

RECEIVED: 14 July, 2005

WARD: Barnhill

PLANNING AREA: Kingsbury & Kenton Consultative Forum

LOCATION: 1 The Leadings, Wembley, HA9 9DT

PROPOSAL: Erection of three-storey block to provide four x one-bedroom and one x three-bedroom self-contained flats; provision of vehicular access to Chalkhill Road and layout of car-parking spaces and communal gardens.

APPLICANT: Mr K Patel

CONTACT: MZA Associates Ltd

PLAN NO'S: P01, P02 Rev B, P03 Rev B, P04 Rev B, P05 Rev B, P06 Rev B, P07 Rev A, P08 Rev A, P09 Rev B, P10 Rev B

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be refused.

EXISTING

The subject site is a corner plot located on the northern end of a 1960's terraced row of dwellings that are situated on the eastern side of The Leadings, within the Chalkhill Estate. The context of The Leading is that of three storey flat roofed terraced dwellings. Chalkhill Road is characterised by a variety of different built forms ranging from detached and semi-detached dwellinghouses through to larger flatted developments. The subject building is not listed, nor is it within a Conservation Area.

PROPOSAL

Erection of three-storey block to provide four x one-bedroom and one x three-bedroom self-contained flats; provision of vehicular access to Chalkhill Road and layout of car-parking spaces and communal gardens.

HISTORY

00/1029 – Outline Application for the erection of three-storey block to provide six self-contained flats; provision of vehicular access to Chalkhill Road and layout of car-parking spaces and communal gardens, **Withdrawn**

The applicant previously proposed the redevelopment of this site involving the construction of six self-contained flats within a three-storey ridged roof building that was to be attached to the northern end of the existing terraced row. Significant alterations were required in order for the proposal to comply with the Council's policies and policy guidance. However, the Council were unable to contact the applicant or his agent and the application was subsequently withdrawn.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Adopted Unitary Development Plan 2004

STR14 New development will be expected to make a positive contribution to improving the quality of the

urban environment in Brent by being designed with proper consideration of key urban design principles relating to: townscape (local context and character) urban structure (space and movement), urban clarity and safety, the public realm (landscape and streetscape), architectural quality and sustainability.

- STR18 A minimum of 9,600 additional dwelling units (including conversions and change of use) shall be provided, subject to the maintenance of a quality environment, between 1997 and 2016.
- STR19 New housing development should be located on sites which reduce the need for travel and preference given to the development of previously used urban land.
- BE2 Proposals should be designed with regard to local context, making a positive contribution to the character of the area, taking account of existing landforms and natural features. Proposals should improve the quality of the existing urban spaces, materials and townscape features that contribute favourably to the area's character and not cause harm to the character and/or appearance of an area or have an unacceptable visual impact on Conservation Areas.
- BE3 Proposal should the regard for the existing urban grain, development pattern and density in the layout of development site.
- BE4 Access for disabled people
- BE6 A high standard of landscape design is required as an integral element of development schemes.
- BE7 A high quality of design and materials will be required for the street environment.
- BE9 Creative and high-quality design solutions specific to site's shape, size, location and development opportunities. Scale/massing and height should be appropriate to their setting and/or townscape location, respect, whilst not necessarily replicating, the positive local design characteristics of adjoining development and satisfactorily relate to them, exhibit a consistent and well considered application of principles of a chosen style, have attractive front elevations which address the street at ground level with well proportioned windows and habitable rooms and entrances on the frontage, wherever possible, be laid out to ensure the buildings and spaces are of a scale, design and relationship to promote the amenity of users providing satisfactory sunlight, daylight, privacy and outlook for existing and proposed residents and use high quality and durable materials of compatible or complementary colour/texture to the surrounding area.
- H1A A minimum of 9,600 additional dwelling units (including conversions and change of use) shall be provided, subject to the maintenance of a quality environment, between 1997 and 2016.
- H12 Residential site layout to reinforce/create an attractive/distinctive identity appropriate to its locality, housing facing streets, appropriate level of parking, avoids excessive ground coverage and private and public landscaped areas appropriate to the character of area and needs of prospective residents.
- H14 The appropriate density should be determined by achieving an appropriate urban design, make efficient use of land and meet the amenity needs of potential residential, with regards to context and nature of the proposal, constraints and opportunities of the site and type of housing proposed.
- H16 Where frontage development is proposed within an existing residential area, the replacement housing must have an equal or greater contribution to the character or quality of the streetscene. Return frontage development should be compatible with any open character of corner sites, be subsidiary to the frontage development and retain an appropriate garden depth.
- TRN23 Parking standards for residential developments. The level of residential parking permitted will be restricted to no greater than the standards in PS14.

Brent Supplementary Planning Guidance

SPG3 Forming an access onto a road

Sets out the standards for the formation of an access onto a highway.

SPG17 Design Guide for New Developments

Sets out the general design standards for development and has regard to the character, design and appearance of developments, the design layout with respect to the preservation of existing building lines, size and scale of buildings and structures, and privacy and light of adjoining occupants. This policy guidance document addresses residential densities, minimum sizes for residential dwellings, external finishing materials, amenity spaces and parking related issues.

The above policies and guidance seeks to ensure that development should not significantly affect the amenities of the occupiers of the neighbouring properties and should be in keeping with the design, scale and character of the surrounding area.

CONSULTATION

Public

Initial consultation period (**19 September to 9 August 2005**)

10 neighbours were consulted.

Letters and a petition were received from the residents of Nos. 2-4, 6-19 and 21 The Leadings an 31 Chalkhill Road noting the following issues:

- Loss of privacy, light and outlook
- Increase in parking, traffic and congestion and safety of traffic and pedestrians
- Loss of trees and other natural features
- Effect on character of area
- Obstruction of views for road users
- Previous damage to mature trees on the site
- Previous damage from machinery to footpaths adjacent to Chalkhill Road

Re-consultation was undertaken on 24 October following the receipt of revised drawings which were significantly different from the initial submission. Further revised drawings were received on 21 November. However, the differences in these drawings did not warrant public re-consultation.

It has been assumed within this report that the revisions to the submitted plans have not addressed the residents' objections to the proposal due to the fundamental nature of these objections.

Internal

Transportation Planning:

A maximum of 5 parking spaces would be acceptable for the proposed flats. It would be acceptable to provide two 'straight-on' parking spaces off Chalkhill Road while the other three parking spaces can be accommodated on-street due to the good public transport accessibility (PTAL rating of 4) and the current levels of on-street parking. It is suggested that a financial contribution of £4,200 (£700 per flat) towards non-car access improvements is sought.

Landscape Design:

No objection. If planning permission is granted, a condition should be attach requiring details of hard and soft landscaping which includes plant species, sizes and density and details of all hard surfacing and the boundary treatment along the Chalkhill Road.

Environmental Health:

No objection. Conditions should be attached regarding the nature and extent of any contamination present on-site.

Members:

Councillor Jim O'Sullivan has submitted a letter of objection which supports the objections by the local residents with respect to the following issues:

- Loss of outlook
 - Traffic safety, parking and congestion and effects on the safety of traffic and pedestrians
 - Loss of trees and other natural features
- Change in character of area

External

Thames Water:

No objection.

REMARKS

This corner site is located at the end of a row of terrace dwellings and is situated on the corner of The Leadings and Chalkhill Road. The design and appearance of the new building within the western (The Leadings) frontage borrows features of the existing building which include the width of the existing dwellings, the front balconies, the combination of bricks and hanging tiles and large lintels above the second floor windows. The window design is in keeping with that of the existing building and would provide a visual link between the old and new buildings but is not identical to the windows of the existing buildings.

The proposed buildings do not contain integral garages which are features of the existing buildings. However, the ground floor window design is in keeping with that of the existing buildings and such a variation will not affect the character and appearance of the streetscape.

Set-in from Boundaries

The proposed building has been stepped so that it maintains a 2 m set-in from the Chalkhill Road pavement to bring the development in line with section 3.7.29 of the Brent UDP 2004. Large steps within the building line are an existing feature of this terraced row. However, this proposal includes two small steps within the building frontage, one at ground floor level and the other throughout the entire three floors of the development. These steps appear contrived and do not reflect the existing terraced row of dwellings and are accordingly poor design features that detract from the building and area. The applicant has indicated that these dimensions and steps are required in order to achieve the minimum floor space required by the Council. This is typically an indication that the applicants are attempted to fit too much development into a confined site, where attempts to meet the minimum requirements that are set out within the Council's supplementary planning guidance result in a development of contrived and awkward appearance that does not compliment the character and quality of the street scene.

The rear walls of the proposed building are less than 10 m from the rear boundary. This is not likely to cause any loss of privacy as the development potential for the area to the rear of the site is very limited.

It should also be noted that Policy H16 specifies, with regard to return frontage developments, that developments should be compatible with any open character of corner sites. The proposed development's contrived and stepped design occupies the majority of this corner plot and either fails to comply or only just manages to comply with the Council's standards. This results in significant harm to the open and spacious character of this corner site, to the detrimental of the streetscene and contrary to Policy H16.

Light and Outlook to Neighbouring Properties

The rear wall of the building is stepped in order to comply with the 1:2 rule in relation to the windows of the existing buildings and between the proposed flats. This rule is typically used for two-storey extensions to existing buildings but is also applied in order to ensure that new residential developments do not cause an unduly detrimental loss of light or outlook to neighbouring dwellings.

While these steps may comply with the 1:2 rule between dwellings, they constitute a large number of steps that are out of character with the adjacent terraced row. In particular, the three-storey step within the middle of the rear wall of the Southern block adds clutter to this elevation which is highly visible from the adjacent highway, within an area which is characterised by a much greater separation between such steps. This cluttering is exacerbated by the minimal rear garden depth.

Privacy and Disturbance

The applicants have proposed windows within the northern flank wall of the northern block. Such windows are not present within the flank wall of the existing building, but improve the security of the parking area and Chalkhill Road by allowing overlooking of these areas. The minimum distance between these windows and the front windows of the houses opposite the site on Chalkhill Road exceeds 20 m. The proposed windows emulate the window design of the existing building.

The main entrance has been designed so that it includes an entrance ramp leading to the front door. The layout of the entrance ramp has been designed so that it complies with the Council's supplementary planning guidance for disabled access to buildings. The applicants have not submitted cross-sectional elevations which detail the gradient of this ramp, but have indicated that it will achieve the required gradient. A condition should be attached to any approval requiring detailed cross sections of the ramp.

The entrance ramp is also set in close proximity (0.5 m) to the front window of the northern ground floor flat. It is noted that the layout of the entrance will promote the use of the steps rather than the ramp, and that the

use of the steps will reduce the impact on the privacy of the ground floor residents to some extent. However, this also highlights the cramped nature of the development.

Residential Density and Unit Size

The proposal meets the Council's minimum requirements with regard to the floor area of one- and three-bedroom flats.

The site area (including a 6 m wide area along the longest (Chalkhill Road) road frontage) is 0.05072 Hectares. The application includes four one bedroom flats and one three bedroom flat and will therefore include a total of 12 habitable rooms. The residential density associated with this proposal is therefore 237 habitable rooms per hectare. This is in keeping with the range of residential densities that are seen to be appropriate for such locations.

Amenity Space

The access to the rear garden area has not been detailed within the site plan. However, it is likely that this will be located adjacent to the refuse area and car parking spaces. The ground floor windows within the flank wall of the building are located in close proximity to this access point and it follows that access to the rear garden area will result in disturbance of the future occupiers of the ground floor flat. Additionally, the use of the rear garden area is likely to result in disturbance and the loss of privacy for the future residents of ground floor flat 2.

The applicants have indicated that a total of 151.2 m² of amenity space will be provided. However, this includes the area between the flank wall of the north block and Chalkhill Road, which is not suitably sized or sited to provide private, usable amenity space. The area to the rear of the two blocks is approximately 120 m². The two first floor flats also have balconies which are approximately 5.4 m² in area. While the combined amenity space just meets the minimum requirements, the aforementioned privacy issues renders some of this amenity space un-usable without causing disturbance of the adjoining residents. This is also fairly typical of a proposal which constitutes the overdevelopment of the site, sacrificing the privacy of future residents to just meet the Council's standards.

Parking

Two 'straight-in' parking spaces have been proposed toward the eastern side of the Chalkhill Road frontage. The proximity to public transport and levels of on-street parking are such that the remaining parking requirement for the proposed flats can be accommodated on the adjacent highways. Section 106 developer contributions would be required if this application was considered acceptable.

Cycle Parking

The applicants have proposed a cycle storage area that is 4.8 m long and ranges in depth from 3 m to 0.5 m. The applicants have not demonstrated that this area is sufficiently sized to provide secure, weatherproof cycle storage for 5 cycles and it is likely that this area is insufficiently sized for such purposes.

Refuse Storage

The refuse storage area which is designed to hold two 1100 L Eurobins is situated adjacent to the parking area, within sole access to this area from the pavement of Chalkhill Road. Such access is not ideal, but is required due to site constraints. The distance between the main entrance and the refuse area is not excessive and the refuse area will not have an adverse effect on the street scene providing it is adequately screened.

Proportion of Hard Landscaping

The proposal results in a large area (approximately 11 m wide including the bicycle parking) of hard landscaping within the Chalkhill Road Frontage, contrary to Policy H12 and detrimental to the street scene.

Comments on the issues raised by Objectors

The impact of the proposal on the parking, traffic and congestion on the adjoining highways has been addressed previously within this report.

The proposal complies with the guidance provided within SPG5 and SPG 17 with regard to the impact on the light, outlook and privacy of adjoining residential occupiers and therefore it is considered that such impact on the existing residential occupiers in the immediate vicinity is not unduly detrimental.

Mature vegetation has been removed from this site in the past. This application provides an opportunity to secure a planting scheme that will restore the natural vegetation within this corner site.

The damage that was caused to the existing vegetation and adjacent pavement cannot be addressed within this planning application.

Summary

The proposal, in an attempt to meet the Council's minimum requirements for floor space and set-in from the side boundary, results in an awkward and contrived design that does not compliment the character of the streetscene. It fails to maintain the open character of this corner site and results in an excessive proportion of hard landscaping within the Chalkhill Road frontage. The proposal also fails to provide an adequately sized area for bicycle storage, while access to and use of the rear external amenity space is likely to lead to disturbance of the future occupants of the ground floor flat. The proposal accordingly constitutes the overdevelopment of the site.

Refusal is recommended.

RECOMMENDATION: Refuse Consent

CONDITIONS/REASONS:

- (1) The proposal fails to adequately respect the open character of this return frontage site, evident through the small set-back from the Chalkhill Road pavement. The building's design and appearance appears contrived and cluttered due largely to the use of a number of smaller steps within the elevations while the proposal results in a excessive level of hard landscaping within the Chalkhill Road frontage. The proposal constitutes an unacceptable form of development, detracting from the character and appearance of the locality and the street scene. The proposal would be visually incongruous, relating poorly to the existing row of terraced dwellings, and as a result, would be contrary to policies BE2, BE7, BE9, H12 and H16 of Brent's Unitary Development Plan 2004, as well as the advice of Supplementary Planning Guidance No. 17: "Design Guide for New Development".
- (2) The proposal would result in an inadequate standard of residential accommodation for flats 1 and 2 due to the poor relationship between the communal external amenity space and the bedroom windows of flats 1 and 2 which is likely to result in the unduly detrimental disturbance and loss of privacy for the future occupants of these flats. Additionally, the proposed cycle storage area is not adequately sized to provide secure, weatherproof storage for all five flats. This is contrary to policies BE9, and H12 of Brent's Unitary Development Plan 2004 and Supplementary Planning Guidance No. 17: "Design Guide for New Development".

INFORMATIVES:

None Specified

Any person wishing to inspect the above papers should contact David Glover, The Planning Service, Brent House, 349 High Road, Wembley, Middlesex, HA9 6BZ, Tel. No. 020 8937 5337



Planning Committee Map

Site address: 1 The Leadings, Wembley, HA9 9DT

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