

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 June 2017

by M Seaton BSc (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 07 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/17/3166792

1 Reddown Road, Coulsdon, CR5 1AN

- 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 Robert Broad against the decision of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 16/03094/P, dated 16 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 15 November 2016.
 - The development proposed is Alterations; conversion to form 4No. two-bedroom and 2No. one-bedroom flats; erection of basement and side extensions and dormer extension in front roof slope; alterations to vehicular access, provision of associated cycle and car parking; provision of bin store.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issues are;
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the site and the area;
 - Whether the proposed development provides for an appropriate standard of accommodation for future occupiers, having regard to floor areas, layout, and external amenity space; and,
 - Whether the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers of One and a Half Fairdene Road would be safeguarded, having regard to outlook.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal property is a substantial two-storey detached dwelling, set within its own grounds at the junction between Reddown Road and Fairdene Road, and in a predominantly residential area close to Coulsdon South railway station. The land rises from the south-west corner of the site towards the Fairdene Road boundary, with the existing building appearing as a prominent feature within the street scene.
 4. The Council has highlighted that it supports the principle of making a full and effective use of land, but has expressed concern that the proposed extensions would, by virtue of their design and appearance within the street scene,
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represent inappropriate works. In particular, the Council has drawn my attention to the visual impact of the flat roofed elements of the two-storey and ground floor side extensions facing Fairdene Road, the roof form of the two-storey extension facing Reddown Road, and extension of the existing bay feature to the basement accommodation.

5. I would not disagree with the Council that the flat roofed elements of the proposed extension are not particularly reflective of the character of the existing building. However, I am mindful that the limited scale of the flat roof on the two-storey element would be visually read in the context of the existing building, and despite its visibility from the higher level of Fairdene Road, would not appear as a particularly incongruous or harmful aspect of the overall design. In respect of the flat roof on the projecting single-storey extension, I accept that as a consequence of its greater area and lower level in comparison to the elevation of the adjoining pavement level on Fairdene Road that it would appear as a more visible feature. I note that the roof design would be partially pitched and that the use of matching materials would assist in assimilating the extension with the main building. However, I consider that the projection of the extension and as a consequence the flat roof form, would appear as an incongruous feature within the street scene, albeit that it would be of limited harm.
6. Turning to the proposed extension of the existing bay window to basement level, I accept that this would appear as an unusual 3-storey bay in area of two-storey properties. However, I am satisfied that the design cues taken from the existing bay window, and the relative scale of the property in comparison to others in the vicinity, would not result in a feature which would appear to be obtrusive or of an unexpected or inappropriate design, and I do not consider this to be a harmful feature in the context of the property or street scene.
7. In respect, of the proposed balcony to flat 4, I would also agree that this is a feature which does not appear to be particularly characteristic of the area, particularly where visible on frontages to the surrounding streets. In this respect, I find that the physical form of the balcony, as well as the impact from its use, would appear uncharacteristic in the context of the character and appearance of the area.
8. The proposed development would incorporate a parking court accessed from Reddown Road, and facilitating parking for 4 cars. This element of the works would result in the coverage of a significant proportion of the existing area of garden with hardstanding and would be a visible and incongruous feature within the Reddown Road street scene, where existing property frontages are characterised by driveways of generally limited width and front gardens. Furthermore, I share the Council's concern that the introduction of a comparatively large pitched roof single-storey building for refuse/recycling and cycle storage on the frontage of the site towards the highest point at the junction between Reddown Road and Fairdene Road, would be a visually intrusive and uncharacteristic addition on an otherwise open corner within the street scene.
9. I am satisfied that whilst the proposed extension to the bay window, the flat roof on the first floor of the extension would not be visually harmful, the roof form of the single-storey extension, the extent of the hardstanding and the proposed refuse/recycling and cycle storage building would appear as visually

harmful and incongruous features within the street scene. As a consequence, I find the proposal to conflict with Strategic Policies SP4.1 and SP4.2 of the Croydon Local Plan Strategic Policies 2013 (the Strategic Policies), Policies UD2, UD3, UD8, UD13, UD15 and H2 of the Croydon Replacement Unitary Development Plan (The Croydon Plan 2006) Saved Policies 2013, as well as Policies 3.5, 7.1, 7.4, 7.5 and 7.6 of The London Plan: The Spatial Development Strategy for London Consolidated with Alterations since 2011, 2015 (the London Plan). These policies seek to advocate high quality design which respects local character and the distinctive qualities of an area, with proposals expected to reinforce existing development patterns.

Living conditions – future occupiers

10. The London Plan sets out that housing development should be of the highest quality internally and externally, and should adhere to minimum space standards to ensure that adequately sized rooms and accommodation are provided for future occupiers.
11. In this respect, I am satisfied that flats 2, 4 and 6 would exceed the minimum standards as set out in The London Plan. However, flat 1 (60.07 m²) would marginally fail to meet the standard for a 2 bedroom – 3 person unit of 61 m², whilst flat 3 (56.97 m²) would fall more significantly short of the same 61 m² minimum standard. With regards flat 5 (40.54 m²), I have had regard to the amendment made to the internal disposition of the unit, suggesting a change of occupation from 1 bedroom – 2 person to 1 bedroom – 1 person. However, it is clear from the layout of the unit and size of the bedroom as well as the originally submitted plans, that the bedroom would be quite capable of still being occupied as part of a 1 bedroom – 2 person unit. In this respect, I am satisfied that it is appropriate, despite the indicated revised occupancy, to judge the flat against the 50 m² standard for a 1 bedroom – 2 person unit, and for which there would be a significant deficiency in floorspace.
12. The failure to meet the minimum space standards would undoubtedly result in the living conditions of future occupiers of the affected units being compromised through reduced space. However, I do not consider that the shortfall in accommodation in the space-deficient units would be compounded by poor internal layout, although I acknowledge the Council's point in respect of flat 4 but am satisfied that this would not in itself contribute to poor living conditions for future occupiers.
13. The Council has also made reference to the lack of available private amenity space for flats 3, 4, and 5, with an area of shared amenity space indicated as being available for communal use towards the front of the property. However, whilst neither the level of space available nor the level of external amenity space required as satisfactory has been quantified, the space identified for communal use essentially comprises the residual space around the front of the property, and which I note would also be adjacent to the bedroom windows of flat 1. Whilst I accept that the existing boundary planting, if retained, would provide some privacy from the public realm, I find that the overall quality of the space would not be satisfactory as provision for future occupiers of flats 3, 4, and 5.
14. I am satisfied that the shortfall of internal floorspace for flats 1, 3, and 5, taken in combination with the absence of private amenity space for flats 3, 4, and 5, would result in poor living conditions for future occupiers. In this respect, the

proposals would not accord with Policy SP2.6 of the Strategic Policies, saved Policies UD7 and UD8 of the Croydon Plan 2006, and Policies 3.5 and 7.4 of The London Plan. These policies seek to ensure that new homes in Croydon meet the needs of residents over a lifetime, meet minimum design, amenity and space standards, and provide amenity space that respects the character of the surrounding area and provides residential amenity space that is considered as an integral part of the design.

Living conditions – neighbouring occupiers

15. I have carefully considered the relationship between the proposed extensions and the neighbouring occupiers of One and a Half Fairdene Road, with the Council having highlighted the impact of the proposed extensions on the outlook of the neighbouring property. Whilst I have no doubt that the proposed extensions would have some limited impact on the outlook from the neighbouring property, I am not persuaded that their position in the context of the disposition of the existing building, or their overall scale, would be so significant as to be unacceptable, with a reasonable level of outlook retained from the windows to habitable rooms. In all other respects, and being mindful of the Council's conclusions within the Committee Report, I am satisfied that the proposed development would not result in an adverse impact on the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers.
16. Therefore, I am satisfied that the proposed development would safeguard the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers of One and a Half Fairdene Road, with regards to outlook. The proposal would therefore accord with saved Policies UD2, UD8 and H7 of the Croydon Plan 2006, and Policy 7.6 of The London Plan. These policies seek to protect the residential amenity of the occupiers of surrounding buildings, including from undue visual intrusion, when considering proposals for new residential development including extensions.

Other Matters

17. I have had regard to the appellant's contention that the existing house is too large and expensive to be suitable as a family home. However, whilst I acknowledge that the property is relatively large compared to other properties in the area, no specific evidence has been adduced to support this contention, and I do not attach any significant weight to it as a consequence.
18. The appellant has also highlighted that it was considered that the pre-application advice provided had been adhered to, as reflected in the recommendation to the Planning Committee for planning permission. I have had regard to the advice received from the Council at the pre-application stage, and the weight given to the various aspects and issues arising from the scheme by the planning officer, but for the reasons set out above I consider that the proposals would not accord with the Development Plan.

Conclusion

19. The conversion of the single dwelling to provide 6 flats would make a limited contribution towards the supply of housing in the local area, with the local economy also having the potential to experience some limited benefit both during the period of the conversion and construction, and following occupation. The proposed development would also be situated in an accessible location for

rail services from Coulsdon South station, and local bus services on Marlpit Lane.

20. Nevertheless, whilst acknowledging the above benefits, and accepting that there would not be an adverse impact on the living conditions of neighboring occupiers, for the reasons I have already set out above, I have found that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, and would not safeguard the living conditions of future occupiers. As a consequence, I have not found the development to be in accordance with the Development Plan. I am satisfied that despite the limited benefits summarised above, that these would be significantly outweighed by the adverse impacts.

21. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Seaton

INSPECTOR