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By e-mail

Planning Application response from Crouch End Neighbourhood Forum

Site: 70-2 Shepherds Hill N6 5RH (within Crouch End Conservation Area)

Ref: HGY/2016/2081, and HGY/2016/1755

Proposal: Demolition of existing building and redevelopment to provide 16 residential dwellings with associated landscaping, car parking and other associated works.

The Crouch End Neighbourhood Forum was designated as a Neighbourhood Forum by Haringey Council in December 2015. Although the Neighbourhood Plan is not yet an adopted policy document and is currently under preparation, the emerging neighbourhood policies affecting conservation areas will not contradict those of the local authority, and will aim to reflect and enhance the character of the local built environment.

CENF wishes to object to the application.

Demolition of Existing Building

The heritage statement included within the application cites the published Conservation Area Character Appraisal/Crouch End CA (No.5). This identifies the existing Victorian building as having a 'neutral' effect upon the Conservation Area. The Forum accepts this classification of the existing C19 building, and the developers are correct to quote the presumption of sustainable development in support of their case.

Attenuating this is the following statement drawn from the emerging Haringey Local Plan Development Mgt DPD policy document. This has (under DM9, our emphasis),

D Subject to (A-C) above the Council will give consideration to, and support where appropriate, proposals for the sensitive redevelopment of sites and buildings where these detract from the character and appearance of a Conservation Area and its setting, provided that they are compatible with and/or compliment the special characteristics and significance of the area.

Furthermore it should also be noted that the CA Character Appraisal document also contains the following information:

1.21 The area between Shepherd's Hill, Coolhurst Road and Hurst Avenue was included in the Conservation Area on 29th November 1994 to protect the remaining original buildings within that area from demolition.

The public campaign to save the current building from demolition clearly draws from this understanding.

Proposed Replacement

Given the above, the Forum feels that the decision on the application rests on a consideration of the quality of the proposed scheme, and that the replacement be judged on whether it preserves or enhances the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Here the case for the new build is on unsure footing. The proposed block matches the neighbouring blocks of flats in scale, height and massing – surrounding blocks that are all listed as 'detractors' in the CA Appraisal and cannot be employed as desirable precedent. We also note the opinions expressed elsewhere that the design of the replacement block falls short of the standard required by the CA, and will fail therefore to positively contribute to local character and distinctiveness. Furthermore the undeniably positive value of the existing arrangement lies in its scale, the break it supplies to the line of high blocks of flats along the street, and especially in the green and well planted setting fronting Shepherd's Hill. These features should be retained.

While some increase in the number of dwellings is supportable, we note that no affordable housing is proposed for the site.

Consequently although the developer's case is arguable, on balance we feel that the current scheme is of insufficient quality, will cause harm to the Conservation Area and should therefore be refused.