphasis on the importance of good design is also to be found in the Development Plan, for example at Policy D3 of 'The London Plan' (which emphasises a "design-led approach"), as well as in more local planning policies.
11. Thus, Policy CS5 of 'Barnet's Local Plan (Core Strategy)', dated September 2012, is focussed on achieving "high quality places", while Policy DM01 of 'Barnet's Local Plan (Development Management Policies)', also dated September 2012, provides more specific criteria aimed at achieving high quality design.
12. Attention has also been drawn to the Council's Supplementary Planning Document entitled 'Residential Design Guidance' (dated October 2016), which also addresses relevant design criteria and considerations, although it does not have the same force as Policies in the Development Plan.
13. The proposed extensions would involve a substantial remodelling of the existing house, creating a new design with a wider front elevation, rather than preserving the existing house as a distinct and identifiable architectural element. The new building would imitate the existing design but the finished two-storey structure would occupy most of the width of the plot, being built close up to its southern boundary, with a very narrow way alongside the northern boundary providing access to the back garden.
14. After completion, the finished house would be bulkier than its immediate neighbours, with a large complex pitched roof enclosing a very large roof space. This proposed roof space is indeterminate in the drawings, being described merely as "loft storage", although the application form makes reference to a "loft conversion". Some spaces on the ground and first floors

- would also be especially large areas, including the living areas on the ground floor and the “master bedroom” on the first floor.
15. In order to achieve these new areas, the existing building would be greatly extended. A large extension would project at the rear (at both ground and first floor levels) and the front of the building would be recast in a new layout.
 16. From the evidence submitted and the site visit, the current use of the main part of the appeal site is unclear, although the appellant has stated that the “rear garden is used as an amenity space by a family”. The recovery of this land to form a genuine garden space would require some effort, however, in view of its current condition.
 17. I am aware that permitted development rights apply to the property (as set out in the appeal submissions) and I accept that this is an important material consideration in this appeal. I also accept that the site is capable of accommodating a substantial family dwellinghouse.
 18. Even so, I accept the argument that the rearward extensions would be overly clumsy and intrusive in their context and I am convinced that the proposed street elevation would be excessively bulky and dominant in the frontage, detracting from the open character of the existing streetscene in this locality and eroding the pleasant character of the suburban surroundings.
 19. In consequence, I have formed the view that the scheme as presented would harm the character and appearance of the surroundings. The additional floorspace would be useful, no doubt, but, from the information submitted, the benefits of the scheme would not outweigh the harm that I have identified.
 20. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is “sustainable” in planning terms, but, nevertheless, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan) and that it ought not to be allowed. Although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

Roger C. Shrimplin

INSPECTOR