

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 September 2016

by David Walker MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 21st October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/W/16/3148787

Plumstead Common Working Men's Club, 71 Kirkham Street, London SE18 2JS

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Plumstead Common Working Men's Club against the decision of Royal Borough of Greenwich Council.
 - The application Ref 15/0743/F, dated 12 March 2015, was refused by notice dated 21 October 2015.
 - The development proposed is demolition of snooker hall, bottle storage, WCs and hallway; and construction of a new block of flats to provide 8 No units to rear of Plumstead Common Working Men's Club.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Plumstead Common Working Men's Club against Royal Borough of Greenwich Council. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues in the appeal are:
 - i) The effect of the proposal on the living conditions of, firstly, occupants of neighbouring properties along Kirkham Street in relation to scale and proximity and having regard to outlook and, secondly, future occupants with regard to accessibility;
 - ii) Whether adequate parking would be retained for users of the existing club; and
 - iii) The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Living conditions

4. The buildings to be demolished are attached to the side of the club but located in a backland position to the rear of houses along Kirkham Street. They comprise of large, but single storey, structures with the closest building to the existing houses having a flat roof. In their place would be a new three storey
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block of flats with a largely featureless gable end presented towards the Kirkham Street houses. While the proposal would be detached from the club, thereby creating a shorter overall length of building, it would be positioned closer to the boundary with the existing houses.

5. In this context where the full height of the existing club extends backwards to enclose the whole length of the adjacent gardens, the additional height of the proposal in close proximity would introduce a further enclosing element. It would reduce the outlook available from the gardens leading to an over dominant effect that would appear oppressive in relation to the existing site conditions.
6. I am mindful that the main parts of the Kirkham Street houses are further away from the proposal than the rear projections, and that I have not been provided with any minimum separation distance requirements. However, this does not diminish the harmful effect of the proposal on the outlook available. I also acknowledge the densely built pattern of development in the area with facing properties in close proximity being a characteristic. These are pre-existing conditions for residents. The effect of the proposal, however, would be to introduce a new detriment to the existing living conditions of the occupants of the Kirkham Street properties that I find to be unacceptable.
7. Such harm as I find would conflict with the requirements of Policy DH1 of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies 2014 (the CS) to provide a positive relationship between the proposal and existing urban context. The Council also refers to Policy H(c) of the CS, relating to backland and infill development, but I do not find it applicable to this particular issue.
8. Turning to the living standards of future occupants. The Officer's Report clarifies that the Council's decision was founded on concerns about accessibility to the family sized flats on the second floor, and to circulation space and door sizes for a wheelchair user. In relation to accessibility, Policy H5 of the CS requires new build flats of three or more storeys to have sufficient lifts. It is consistent with the inclusive design requirements of Policy 7.2 of The London Plan 2015 (the LP). No lifts are provided in the scheme. I acknowledge the Officer's Report states that the Mayor of London's Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance does not require a lift. However, with the CS and LP forming part of the statutory development plan their policies prevail under the Planning Acts and I have no significant material considerations before me to indicate otherwise.
9. On circulation space, I am satisfied with the appellant's explanation that this could be secured with a minor variation to the plans under the conditions suggested. Overall, on this issue however I find the proposal would have a harmful effect on the living conditions of the existing occupants of Kirkham Street houses and would provide insufficient accessibility to the second floor flats.

Whether satisfactory parking provision would remain

10. Submissions from interested parties indicate that the streets surrounding the club can suffer from parking stress, particularly during events. Moreover, the appeal site is not particularly well located for accessibility to public transport options. However, there is no dispute between the parties that access to the club car park is obtained only via the Ravine Grove flats entrance which

contains security gates. It is accordingly little used by the club and the number of spaces available is limited.

11. Having regard also to the unrestricted on-street parking available along Ravine Grove and Kirkham Street, I do not find that the loss of the existing car park would materially worsen the existing parking conditions of the area. As the proposal would not therefore give rise to significant adverse effects on traffic and parking conditions I am satisfied that it would accord with the requirements of Policy IM(c) of the CS and Policy 6.13 of the LP.

Character and appearance

12. Although the proposal would be taller than the existing buildings it would not be out of scale with the height of the Ravine Grove flats and the remaining elements of the club building. Set in this context I am satisfied that the proposal would not appear excessively bulky. The eaves level windows of the stairwells and balconies of the proposal would differ in design from the adjacent flats, but not excessively so, and there would be matching dormer windows.
13. The Council concedes that there is not a uniform character to the area and from my site inspection I do not disagree. Having regard to the variety in building designs in the vicinity I do not find the design of the proposal would result in the introduction of a discordant feature. It would not be prominent in the streetscene with views being limited to those obtained from the existing houses overlooking the appeal site along Kirkham Street and Flaxton Road.
14. Overall, therefore, I do not find the proposal to have harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area and as a result it would accord with the design requirements of Policies DH(1), H(c) and H5 of the CS, and Policies 3.5 and 7.4 of the LP, to have a positive relationship with the existing urban context and enhance character, amongst other things.

Planning balance

15. In reaching my findings I am mindful that the redevelopment proposed would help to offset the drop in membership and generate a long term income that would secure the future of the club. The appeal site is also located close to Plumstead Common for recreation and to local shopping facilities, and the proposal would deliver further units of accommodation to the housing stock of the area. These factors undoubtedly weigh in support of the proposal. However, my findings in relation to the living conditions of existing and future occupants, and with regard to the accessibility of the second floor flats would lead to significant adverse effects that would not be outweighed by the benefits.

Other Matters

16. I also acknowledge the other matters raised by interested parties. In relation to the potential for a loss of light and privacy, the proposal would be sited at a sufficient distance to avoid any significant loss of natural light and elevations with windows are sufficiently separated from nearby properties to avoid overlooking. As noise and disturbance during construction could be reduced to acceptable levels with the use of suitable conditions they do not weigh heavily against the scheme. My attention has also been brought to potential areas of

shared ownership within the proposal but as this is a private matter between the parties affected I have not considered it further.

Conclusion

17. For the reasons given above, and with regard to the development plan read as a whole, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

David Walker

INSPECTOR