

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 November 2016

by Roy Merrett BSc(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 09 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/D/16/3157748

111 Chipstead Valley Road, Coulsdon, Surrey CR5 3BP

- 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 Mr S Reid against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 16/01274/P, dated 8 March 2016, was refused by notice dated 11 May 2016.
 - The development proposed is a vehicle crossover to facilitate off-road parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on i) highway and pedestrian safety and ii) the character and appearance of the dwelling and wider street scene including the St Dunstan's Cottages, Chipstead Valley Road Local Area of Special Character (LASC).

Reasons

3. The appeal site is at the end of a terrace of eight properties. It fronts a busy highway, Chipstead Valley Road, which has on-street car parking bays marked out on either side. The construction of the proposed crossover would result in the loss of one of the parking bays in order to facilitate access to the front of the property. There is a bus stop situated a short distance from the appeal site. It is undisputed by the parties that vehicle parking space is available at the rear of the property, via a service lane running from Chipstead Valley Road, further to the west.
 4. At my visit, I noted that the appellant has already completed a hardstanding area to the front of the dwelling. Whilst a relatively wide section of the boundary wall has been removed to facilitate vehicular access, no information has been provided to demonstrate that a vehicle may be turned within the site in order to leave in forward gear.
 5. I consider that vehicle movements to and from the hardstanding area would not occur frequently. Similarly, busses using the nearby stop would be a relatively infrequent occurrence. Therefore in terms of the visibility of the road
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- for drivers seeking to reverse from the site, the proximity of busses stopping nearby would not in itself result in any significant conflict.
6. However, notwithstanding this, the visibility of general traffic flows along Chipstead Valley Road to drivers emerging from the site would be impaired to a degree by the remaining boundary wall and also by the presence of nearby on-street parking. In the absence of any information being provided to the contrary, for example to demonstrate satisfactory visibility splays along Chipstead Valley Road, this would not therefore be conducive to a safe and straight forward vehicle exit manoeuvre.
 7. During my visit I observed a bus manoeuvring in relation to the nearby stop. At that time the parking space at the front of the appeal site was unoccupied. However, even with the space vacated, the presence of other parked vehicles further away meant that it was not possible for the bus to pull in without disrupting the free flow of traffic. I therefore consider that the proposed removal of the space would not benefit the free flow of traffic from this perspective.
 8. Furthermore whilst the removal of the on-street parking space would result in less potential obstruction to road users, any beneficial effect of this would be negligible in the wider context of significant on-street parking. In any event the presence of on-street parking, whilst restricting space on the carriageway has the positive effect of forcing drivers to be more careful and therefore controlling vehicle speed in the interests of highway and pedestrian safety.
 9. I note that the Council has not objected in principle to the loss of an on-street car parking space, however for the aforementioned reasons this does not outweigh the harm that I have identified above in terms of drivers manoeuvring away from the site.
 10. In addition, the appellant has access to car parking space at the rear of the property. Therefore in principle, the benefit of being able to get into and out of vehicles away from the busy main road at the front, is already available. This reduces the strength of the argument that the crossover is required in the interests of passenger safety. Accordingly, it adds weight in favour of resisting the proposal.
 11. For the aforementioned reasons I conclude that the proposal would result in harm to highway and pedestrian safety. It would therefore conflict with Saved Policy UD13 of the Croydon Replacement Unitary Development Plan 2006 (UDP), which amongst other things requires car parking to be safe.
 12. I acknowledge from the photographs submitted with the appeal statement and from my visit that there are other cases in the locality where vehicle crossovers have been installed. Examples have been cited in close proximity to a bus stop and a pedestrian crossing. It is not clear whether the occupiers of these sites have access to alternative car parking provision, as in the current appeal case. In any event, this does not justify the harm that I found in this case which I must consider on its own individual merits.

Character and appearance

13. The terrace within which the appeal site is located incorporates various matching design features, including ornate decorative red brickwork above the windows and front boundary walls and piers. These features give the terrace a

broadly uniform appearance. Indeed the Council has referred to the similarity of stone walls and piers along the front boundary as a characteristic feature of the terrace, which lies within the LASC.

14. Whilst the demolition of part of the wall to facilitate vehicular access serves to disrupt the uniformity of the terrace to a degree, the effect of this is mitigated by an existing lean-to side extension to the appeal dwelling which, more than the gap in the wall, is at odds with the similar appearance of the terraced group. In this context, the loss of part of the wall is not so significant in terms of its visual impact. The introduction of the vehicle crossover would in itself, because of its limited form, have a negligible impact on character and appearance.
15. For the above reasons I conclude that the proposal would not result in harm to the character and appearance of the dwelling and wider street scene including the LASC. It would therefore be in accordance with Policies 7.4 and 7.6 of the London Plan 2015; Policies SP1.2, SP4.1 and SP4.2 of the Croydon Local Plan Strategic Policies 2013; Policies UD2, UD3 and UC5 of the UDP and the Council's Supplementary Planning Document No 2 - Residential Extensions and Alterations insofar as they seek to promote good design and to protect Local Areas of Special Character within the Borough.

Conclusion

16. I have not found harm to character and appearance. However this is outweighed by my negative findings regarding highway and pedestrian safety. I therefore conclude, having had regard to all other matters raised, including that there have been letters in support of the proposal, that the appeal should be dismissed.

Roy Merrett

INSPECTOR