
Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 11 February 2014

by Isobel McCretton BA(Hons) MRTPI

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

Decision date: 19 March 2014

Appeal A Ref: APP/N5090/A/13/2202995

Longbourne, 11 Totteridge Common, London N20 8LR

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant [outline] planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Shafran against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
 - The application Ref B/04379/12, dated 19 November 2012, was refused by notice dated 4 July 2013.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing dwellinghouse and the construction of a new two-storey dwellinghouse incorporating rooms within the roofspace and basement.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/N5090/E/13/2203002

Longbourne, 11 Totteridge Common, London N20 8LR

- The appeal is made under sections 20 and 74 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 against a refusal to grant conservation area consent.
 - The appeal is made by Mr and Mrs Shafran against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barnet.
 - The application Ref B/04380/12, dated 19 November 2012, was refused by notice dated 4 July 2013.
 - The demolition proposed is described as demolition of the existing dwellinghouse and the construction of a new two-storey dwellinghouse incorporating rooms within the roofspace and basement.
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Procedural Matters

1. I have had regard to the Government's recently issued Planning Practice Guidance and I am satisfied that there are no significant policy changes which would alter my conclusions.

Decisions – Appeals A & B

2. Both the appeals are dismissed.

Main Issue

3. The site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt. However the proposed dwelling is not materially larger in terms of volume and footprint than the house and buildings it would replace. As such, it is not part of the Council's case that the development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt with regard to development plan policy and the National Planning Policy Framework (2012) (the Framework). Thus the main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the Totteridge Conservation Area, including the effect on trees.

Reasons

Appeal A

4. The appeal site is situated on the southern side of Totteridge Common. On this side of Totteridge Common the houses are set at the top of a high ridge. The land falls away to the rear and there are extensive views over the valley and beyond. The existing house is a wide, 2-storey brick built dwelling, of no particular architectural merit, dating from the 1970s. A garage with accommodation above is located in front of, and at right angles to, the house on the eastern side, and there is a separate outbuilding located further forward close to the western boundary. Although it has a wide frontage, the house is of modest proportions. It is set well back from, and at a lower level than, Totteridge Common and is partially screened by frontage vegetation. The form, materials and position of the house means it is not prominent in the street scene. As such it has a neutral impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
5. It is proposed to erect a detached 2-storey house with accommodation in the roof space and the basement. The style of the house is described as a neo-Georgian design utilising the Tuscan classical order. The front façade would be symmetrical, with a central pediment and an entrance portico flanked by columns and a pierced balustrade above. There would be higher projecting gables to each side with first floor balconies. The rear elevation would also be symmetrical with a central pediment, but with deeper projecting bays and a series of first floor balconies. The building would be white painted cement render with a slate roof. Utilising the steep slope of the land, the front area would be reconfigured with the driveway realigned to sweep round and down into a level 'arrival court'. A low triple garage on the western side would have 'green' sedum roof linking it to the landscaping. The existing boundary trees and shrubs would be retained and there would be additional planting within the site, reinforcing the design concept.
6. Within the site a line of 6 cypresses and two cedars would be removed (to which the Council has raised no objection), but overall most of the trees and boundary vegetation at the site would be retained. The Council has expressed concern that it is difficult to ascertain from the drawings the extent of the effect of the significant ground works on trees. However from the information before me and what I saw at the site visit with regard to existing retaining walls etc, I am satisfied that, with suitable protective measures in place and further details of levels submitted, there should be no unacceptable impact on retained trees and vegetation.
7. There is no objection in principle to the replacement of the house. The existing building, having broken ridge lines, a variety of roof slopes and dormers and sitting below road level, is not prominent in the views from Totteridge Common. Although the ridge of the new dwelling would be at a similar height to the existing house, the bulk of the upper floor/roof would be considerably increased. There would be extensive ground works, to create both the new house and the remodelled driveway giving a more open frontage. As a result, when viewed from Totteridge Common, the palatial appearance of the new dwelling would be far more imposing than the existing house, despite being set below road level, and the highly engineered arrival court would appear at odds with the informal, semi-rural character of the area. The white render finish would also make it much more visible than the existing house, which is

- predominantly mellow red/brown brickwork, especially in winter when a large proportion of the frontage trees and vegetation would not be in leaf.
8. To the rear the bulk and mass of the building would again be more imposing than the existing building. This would be seen in longer views of the escarpment from the surrounding countryside and so contribute to a change in character of the Conservation Area as seen in the longer views from the valley below.
 9. This part of the Conservation Area has a semi-rural ambience. The houses vary in size and design, but in the immediate vicinity of the appeal site they are, for the most part, more modest than the appeal proposal, of 'Arts and Crafts' style and do not stand out conspicuously in the street scene. The Council sets out that the Totteridge Conservation Area Character Appraisal (TCACA) identifies this part of the Conservation Area (Area 5) as consisting of *'very low density housing set amid green fields with a distinct rural character'*. Although another identified characteristic of this area is the *'scattering of large houses set in spacious and secluded grounds'*, among the principle negative features are that *'recent development has sometimes failed to take account of the special qualities of the area with neo-Georgian and neo-classical designs that are not sympathetic to the simplicity and quality of the earlier housing'*. In addition, the negative features of the whole Conservation Area which have been highlighted include *'several recent developments along Totteridge Village, Totteridge Lane, Totteridge Green and Totteridge Common fail to respect the sensitive setting of the conservation area or reflect the quality and simplicity of the design of the original houses'*.
 10. In support of the proposal the appellants make reference to Montebello, no.19 Totteridge Common. This is a very large, neo-Georgian house with classical references, and is considerably bigger than the house proposed at the appeal site. However the Council states that permission was granted for its construction before the designation of the Conservation Area and, it seems to me, that it is the form of development which is identified in the TCACA as having a negative effect on the character of the Conservation Area. I therefore do not consider that that property sets a precedent for my consideration of the appeal proposal which must be determined in the light of current policy and guidance.
 11. The Framework sets out that great weight should be given to the conservation of heritage assets, i.e. the Conservation Area. Where there is harm to a heritage asset which is less than substantial harm, as in this case, the public benefit of the proposal must be taken into account. As a one for one replacement, the proposed development would not result in a net gain in housing accommodation in the area. There would be a minor public benefit in that the new house would be built to modern standards (it is the intention to meet level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes) and so, in this regard, would be more environmentally sustainable. Nonetheless, I do not consider that this would outweigh the harm to the character and the appearance of the Conservation Area which would result.
 12. I conclude that the proposed development would not preserve or enhance the character or the appearance of the Conservation Area but would harm it. It would not accord with policies CS1 and CS5 of Local Plan Core Strategy (2012) and DM01 and DM06 of the Local Plan Development Management Policies DPD (2012) which, among other things, require a high standard of design which

respects local context and distinctive local character, preserves or enhances local character and respects the appearance, scale, mass height and pattern of surrounding buildings.

Appeal B

13. In the absence of an approved scheme for the replacement of the dwelling, I consider that the demolition of the existing house and buildings would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Conclusion

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

Isobel McCretton

INSPECTOR

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