

Roger Hayes
9 Beaufort Road
Kingston upon Thames
KT1 2TH

31st January 2017

Dear Mr Hayes

Reference: PREAPP/16/00325

Proposal: Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of detached 7/8 bedroom three/four storey dwelling (including basement).

Location: 24 Downs Hill, Beckenham, BR3 5HB.

Thank you for your pre-application advice request. I have set out the Council's informal advice below:

Site and Location

The application site lies on the north eastern side of Downs Hill and currently comprises a detached single dwellinghouse set within a generously deep plot. The land slopes down from the road to the end of the rear garden which backs onto railway land.

The site lies within the Downs Hill Conservation Area and a TPO covers the front of the site and neighbouring sites, covering any pine tree.

Proposal

It is proposed to demolish the existing dwelling and to replace it with a substantial house which would have a two/three storey appearance from the front of the site and a four storey appearance from the rear as a result of the basement and terrace excavation. An annotated block plan has not been provided although from the submitted information it appears that the proposed dwelling would extend for the full width of the site.

The dwelling would be part one/two storey adjacent to either flank boundary with a

projecting front element incorporating a feature central two storey predominantly glazed overhanging element serving the first floor landing and second floor void area. The remaining second floor accommodation would be set back from the main front elevation below and set in from the side elevations of the side part one/two storey 'wings'. A flat 'green' roof is proposed for a large part of the roof area with the second floor bedroom suite overlooking the flat roof.

The dwelling would be of contemporary design, finished in a palette of materials including cladding and render. All roof elements would be flat. The pre-application planning statement refers to the desire to construct an environmentally friendly dwelling, incorporating renewable energy efficiencies etc.

Planning History

There is no recent planning history relating to the site.

Relevant Policies

The application falls to be determined in accordance with the following Unitary Development Plan policies:

- BE1 Design of New Development
- BE12 Development in Conservation Areas
- BE14 Trees in Conservation Areas
- NE7 Development and Trees
- H7 Housing Density and Design
- H9 Side Space
- T3 Parking
- T18 Road Safety

Supplementary Planning Guidance of relevance to the application comprises:

- SPG1: General Design Principles
- SPG2: Residential Design Guidance

Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Downs Hill Conservation Area.

Emerging Bromley Local Plan

The Council is preparing a Local Plan. It is anticipated that submission of the draft Local Plan to the Secretary of State will occur in the early part of 2017. These documents are a material consideration. The weight attached to the draft policies increases as the Local Plan process advances.

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|-----------------|-------------------------------|
| Draft Policy 4 | Housing Design |
| Draft Policy 8 | Side Space |
| Draft Policy 30 | Parking |
| Draft Policy 32 | Road Safety |
| Draft Policy 37 | General Design of Development |
| Draft Policy 41 | Conservation Areas |
| Draft Policy 43 | Trees in Conservation Areas |

The London Plan

- Policy 3.5 Quality and design of housing developments
- Policy 7.3 Designing out crime
- Policy 7.4 Local character
- Policy 7.6 Architecture
- Policy 7.8 Heritage assets and archaeology

Housing SPG

Sustainable Design and Construction SPG

National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 is a material consideration in the assessment of the proposal.

Paragraphs 56 and 60 of the NPPF emphasises the importance of good design and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment. Paragraph 64 states that permission should be refused for poorly designed development that fails to take the opportunity to improve the character of an area and the way it functions.

Chapter 12 relates to “Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.”

Para. 131 states, inter alia, that local planning authorities should take account of “the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.” Para. 133 relates to considerations to be taken into account where a development will lead to substantial harm to a designated heritage asset and Para. 134 relates to the need to consider public benefits of a proposal when dealing with development proposals that would lead to less than substantial harm to the designated heritage asset.

Conclusions

The main issues in a proposal of this nature are considered to be:

- The impact of the loss of the host building on the character and appearance of the conservation area
- The extent to which the proposed replacement building would preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation
- The impact of the proposal on the visual amenities of the area in general
- The impact of the proposal on the residential amenities of neighbouring properties

The character and appearance of the conservation area is described in the SPG referred to above. It states that the conservation area consists of detached dwellings unified by their common age of construction, unified by their reference to neo-Tudor and neo-vernacular elements. It is acknowledged that design and material vary somewhat through the area. However, key unifying features are identified as:

- Some houses are of one and a half storeys, with loft space gaining light from dormers and roof lights while others are slightly larger two storey dwellings with a cottage effect achieved through the use of first floor dormer windows.
- There is a widespread use of bay windows, applied timber framing and white rendering to external elevations

The SPG states that the Council will expect all proposals for new development to conform to the character of the area “especially in regard to scale and height of construction, location within a plot and the design and materials used.”

With regards to roofs, it is noted that the characteristic roof shape within the conservation area is hipped or half-hopped with a uniform pitch on most houses.

Policy BE11 of the Unitary Development Plan states inter alia that proposals for new development will be expected to respect or complement the layout, scale, form and materials of existing buildings and spaces. The demolition of an unlisted building in a conservation area will be permitted only where the building does not make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area and acceptable and detailed plans for a replacement scheme are supplied (Policy BE12).

Demolition of the host building

It is not considered that the host dwelling makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Accordingly, an application to demolish the host dwelling and replace it by a new residential dwelling may be worthwhile, subject to the granting of planning permission for a replacement dwelling that would be at the very least preserve, but preferably enhance, the character and appearance of the conservation area

The impact of the proposed replacement dwelling on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The proposed replacement dwelling would, in my view, fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. It is my informal opinion that a formal application along the lines of the pre-application submission would be unlikely to be successful.

Of particular concern are the following aspects of the proposed dwelling:

- The flank to flank width and overall bulk of the dwelling in relation to the site boundaries and neighbouring development
- The design and appearance of the dwelling, incorporating significant second floor features and a predominantly flat roofed appearance.
- the dominance and incongruity of the proposed dwelling in relation to the prevailing pattern and appearance of development in the locality.

With regards to the visual impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the conservation area, while I note that the existing dwelling extends to the site boundaries, the overall bulk of the dwelling and the principally single storey appearance for that part of the house to either side of the site tends to limit the extent to which the dwelling appears cramped within its site. In contrast, the proposal incorporates two storey development with small single storey elements immediately adjacent to the boundaries which in my view would result in a cramped appearance to either side of the proposed dwelling.

The significant two storey bulk and width of the dwelling, with the additional second floor/roof top accommodation, would result in the house having an over-dominant appearance in the context of the site and the prevailing pattern of development in the locality where more generous side space tends to be retained and the dwellings are more modestly proportioned in relation to their plots.

While I appreciate that certain other dwellings within the immediate locality of the host dwelling have an overall ridge height similar to the overall flat-roofed height of the proposed dwelling, a combination of more sympathetic design and the retention of significant space to the boundary results in these dwellings (i.e. No. 28) having a lighter and less cramped impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area. For example, No. 26 which lies to the north of the application site has a generally two storey appearance with a significant proportion of the width of the dwelling being subservient to the feature front gables and a generally single storey appearance towards the boundary with No. 24 and more significant side space towards the boundary with No. 28. The design and layout of this development reflects the appraisal of the character and appearance of the conservation area in the SPG.

To the south, the dwelling at No. 28 is of more contemporary design than is common in the vicinity, but incorporates visual elements that complement and reference the pitched roofs and scale of dwellings in relation to their respective plots.

The second floor accommodation would be appreciable from the street scene as a consequence of the topography of the site and street, and the flat-roofed bulk of the accommodation and its height, commensurate with the ridge rather than eaves heights of dwellings on this side of the street, would fail to complement the bulk and form of the dwellings in the conservation area. I note that a flat-roofed dwelling at No. 117 Foxgrove Road is the only locally listed dwelling in the conservation area. However, that site is some distance from the application site and the dwellings would not be viewed in direct comparison with each other. Furthermore, the more modest scale of that dwelling and the more generous appearance of space between the dwelling and the boundary and neighbouring dwellings does not in my view provide a direct reference point for the proposed dwelling.

A contemporary approach to design of houses in conservation areas is not precluded in local, national or regional planning policy, and it is not necessary to mimic or provide a pastiche of historic styles for all new development in conservation areas. However, any contemporary house introduced into such an established setting with identified uniformity of design features, scale and setting of development and an appreciable consistency in external materials would need to be of a very high design standard, as well as referencing and complementing surrounding buildings. A

contemporary designed house in an historic area should be recessive rather than seeking to dominate the street scene.

The street scene provided, in my view, illustrates that the proposed dwelling would appear overdominant, excessively bulky and alien in the context of its site and surroundings. If a contemporary approach is to be adopted, then some reference to local styles and materials should be included. While No. 117 Foxgrove Road is flat-roofed, it is the exception rather than the rule (as illustrated in the Supplementary Planning Guidance assessment at para. 3.15 regarding roofs). The more contemporary dwelling adjacent to the application site incorporates pitched roofs while retaining space to the boundary and a more proportional bulk in relation to the width of the plot that that which is proposed.

Visual amenities of the area

In the most part, the impact of the proposal on the visual amenities of the area is indivisible from the assessment above regarding the impact of the scheme on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

I would however draw your attention to Policy H9 of the UDP which states that where higher standards of separation between development and the boundary already exists within residential areas, a more generous side space than the minimum 1m will be expected to be provided *for the full height of the flank wall of the building*. The policy seeks in part to protect the high spatial standards and level of visual amenity characterising many of the borough's residential areas.

The policy relates to proposals of two or more storeys in height, which would be applicable to the pre-application proposal in that it proposes new part one/part two storey development close to the boundary without, it appears, providing the minimum 1m side space for the full height of the flank walls. In my view, the conservation area location is one where the Council would normally expect a more generous separation to be provided, and the street scene elevation submitted is illustrative of what would appear to be a cramped relationship between the proposed development the boundary/adjacent development.

Policies BE1 and H7 are also relevant to the assessment of the proposals, alongside Policy BE11 referred to above. Policy H7 requires that the site layout, buildings and space around buildings be designed to a high quality, recognising and complementing the qualities of surrounding areas. Policy BE1 states also that development should complement the scale, form, layout and materials of adjacent buildings and areas, and should not detract from the existing street scene. As referred to in greater detail above, I am not convinced that the proposals would complement and respect the scale, form, siting and materials of the locality.

For information I would draw your attention to the redevelopment of No. 28 Downs Hill, involving the demolition of the host dwelling and its replacement by a new development, for which planning permission was granted under reference 14/03219. Permission was previously refused under reference 14/00231 on the grounds:

1 The proposal would constitute an overdevelopment of the site by reason of the limited side space to the southern boundary (given the height and design

of the proposed replacement dwelling) which would cause harm to the character and appearance of the Downs Hill Conservation Area contrary to Policies BE1 and BE11 of the Unitary Development Plan.

2 Insufficient information has been submitted to demonstrate that the proposed development could be undertaken in a satisfactory manner, so as to not result in unsatisfactory levels of overlooking, especially given the changes in level on the site, thereby contrary to Policy BE1 of the Unitary Development Plan.

The permitted scheme was considered to have overcome these grounds for refusal in that the revised scheme provided a minimum of 2m space to each boundary, the scheme reduced the height of the building so that the ridge aligned with the higher gable at No. 26 and the terracing at the rear addressed concerns regarding the impact of the proposal on residential amenity.

Impact on residential amenity

If a formal application for planning permission is submitted the Council will write to neighbouring owners/occupiers to invite them to submit representations in objection or support of the proposed development. The proposal would also be advertised by way of an entry in the local press along with a statutory site notice. Where material considerations are raised in response to this consultation they will be taken into account in the assessment of the scheme.

I would anticipate that there would be a strong local interest in an application along these lines. A full assessment would be undertaken of the impact of the scheme on residential amenity with reference to Policy BE1's requirement that development should respect the amenity of neighbours by ensuring that their amenities are not harmed by noise, disturbance, inadequate daylight, sunlight, loss of privacy or by overshadowing. Such an assessment would be framed by consideration of the existing relationship between the host dwelling and neighbouring dwellings.

If a formal application for planning permission is submitted, detailed sectional drawings should be submitted in order that the Council and neighbours can consider the relationship between the development and neighbouring land/property. I note that the scheme appears to involve substantial excavation to form a large basement area. In view of the sloping nature of the site it would be advisable to include neighbouring buildings (or at least those parts nearest the boundary) in drawings submitted with the application, and you should have regard to the privacy of neighbouring gardens/patios in the design and extent of the proposed raised terrace. Drawings including existing and proposed boundary landscape screening would be helpful, although I am concerned that the proposed raised terrace may have an unneighbourly impact on immediately neighbouring dwellings as a consequence of its height and rearward extent in comparison with the existing situation.

Other matters

If a formal application is submitted the Council will notify local residents of the development. Waste services, Thames Water, Drainage and Environmental Health would also be consulted. The Advisory Panel for Conservation Areas (APCA) would

also be invited to comment. The Highways Engineers would provide comments regarding the parking and manoeuvring provision on site and the assessment of the trees officer regarding the impact of the development on protected trees would also be sought.

It is recommended that you take into consideration the means of drainage for hard surfaces on the site, whether these would be of a permeable material and whether SUDS or on-site drainage are proposed.

Any trees on the site or adjacent to the boundary should be clearly indicated on the submitted drawings and if the development proposals would be likely to necessitate their removal or impact on their health and long term retention it would be appropriate to submit an Arboricultural Implications Report.

Community Infrastructure Levy

The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a levy that Local Authorities (including the Greater London Authority) in England and Wales can choose to charge on new developments in their area. The money can be used to support development by funding infrastructure that the Council, local community and neighborhoods want – for example new or safer road scheme, park improvements or a new health centre.

Although Bromley has not yet decided whether it will implement a CIL, the Mayor of London has formally submitted his proposed CIL charging scheme. The Levy is intended to raise £300 million towards the delivery of Crossrail and came into effect for planning permission after 1st April 2012.

The Mayoral CIL will apply to larger proposals involving new buildings and extensions (generally over 100sqm of new floorspace), and charges will be based on the size and type of new development. You are advised to submit a CIL liability form along with the application as well as a Planning Statement.

Validation Requirements

I hope that this letter provides some guidance to the main considerations and information required. As part of any planning application other supporting documents may be required in addition to a block plan, location plan and scaled elevations and floorplans. A full explanation of these and other requirements can be found at:

http://www.bromley.gov.uk/info/485/planning_applications/100/applying_for_planning_permission

Please note the requirement on page 18 of this document regarding proposals for living roofs to be accompanied by details of the proposed roof planting and management (www.livingroofs.org/)

Applications normally take about 8 weeks to determine. They can be decided by officers under delegated powers or by elected Members at the Planning Committee. If the application is reported to Committee, you are entitled to attend and speak for 3 minutes. This is subject to a registration procedure which can be viewed on our website.

Conclusion

In my informal opinion an application along these lines would be unlikely to be acceptable and it is likely that planning permission would be refused.

Without prejudice I am concerned that the proposal would constitute an overdevelopment of the site, with limited side space in context with the height and design of the proposed replacement dwelling. I am also concerned that the proposal would have inadequate regard to the prevailing character, scale, materials and form of development in the conservation area, and would dominate rather than complement the street scene. The impact of the proposal on the residential amenities of neighbouring dwellings would be carefully considered in the determination of a formal application. The Council would have regard to the existing development on the site and the relationship between the proposed development and neighbouring properties, including the terrace and basement, taking into account daylight, sunlight, privacy and outlook.

You should appreciate that this is an informal opinion only and that it is made without prejudice to the determination of an application as each case is determined on its own merits in light of the relevant planning policies of The London Plan, the adopted Unitary Development Plan (2006) and any other material land use planning considerations. Accordingly, the only way to test this is by way of a formal application.

Yours sincerely,

Susanna Stevenson
Planner
Development Control (West)