

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 July 2017

by S M Holden BSc MSc CEng MICE TPP FCIHT MRTPI

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

Decision date: 7th July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/W/17/3170867

255-257 Ilford Lane, Ilford IG1 2SB

- 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 City Developments Ilford against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref 5612/16, dated 22 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 26 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is alterations and extensions to provide a total of 6 no. self-contained flats to first and second floors.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - a) the effects of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area;
 - b) whether or not the proposal would give rise to inconvenience for road users and be prejudicial to highway safety arising from additional demand for parking.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal property is a three storey building with a flat roof on the corner of Ilford Lane and Henley Road; it also has a single-storey rear element. Properties of similar dimensions and designs occupy the opposite corner and some other corner sites along this busy road. Ilford Lane is otherwise characterised by two story buildings with commercial uses on the ground floor and residential above. Henley Road is a residential street of two-storey terraced properties with small front gardens.
4. There are commercial activities on the ground floor of Nos 255-257 and two one-bedroom flats on each of the first and second floors. The proposal would extend the building at the rear and alter the internal layout in order to provide two studio flats and four one-bedroom flats. The current proposal is a revised scheme following the dismissal of an appeal for a larger scheme, Ref: APP/W5780/W/16/3145993. Permission has subsequently been granted for the single-storey rear extension which formed part of that proposal, Ref: 4013/16. This would occupy much of the area currently used as a delivery yard between the existing rear elevation and the flank wall of No 1 Henley Road.

5. Policy 3.4 of the London Plan seeks to optimise housing potential whilst taking account of local context, character, design and public transport capacity. Table 3.2 then sets out indicative density levels according to location and accessibility. On the basis that the site is in an urban area with a Public Transport Accessibility Level of 2 (PTAL), a density of 70-170 units/hectare (u/ha) or 200-450 habitable rooms/hectare (hr/ha) is recommended. However, as two of the proposed units are studio flats with only one habitable room, some of the figures given in Table 3.2 do not appear to be directly relevant to this particular case.
6. The parties' assessments of the density of the proposed development differ significantly. The appellant gives them as 333 hr/ha and 200 u/ha whereas the Council considers them to be 560 hr/ha and 240 u/ha. Regardless of these differences the figures suggest to me that the proposal is an attempt to accommodate more units on the site than would be appropriate in this location. However, density is not a measure of design quality and is therefore a secondary factor in determining the acceptability of the scheme. The substantive issue is whether or not the additional accommodation can be provided without causing harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
7. The two-storey rear extension above the existing single-storey element would be very similar in terms of its overall height and bulk to the previous proposal. In rejecting that scheme the Inspector was of the view that the additional depth, bulk and height of this rear extension would erode the existing openness to the rear of the property. I agree. It would occupy an important gap at first floor level between the host property on the corner of Ilford Road and the smaller houses in Henley Road. The extension would be a visually intrusive and dominant feature and its proximity to the adjacent terraced dwellings would introduce an unacceptable level of enclosure to the western end of Henley Road.
8. In my view the existing gap between the buildings provides a valuable transition between the mixed uses on Ilford Lane and the residential character of Henley Road. Its loss would therefore be harmful. Furthermore, there is a comparable gap above the extensions at the rear of the property on the opposite corner. This not only provides similar views towards the rear elevations of the properties along Ilford Road but also provides a sense of symmetry to the approach to the junction. The proposal would disrupt these features to the detriment of the wider street scene.
9. Taking all these factors into account, I conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore fail to comply with Policy 3.4 of the London Plan and Policies SP3 and SP7 of the London Borough of Redbridge Core Strategy and Policy BD1 of the Borough Wide Primary Policies (BWPP), all of which, amongst other things, require new development to be high quality and contribute to the distinctive character and amenity of the locality.

Parking provision and highway safety

10. No off-street parking for vehicles would be provided within the scheme. However, 6 cycle parking spaces would be provided on the ground floor. These would be within the building and behind a roller-shutter door so would be covered and secure. Notwithstanding the Council's concerns about the

usability and practicality of the arrangement it would appear to meet its minimum requirements. In any event agreement of the details could be secured by a condition, if the development was acceptable in all other respects.

11. The proposal would provide two additional small studio flats. The Schedule of Maximum Parking Standards set out as part of Policy T5 of the Borough Wide Primary Policies states that for 1-2 bed units the requirement for car parking spaces is '1 to less than 1 per unit'. In responding to the application the highway authority did not recommend how many spaces should be provided, but it seems to me that 1, rather than 2 spaces, would be adequate.
12. The on-street parking currently available to residents is known to be at, or close to, capacity. It was well-used at the time of my site visit, which was in the middle of the day. Demand for space in the evenings and at weekends is likely to be higher. However, with the exception of Ilford Road and some short sections of the side roads, there are no parking restrictions in the vicinity of the appeal site. In my view the additional demand for parking arising from two studio flats would be less than that from the previous proposal for an additional three, one-bedroom flats. It is therefore unlikely to significantly worsen the current parking situation, even without off-street provision within the scheme. Consequently, I am not persuaded that the proposal would lead to unacceptable inconvenience for local residents or danger on the public highway.
13. The site has a PTAL of 2 and is therefore not well served by public transport. However, it is close to local shops and there are buses serving Ilford Road. Residents could therefore choose to walk, cycle or use public transport to access at least some of the facilities and services they need.
14. I conclude that the proposal would not result in increased inconvenience for road users or be prejudicial to highway safety as a result of additional unmet demand for parking. It would therefore comply with Policies T1 and T5 of the BWPP which, amongst other things, seek to promote use of sustainable modes of transport and require new development to provide appropriate vehicle and cycle parking facilities.

Conclusions

15. The Government is seeking to significantly boost the supply of housing and requires applications for housing development to be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. There is no objection in principle to an increase in the number of residential units on the appeal site, provided this can be achieved without harm to the local environment.
16. I have concluded that the lack of off-street parking is not a reason to reject the scheme. However, I have found that the proposal would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The benefits that would accrue from the provision of the additional units of accommodation would not outweigh this harm.
17. For this reason, and having regard to all other relevant matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Sheila Holden

INSPECTOR