

## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 January, 2017

**by S. J. Buckingham, BA (Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI FSA**

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

**Decision date: 27<sup>th</sup> January, 2017**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/W/16/3159801**

**1 - 3 Coventry Road, Ilford, Essex, IG1 4QR**

- 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 Sir Neil Thorne against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
  - The application Ref 3851/15, dated 30 September, 2015 was refused by notice dated 9 May, 2016.
  - The development proposed is side extension to existing three-storey office building providing: 6 no. small offices, 1 no. wet room/ablution room, 2 no. additional vehicular parking spaces.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for 6 no. small offices, 1 no. wet room/ablution room, 2 no. additional vehicular parking spaces at 1 - 3 Coventry Road, Ilford, Essex, IG1 4QR in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 3851/15, dated 30 September, 2015 and the plans submitted with it, subject to the conditions set out in the schedule to this decision.

### Preliminary Matter

2. The description of development in the heading above has been taken from the planning application form. However, in Part E of the appeal form it is stated that the description of development has not changed, but, nevertheless a different wording has been entered. Neither of the main parties has provided written confirmation that a revised description of development has been agreed. Accordingly I have used the one given on the original application.

### Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect on the character and appearance of the area, the effect on the living conditions of occupiers of adjacent premises in respect of outlook and whether the development would provide adequate arrangements for parking, including cycle parking, servicing and delivery.

### Reasons

*The effect on the character and appearance of the area*

4. No 1 – 3 Coventry Road is a three-storey block of office units. It lies at the commercial western end of Coventry Road, where it meets Cranbrook Road a
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- major route into Ilford town centre. To the east are substantial gabled, double-fronted villas from which it takes some loose design cues.
5. The appeal proposal is for a three-storey extension of the existing building on its eastern flank, to fill a gap between the building and site boundary, a space currently occupied by a redundant electricity sub-station and the access to it. The extension would also occupy the site of the sub-station, which is set to the rear of the site, so extending it behind the current rear building line.
  6. The commercial blocks around the appeal site while larger in size than the villas to the east or the traditional retail premises on Cranbrook Road, generally maintain a small gap between them, reflecting the small gaps between the villas, although the appeal building directly adjoins Heraldic House, the block to its west. There is an unusually wide gap between the appeal building and Gunveer Court to the east due to the presence of the sub-station and an access road leading to the rear of Gunveer Court.
  7. While the proposed extension would run up to the property boundary, there would still be a gap of around 2.5m between the appeal building and Gunveer Court. The proposal would also follow the existing front building line and retain a relatively generous forecourt parking area to the front. I consider therefore that it would reflect the generally small gaps between buildings along Coventry Road, and retain an open setting to the front. The depth of the proposed extension would not be easily visible from the street frontage, and would partly occupy space already built in the form of the sub-station. I conclude therefore that the proposed extension would not appear particularly cramped within its plot, and would not have a significantly harmful effect on the character and appearance of the area in that regard.
  8. The design of no 1 – 3 is characterised by a strong vertical rhythm created by the roof gables, gabled doorways, hipped window bays, and low parapets dividing the roof. The frontage is symmetrical, with a central doorway and a handed pair of doorways on either side. However, the number and variety of design elements on the front elevation are such that this symmetry is not its strongest visual element.
  9. The proposed extension would be narrower than the other vertical bays of the building and have simpler detailing. It would not therefore compete visually with the rest of the building, and is likely to be read as a subsidiary element. It would not as a result disrupt the strong rhythm of the main part of the elevation, or its symmetry, and would not therefore harm its appearance or that of the wider area.
  10. I conclude that the appeal proposal would not harm the character and appearance of the area, and would not as a result conflict with Policy BD1 of the Borough Wide Primary Policies Development Plan Document 2008 (the BWPP) which seeks development which contributes to the distinctive character of the area in which it is located and be of a building style, massing, scale density and design appropriate to the locality. It would accord with Policy SP3 of the Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document 2008 (the CS) which requires all new development to respect the amenity of its locality generally.

*The effect on the living conditions of occupiers of adjacent premises in respect of outlook*

11. Gunveer Court is a residential block adjacent to the appeal site completed in 2014. It has a front range and a rear extension extending back into its site. As the proposed extension would extend to the site boundary, this would bring it to less than 3m distance from windows on the flank elevation of the frontage building of Gunveer Court. The accommodation in this building is on three floors, and the approved plans indicate that there are two flats on each floor, with one on each floor adjacent to the appeal site.
12. The Appellant has provided advertising information to suggest that Gunveer Court is used for short-stay accommodation as "self-catering apartments" rather than homes. However, the Council maintains that the permission granted for this building was for self-contained residential units, and there is no permission for any other use. It is not for me to determine the lawful use of these dwellings. As, in any case, the effect of the development proposal on occupiers of the flats would be similar in either form of residential use, I have determined the appeal on that basis.
13. While the approved plans for Gunveer Court show two windows per flat on the elevation facing the appeal site, they have been constructed with three. The smaller pairs of windows on each floor of the side elevation are primarily obscure-glazed, with a small opening light at the top, suggesting that they relate to bathrooms or shower rooms, while the slightly larger windows on this elevation are also partially obscure-glazed, and may belong to kitchens. Larger windows on the road frontage of the building are likely to be for living rooms and bedrooms.
14. The windows of the flats facing the appeal proposal from Gunveer Court already look out towards the flank elevation of No 1-3. While bringing this elevation into closer proximity would increase its effect on the outlook of occupiers of these flats, as these are likely to be secondary windows or lighting kitchens or bathrooms, with the outlook from these rooms already reduced by obscure glazing, the effect is likely to be limited. I note also that this would replicate the situation relating to the secondary windows on the east side of Gunveer Court, which appear to be as approved, and which look out towards a narrow gap between that building and the adjoining villa at number 5 Coventry Road. I conclude therefore that the harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of these flats is likely to be minor.
15. As the appeal proposal would not therefore have a significantly harmful effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of adjacent dwellings, it would not conflict with Policy BD1 of the BWPP, which seeks development which does not prejudice the amenity of neighbouring occupiers, nor with Policy SP3 of the CS, which requires that new development respects the amenity of adjoining properties.

*Whether the development would provide adequate arrangements for parking, including cycle parking, servicing and delivery*

16. The Council does not contest that the proposal complies with maximum car parking standards, but was concerned about the effect of the need to provide an additional crossover on site. The existing forecourt parking outside the appeal building runs the full width of the building, and is accessed by four

broad crossovers, including one providing access to the sub-station, while the area in front of the sub-station is used for parking. No additional crossover would be required therefore, and there would be no additionally harmful effect on pedestrian movement along the pavement adjoining the site.

17. Although no provision for secure cycle parking was initially proposed, a revised plan was submitted as part of the appeal process showing three secure cycle parking spaces (ref. 15.242\_PL06). I have considered whether any party would be unfairly prejudiced by my taking this plan into account, and have concluded that they would not. Although this plan shows adequate provision for cycle parking, it is not clear how it will be possible to access this, as the entrance to the pathway running behind the building, where the cycle parking is located, opens onto land outside the appeal site and there are no doors to the rear of the appeal site. However, I consider that this is a matter which can be reserved by condition.
18. A Delivery and Service Plan for the extended office building prepared by ATP Architects was also submitted as part of the appeal process. I have again considered whether any party would be unfairly prejudiced by my taking this plan into account, and have concluded that they would not. This plan confirms that as accommodation for a number of small-scale consultancy businesses the building currently generates low need for servicing and deliveries. Minor intensification of that use is not therefore likely to have a harmful effect on highway safety in terms of numbers or parking of delivery vehicles.
19. The plan also sets out mitigation measures to be deployed if service trips to the extended building are significantly higher than expected, including through deployment of a central booking system and shared deliveries. I conclude that if secured through condition, this approach is likely to ensure that no unexpected harmful effects arise in relation to servicing.
20. I conclude therefore that the appeal proposal makes adequate provision for parking, cycle parking and for deliveries to and servicing of the extended building. As a result it does not conflict with Policy T1 of the BWPP, which seeks development which demonstrates a reduced dependency on private vehicles, nor with Policy T5, which seeks compliance with maximum parking standards, nor with Policy T6, which seeks new development which makes adequate, safe and functional provision for service and delivery vehicles.

## **Conclusion**

21. For the reasons given above, and taking into account matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

## **Conditions**

22. I have considered the conditions put forward by the Council, and the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework. For clarity, a condition is added requiring implementation of the development in accordance with the approved plans. I have added a condition requiring the construction of the external faces of the building in materials to match existing work, in the interests of protecting the character and appearance of the area.

23. The implementation and retention of the approved cycle parking spaces and access to them is required by condition in the interest of ensuring that adequate provision is made in the interests of reducing dependency on private vehicles. A condition is also added requiring the implementation of the submitted Delivery Service and Management Plan in the interests of protecting highway safety.

*S J Buckingham*

INSPECTOR

### **SCHEDULE OF CONDITIONS**

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
- 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 15.242\_PL01, 15.242\_PL02, 15.242\_PL03, 15.242\_PL04.
- 3) The external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall be constructed in materials which match existing facing materials.
- 4) The extension hereby permitted shall not be occupied until space has been laid out within the site 3 bicycles to be parked and details supplied of how access to that space shall be achieved, and it shall thereafter be kept available for the parking of bicycles.
- 5) The measures described in the Delivery Service and Management Plan (DSMP) submitted in the appellant's statement (Appendix 7) dated September 2016, shall be implemented within the time period specified within that plan, and maintained thereafter in accordance with the approved details.