

Application No:	Consultees Name:	Received:	Comment:	Response:
2020/3461/P	Paul Farrow	10/10/2020 10:04:32	COMMNT	<p>Objection by Paul Farrow on behalf of Highgate and Dartmouth Park Conservatives.</p> <p>First, it is worth noting that the site falls within the Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Forum area. It is therefore subject to the Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Plan. The Neighbourhood Plan was adopted after the Local Plan, so takes precedence over it.</p> <p>Second, we welcome the redevelopment of the hostel and the re-provision of temporary accommodation on site, and particularly accommodation fit for families. This is directly encouraged by the Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Plan, which designates the Chester Road hostel as a community facility to be preserved.</p> <p>That notwithstanding, we strongly object to this application on the grounds that its appearance is harmful to the conservation area, it intrudes on to the views on both roads, it is not built to a suitable style for the area, and does not meet the design standards expected in Dartmouth Park. All of this leads to us concluding that the amenity value from the accommodation is reduced as it will harm residents' life chances, and it should therefore be refused.</p> <p>Appearance and conservation</p> <p>The proposal has an industrial appearance, clearly intended to be evocative of corrugated iron of the sort you might find adorning a warehouse or in a scrapyard. It is clearly not acceptable and should be refused on this basis alone.</p> <p>The site is in the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area, whose character must be preserved and, where possible, enhanced by applications. When determining the impact on the character of a conservation area, Camden must consider the conservation area statement. Camden's Local Plan states that Camden will grant planning permission only where it preserves or enhances the special character or appearance of the area. This is stated as an absolute commitment in the Local Plan.</p> <p>The site is particularly sensitive in conservation terms for a number of reasons:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. It lies at the junction of two roads, with a prominent corner visible along both Dartmouth Park Hill and Chester Road. Because of the bend in Dartmouth Park Hill, its Dartmouth Park Hill elevation is visible from far up Dartmouth Park Hill 2. Chester Road is an exceptional contributor to the conservation area because of its uniformity. All buildings on Chester Road south of Chester Balmore except for the hostel make a positive contribution to the Conservation Area. 3. The setting of buildings that make a positive contribution to the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area is itself protected in the Neighbourhood Plan: giving it a stronger protection than the Conservation Area alone. 4. The view up Chester Road is protected in both the Dartmouth Park Conservation Area statement and the Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Plan <p>What is the character of the area?</p> <p>Chester Road – On the western side south of number 31, they are uniformly three-storey red brick (16 houses). In the rest of the road up to Chester Balmore – i.e. 20 houses on the east and 12 on the west – they are uniformly three-storey yellow brick with or without stucco rendering. There is no building that shares any</p>

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aspect of appearance of character with the proposed building.

Dartmouth Park Hill – South of the site is composed of a high-quality red brick terrace (Bramshill Mansions), with three storeys plus a basement. Numbers 81 and 81A were deliberately built to look like Bramshill Mansions (although did not do so successfully). North of the site, the properties are built of yellow and red brick: a terrace on the Islington side and the 1980s Forrest/Palacio phase of the Highgate Newtown on the Camden side (to which there is also access via Colva Walk).

Nothing – absolutely nothing – locally looks like the building that is proposed. It is alien to the area and given the sensitivity of the site, it is unacceptable in the area. This was a real opportunity to build something similar in appearance to the red brick mansion blocks that fill Croftdown Road and St Albans Road and that would therefore have fitted in to the red brick homes on the western side of Chester Road and Bramshill Mansions immediately to the south.

Because it does considerable heritage harm to a conservation area, it should be refused permission.

Intrusion onto views

As well as the view being mentioned in the Conservation Area statement, a number of views are protected in the area under Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Plan policy DC1(a). These views are described by the Plan as “integral to the unique character of the area”, and the protection is a stand-alone policy in planning law, separate and in addition to the protection under the duty to preserve and enhance the Conservation Area.

View 3 in the Neighbourhood Plan is the view north-westwards up Chester Road from the junction with Dartmouth Park Hill. The site is directly at the very front of this view.

The plan expressly states:

“Any development should (i) be of a height that does not harm the view; (ii) fit in with the prevailing pattern of buildings and spaces; and (iii) not tightly define the edges of the viewing corridor.”

The proposal does not even attempt to conform to the prevailing pattern of the buildings and spaces. By not even attempting to fit in, the proposal sticks two fingers up at the Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Plan.

Because it does considerable harm to the protected view, it should be refused permission.

The requirement for traditional buildings

The proposal would be for a large multi-unit building in an industrial style. This is expressly prohibited by the Dartmouth Park Neighbourhood Plan, whose policy DC1(c) states that developments must:

“[Ensure] that multi-unit developments in areas predominantly characterised by traditional terraced, semi-detached and detached housing will have scale and massing which respects that of surrounding buildings.”

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As a multi-unit development, the proposal must therefore have scale and massing that reflects the buildings around it, and especially the building forms common in the Dartmouth Park area. This is explained in the Plan, which states:

“In the central area of traditional streets, any required increase in density can best be achieved through the use of urban forms characteristic of Dartmouth Park.”

As noted, there was an opportunity to provide the additional units using a typology fitting in to Dartmouth Park, such as a red brick block or a faux terrace, and the Neighbourhood Plan includes a requirement for it. However, this proposal does not do that. It should therefore be refused permission.

Good design

The building’s “corrugated iron” appearance shows terrible design, without relation to its surroundings. The Neighbourhood Plan requires all developments to demonstrate good design, including but not limited to:

“Using good quality materials that complement the existing palette of materials used within the immediate area.”

This is unlike any part of the area. The palette is unlike anything in the area. The quality of the materials can be questioned, of course, but regardless of their expense or craftsmanship, they do not complement the existing palette of materials nearby.

For a development to be meet this policy requirement, it would have to be built in red brick or yellow brick, with or without a white or cream stucco render. Even the Chester Balmore development attempted to do this by being built of cream brick. But this application does not attempt to do this, so should be refused.

The poor design limits the amenity of the building

We think it is good news for Camden that the hostel is being rebuilt. In part, it is replacing Englands Lane hostel in Belsize Park, which is completely unfit for purpose at this moment in time, and is too cramped for families.

However, we do not think the design assists residents to integrate into the local community and therefore harms them. By making the Chester Road hostel the “ugly green building”, whose appearance local residents already resent, Camden is deliberately setting it apart. This will create a social barrier between people living in permanent accommodation and temporary accommodation. That cannot possibly be good for residents’ esteem or mental health, when the building should be used to help restore those things to people who have suffered greatly.

For all its huge internal faults, Englands Lane hostel is a traditional red brick mansion block that fits in to the style of the surrounding area. Its design is similar to the red brick mansion blocks on Belsize Grove, Eton Rise, and Belsize Avenue. It deliberately tries to minimise the gap between residents of the hostel and the surrounding area.

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Function and form are entwined in good design. The poor form of the Chester Road hostel undermines the noble and much needed function. It harms residents' life chances unnecessarily in order to be bold and different. This reduces the amenity value of the building, which we think ordinarily deserves great weight.

Balanced against the other factors, this reduced amenity leads us to conclude the application should be refused.

[end]
