

Agenda Item 06

Supplementary Information

Planning Committee on 10 March, 2021 Case No.

20/3502

Location	167 Preston Hill, Harrow, HA3 9UY
Description	Demolition of dwellinghouse and erection of a three storey building comprising 6 self-contained flats, hard and soft landscaping to front creating two off-road parking spaces, extended crossover, refuse and cycle storage to front and subdivision of rear garden

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Neighbour objections

The introduction to the 'Summary of Key Issues' section of the report refers to 16 neighbour objections having been received. However, this number included multiple comments from one objector, and comments were received from 15 objectors, as highlighted under "Neighbour objections" in the Summary of Key Issues and the Consultation section of the report.

Further comments from two neighbouring properties have been received following publication of the committee agenda. These are from neighbours who have already objected and so do not affect the number of objections as stated above. The issues raised are summarised as follows and considered below.

- Loss of light, nuisance and impact to 165 Preston Hill, including the wide facing windows and communal spaces;
- That the recommendation doesn't reflect the Planning Inspector's previous decision, and the proposal represents minor amendments to the previous refusal;
- That in comparison, the redevelopment of 163 Preston Hill was limited to 2 storeys and 4 flats when that site is on a larger corner plot with better access and amenities;
- That there is a reliance on the 2011 census for parking data which is out of date;
- That the application refers to parking for 2 cars, not 1;
- That double yellow lines have just been painted in the local streets, reducing on-street parking, and this hasn't been taken into account;

Previous applications and appeals relating to this site

As noted in the 'Relevant Site History' section of the report, a previous application ref 19/1774 was made for householder extensions to the existing dwellinghouse on the site. This application was refused by the Local Planning Authority on 22 July 2019 and subsequently dismissed on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate on 21 November 2019. The neighbour comments suggest that, as the current application is for a building of a similar size and scale, it should be assessed in the same way as the previous application.

Each application must be considered on their own merits. However, previous decisions and appeal decisions can be material considerations.

The 2019 application was for extensions and alterations to the existing house (rather than demolition and redevelopment), and in line with adopted policy and guidance, the impact on the character of the host dwelling together with the surrounding area was considered. The scheme looked to reflect the design approach of the adjoining Brent Hotel and incorporated substantial extensions to both sides, the rear and the roof including a number of dormer windows. Officers considered the proposal to be poor in terms of its design and appearance, resulting in a bulky, prominent and unsympathetic form of development which would fail to respect the proportions of the host dwellinghouse and pattern of residential development in the area.

The Inspector agreed that the proposal "would detrimentally alter the character of the host dwelling resulting in a disproportionate appearance more akin to larger, more intensive use types such as the hotel and apartment building referenced. This would consequently harm the character and appearance of the host dwelling by unduly increasing the bulk of the property relative to its intended use as a family dwelling house and would interrupt the legible pattern of small scale residential dwellings in the area."

The Inspector's report emphasises the distinction between individual family homes and larger buildings intended for more intensive uses. The surrounding area contains examples of both and, as the current

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proposal is not for extensions to the dwelling but for a more intensive residential use, it is considered appropriate to assess it against the guidelines set out in the Brent Design Guide SPD1 and in the context of other buildings of a similar scale within the area.

A subsequent application for the demolition of the existing house and construction of a new building of six flats on the site was refused by officers on 3 September 2020 (ref 20/1844). This is considered to be directly relevant to the current proposal. Paragraphs 3, 11, 16 and 27 of the main report set out the relevant differences between the two applications and summarise how the current proposal is considered to have addressed the reasons for refusal of the previous application.

Impact on 165 Preston Road

The neighbour comments refer to loss of light, nuisance and impact to the business at the adjacent property 165 Preston Hill, due to the proposed building being larger than that existing. This concern was raised previously and is noted in the summary of neighbour objections in the 'Consultation' section and addressed in paragraph 15 of the report. However, within the additional comments, the objector refers to a breakfast room sectioned off from the kitchen at the rear, with a double glazed glass door for light at the side which would be blocked out by the development, in addition to a room at first floor with only one window to the side, another room at first floor with one of two windows to the side and another room on the second floor where the windows are dormers to the side.

No.163 has been extended following an application for full planning permission (ref 01/1228), which was refused by the Council on 9 August 2001 but subsequently allowed on appeal by the Planning Inspectorate on 30 January 2002. It is currently in use as a hotel (Use Class C1). Reference has been made to the approved plans submitted for that application to determine the layout of the property.

The approved plans show a ground floor window in the middle of the flank elevation facing onto 167 Preston Hill, serving a bathroom. There are two first floor flank elevation windows, serving a bathroom and a shower room respectively. Finally, there are two dormer windows in the roof on the flank elevation, with one serving a toilet. The other window serves a hotel room which also has a window facing to the rear. Site photographs provided by the agent also support the conclusion that there are two small flank elevation windows at both first and second floor. No ground floor flank elevation windows are visible in these photographs or in online images of the property, however this flank elevation is already screened by the existing building at 167, which has a single-storey side extension set off from the shared boundary by 0.85m to provide a side passageway which is gated.

It is considered that light to the ground floor flank elevation window at 165 would already be impacted by the existing single-storey side extension and rear outbuildings at the application site. The proposed building would be deeper than the existing building, but this additional impact would be reduced by the removal of the outbuildings, whilst the proposed building would be at a distance of 1.2m from the side boundary at ground and first floors and 2.1m at second floor, which would also help to mitigate impacts on the ground floor window caused by the additional height and bulk. As noted above, the approved plans indicate that there are no primary habitable room windows on this elevation, and this point has been confirmed in previous case officers' site visits.

Furthermore, it should be noted that a hotel is not considered to be a residential use as it does not provide permanent residential accommodation. Consequently the standards and guidance for impacts on residential properties set out in Brent's supplementary planning documents do not need to be applied to this property. Impacts on daylight and sunlight are considered, but they are not given the same degree of weight as similar impacts on permanent residential accommodation.

Previous applications relating to 163 Preston Road

The neighbour correspondence refers to "a neighbouring site at 163 Preston Hill, situated on a much larger corner plot site, with better access and amenity was approved after numerous attempts for a maximum of 4 flats with the proposed building profile to be retained in line with the residential detached and semi detached homes on the existing street scene which was a key consideration and requirement for approval".

A similar comment was noted in the 'Consultations' section of the main report, with the following officer response: "Each application is assessed on its own merits against current adopted and emerging policies. Four units were proposed and approved under Ref 19/3057 and the assessment of a case does not generally consider whether an additional number of units beyond that proposed would be acceptable. No previous applications for a larger number of units on that site have been made."

It should be clarified that two previous applications were submitted for a new development comprising seven homes, but were subsequently withdrawn (reference 14/1666 and 14/3657). Both applications featured three-storey buildings with additional basement accommodation. The site at 163 Preston Hill is 470sqm approx in size, whereas the application site is 403sqm approx in size, however whilst the site area is one factor that can influence the number and size of homes that can be provided on the site, other detailed design considerations and matters such as the design of the scheme and the quality of accommodation proposed also need to be taken into account. Each scheme must also be considered on its merits, and the design, appearance and layout of those proposals, together with their relationship with surrounding properties materially different from the proposal relating to No. 165.

It is also important to note that the policy context continues to evolve and that this affects how applications are assessed over time. For example, the two withdrawn applications referred to above would have been determined with reference to the 2011 London Plan as part of the adopted development plan. Policy 3.4 of this document provided specific numerical ranges to guide the density of new residential developments (the density matrix). The current 2021 London Plan Policy D3 emphasises the need to make the best use of land by following a design-led approach to optimise the capacity of sites, and the lack of any reference to specific densities allows scope for higher densities to be achieved.

Parking provision

Neighbour comments have drawn attention to waiting and loading restrictions on Preston Hill, which came into operation on 9 November 2020 although the double yellow lines indicating this have only recently been marked on the ground. Officers were unaware of these restrictions when the committee report was published, but have since been made aware of the extent of the changes.

As discussed within the main body of the committee report, based upon 2011 census data showing car ownership averaging 0.5 cars per flat in this area, the six flats proposed are estimated to generate demand for three parking spaces. Two spaces would be accommodated on site, leaving one car to park on-street. The committee report was written on the basis that this car would be able to park along the site frontage, as the applicant's parking survey shows no demand for on-street parking along this stretch of Preston Hill at night. However, this is no longer the case with the introduction of the double yellow lines.

The applicant's parking survey counted the number of cars parked on-street overnight on two nights in May 2020, in order to assess spare capacity. This identified an average of about 35 spare on-street parking spaces within about 200m (5 minutes walk) of the site. This would now fall to about 25 spaces due to the introduction of the double yellow lines. The spare capacity can be found largely in Preston Hill (between The Mall and Belvedere Way), with some spare capacity in Kinch Grove. These spaces are not as conveniently located as parking along the site frontage would have been. However, they are considered to be sufficiently close to be accessible for future residents. It should be noted that the NPPF states that proposals should only be refused on transport grounds where the impact is severe. The proposed development would generate demand for one on-street parking space in an area that is not particularly heavily parked (given that most properties in the area have off-street parking) and this is not considered to be a severe impact, even after these yellow lines have been installed.

The objector has also questioned the use of 2011 census data to estimate car ownership. As is apparent from the date of the census, this data is now around 10 years old. While there may have been some change in the average levels of car ownership, given the number of spaces shown to be available in the local streets, this is not expected to be to a degree that would result in excessive levels of local on-street parking.

Recommendation: Remains to Grant planning permission subject to conditions and informatives as set out in the report.