

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 May 2017

by Nicola Davies BA DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 6 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/G5180/W/17/3169318

81 Ravensbourne Avenue, Bromley BR2 0AU

- 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 Peter Griffin against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Bromley.
 - The application Ref DC/16/04574/FULL1, dated 30 September 2016, was refused by notice dated 6 December 2016.
 - The development proposed is the partial demolition and extension of existing dwelling and construction of two new adjoining dwellings together with external works and landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant has indicated that a planning permission granted by the Council relating to the appeal site. Notwithstanding this, I have considered the appeal on its own merit as a standalone development.

Main Issues

3. The main issues raised in respect of the proposed development are the effect on: -
 - (a) The character and appearance of the area;
 - (b) The living conditions of future occupiers; and
 - (c) Parking provision.

Reasons

The character and appearance of the area

4. The area is characterised, in the main, by two-storey detached and semi-detached properties although there are some terraces of three dwellings. The properties along the appeal side of Ravensbourne Avenue have a general uniformity to their plot widths and have long rear gardens although these taper in length as the dwellings come closer to the railway embankment to their rear. There is also a degree of separation between properties and their side boundaries and I observed that many properties have passageways to the side.
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Although properties in the area have parking within the frontages, most frontages host landscaping that contributes to the verdant appearance of the area.

5. With regard to the partial demolition of the existing side extension of the host dwelling, No 81 Ravensbourne Avenue, this would restore the symmetry to this dwelling. I am satisfied that the proposal is acceptable in respect of the alterations to this dwelling.
6. The new dwellings would occupy plots of smaller width to those in the area and the dwellings would have narrower frontages. In addition, the plot depths would be smaller and the proposed dwellings would occupy a large proportion of each plot. Despite the new dwellings being designed to meet the London Plan Design Standards for dwellings and the principle and density of residential development being acceptable in this location, the new dwellings would not reflect the prevailing pattern of development in the area and, in particular, those to the south western side of Ravensbourne Avenue.
7. Policy H9 of the London Borough of Bromley Unitary development Plan (UDP) requires new residential development of two or more storeys in height to be a minimum of 1m from the side boundaries of a site. Paragraph 4.26 relating to this policy explains that space around residential buildings is essential to provide adequate separation and to prevent a cramped appearance. The Council indicates that this would not be retained to the side of the host dwelling or that of Plot 2. The appellant has confirmed the space between these developments would be 1.85m in total.
8. Whilst the separation would prevent the appearance of terracing, the proposal would appear cramped as a result of the narrowness of both dwellings and plot widths, limited plot depths and the uncharacteristically close relationship between the reconfigured existing dwelling and the proposed dwelling of Plot 2. These factors taken in combination would result in a development out of keeping with the character and appearance of the development in the area.
9. In addition to the above, although the host property with lawn and driveway would be in keeping with the frontages in the area, the frontages of the proposed dwellings would be predominantly hard surfaced with little in the way of landscaping. The limited frontage widths offer inadequate opportunity to provide any meaningful landscaping to the front. This would also be out of keeping with the general character of the area. Furthermore, the size of the rear gardens, despite not being visible from Ravensbourne Avenue, would be significantly less than other properties in the area and again this would be out of keeping with the general character of the area.
10. The proposed development would therefore be an overdevelopment of the appeal site. The proposal would be prominent in views from the adjoining highway. This visual harm would therefore be prevalent in public views and in the outlook from the surrounding dwellings. Furthermore, I do not consider this harm could be overcome by the appellant's suggestion to impose conditions relating to hardsurfacing and/or landscaping.
11. Whilst the proposal would remove the existing space between the host dwelling and No 83 Ravensbourne Avenue, I do not consider this gap to make a significant contribution to the appearance of the streetscene. This space does not generally reflect the rhythm of existing built development in this locality. I

therefore do not conclude that it is an essential feature of this streetscene, nor is the landscaping within it.

12. For the above reasons the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, and would be contrary to Policies H7 and BE1 of the UDP, Policy 7.4 of the London Plan and London Borough of Bromley Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) 1 & 2. These seek development proposals not to detract from the existing streetscene and that the site layout, building and spaces about buildings have regard to the pattern and grain of the existing spaces and streets, amongst other matters. The proposal would also conflict with the aims of paragraphs 17, 56 and 58 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that attach great importance to the design of the built environment and aim to ensure that development responds to local character.

The living conditions of future occupiers

13. The rear gardens of the proposed dwellings would be substantially smaller than those in the wider area. The ends of the gardens abut a steep vegetated railway embankment.
14. The appellant has directed me to the London Plan SPG. The Council acknowledges that Standard 26 of this SPG sets out private outdoor space standards for dwellings. Paragraph 2.3.31 advises that the resulting space should be of practical shape and ensure the space offers good amenity. In my opinion, the rear garden spaces, although providing a sitting out area and bicycle storage provision, would not provide adequate space for general outdoor recreation associated with three bedroom family dwellings. The overall constrained size of rear gardens and limited depth between the dwellings and the embankment would not offer future occupiers a good standard of outdoor living environment and would not achieve an acceptable outdoor living space.
15. Whilst the side garden of the host property would be removed and would therefore reduce the outdoor space associated with this dwelling, I consider the resulting rear garden area to be of an acceptable width and depth for this existing family dwelling.
16. For the above reasons the proposed development would be harmful to the living conditions of future occupiers, and would be contrary to Policies H7 and BE1 of the UDP, Policy 7.4 of the London Plan and London Borough of Bromley SPG 1 & 2. These seek development proposals to respect the amenity of future occupiers and to provide adequate private amenity spaces to serve the needs of the occupants, amongst other matters. The proposal would also conflict with the aims of paragraph 17 of the Framework that seek to secure a good standard of amenity for all future occupants of land and buildings.

Parking provision

17. The site is located within a moderate PTAL 3 area and lies inside the Bromley Town Centre Parking Zone. The Council's Highway Officer seeks two spaces to be provided for the host dwelling and three collectively for the new dwellings. The proposal would not meet this requirement.
18. Policy 6.13 of the London Plan seeks an appropriate balance between promoting new development and preventing excessive car parking provision that can undermine cycling, walking and public transport use. I have no

substantive evidence before me that would indicate that off-street parking provision below that sought by the Council's Highway Officer would be harmful taking into account that Shortland's railway station, shops and local services are within walking and cycling distance of the appeal site where public transport is accessible.

19. Taking the above matters into consideration, I conclude that the proposed development would not have an adverse impact upon parking provision. It would not, therefore, conflict with Policy T3 of the UDP or Policy 6.13 of the London Plan which seek, amongst other matters, to employ maximum parking standards to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport and to assist in limiting the use of the car.

Other Matters

20. Paragraph 14 of the Framework requires decisions to be made with regard to the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Accordingly I have considered whether the appeal proposal would be consistent with the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, as set out in paragraph 7 of the Framework. I recognise that the proposal would create two high quality family homes contributing to the housing supply in the area and make effective use of land in an accessible location. Nonetheless, I have found that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area and the living conditions of future occupiers, placing it in conflict with the environmental and social dimensions of paragraph 7. The development leads me to conclude that there is conflict with the development plan as a whole and I find the scheme is not sustainable development.
21. I acknowledge that the proposed development would not harm the living conditions of adjoining occupiers and that neither the Council's Environmental Health or Network Rail have raised objection to the proposal. However, these matters do not outweigh the harm that I have identified above or justify the proposal. Furthermore, a number of residents close by have raised other concerns in relation to the proposal but in view of my conclusions on the first and second main issues, there is no need for me to address those in the current decision.

Conclusions

22. Whilst I have found in favour of the appellant in terms of the effect on parking provision, this does not overcome the identified harm in relation to the other main issues. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nicola Davies

INSPECTOR