
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 July 2017

by Helen Hockenhull BA(Hons) B.PI MRTPI

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

Decision date: 28 July 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/G5750/W/17/3173145

292-294 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1EE

- 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 East Ham Central Hotel against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Newham.
 - The application Ref 16/03524/COU, dated 10 November 2016, was refused by notice dated 27 January 2017.
 - The development proposed is the change of use from B1 (office) to C1 (hotel).
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the change of use from B1 (office) to C1 (hotel) at 292-294 Plashet Grove, East Ham, London E6 1EE in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 16/03524/COU, dated 10 November 2016, subject to the following 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: Drawing No 16262_PL01 – Site Location Plan, Drawing No. 16262_PL02 – Existing Plans, Drawing No. 16262_PL03 – Existing Elevations, Drawing No. 16262_PL04_ Proposed Plans, and Drawing No. 16262-PL05 – Proposed Elevations.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are :
 - the effect of the development on the Council's economic, investment and regeneration objectives;
 - the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring residential properties with particular regard to noise and disturbance;
 - whether the proposal provides a high quality development having regard to its intended use.

Reasons

The Council's economic, investment and regeneration objectives

3. The appeal building is located on the south side of Plashet Grove, East Ham

in a mixed use area with a High School, residential uses and a place of worship in close proximity. The building lies close to High Street North and is located within the East Ham Major Centre. The building forms a three storey commercial property which it is proposed to convert to a 24 bedroom hotel. The conversion works would not involve any external alterations to the building.

4. Policy 4.5 of the London Plan 2016 seeks to support the visitor economy and stimulate its growth by amongst other things, improving the range and quality of provision beyond the Central Activities Zone (CAZ). Such provision is to be focussed in town centres. The London Borough of Newham Core Strategy in Policy S1 seeks to focus major development opportunities within the Arc of Opportunity - stretching from Stratford and the Olympic Park, down the Lower Lea Valley and east through the Royal Docks to Beckton. The Policy aims to achieve a major shift from traditional industrial activity to a number of commercial uses including those related to the visitor economy.
5. Policy J1 promotes investment and continued development and promotion of the Arc of Opportunity. It identifies a number of employment hubs including Stratford Metropolitan area, the Royal Docks and Green Street where investment in employment uses including the visitor economy will be concentrated. also recognises East Ham as an Employment Hub where town centre uses, creative and cultural industries and the civic centre are to be the focus. In summary the above policies aim to focus investment and regeneration in the Arc of Opportunity, the Employment Hubs and Town and Local Centres.
6. The appeal site lies some distance from the Arch of Opportunity but is located within East Ham Town Centre. Whilst the proposal would divert investment from the identified regeneration areas of Stratford and the Royal Docks, it would bring investment to East Ham. The proposal is relatively small scale with 24 bedrooms. The appellant has provided evidence that the new hotels being constructed in Stratford and the Royal Docks are major hotels which are part of established brands. These hotels would cater for a different customer base to the appeal proposal, which I am advised would provide budget accommodation for guests visiting the local area, for example attending a family event.
7. Whilst the proposal would provide a hotel outside the areas where the Core Strategy aims to promote the visitor economy, I have no evidence before me to suggest that a hotel of the size proposed and with the intended client base, would materially undermine the Council's regeneration objectives for these areas. This leads me to the conclusion that the proposed change of use would comply with Policy 4.5 of the London Plan and Policies S1 and J1 of the Core Strategy which seek to promote investment in certain areas including town centres.

Living conditions

8. The proposed hotel would have 24 bedrooms. It is unclear from the evidence before me how many of the rooms would be for single occupancy and how many would be double rooms. Taking a worst case scenario, with a staff of 8, the number of persons going to the premises could be in the region of 50-55.

9. The appeal site is located in a mixed use area where during the day there is a high level of activity with the associated noise and disturbance. During the evening the level of activity is reduced as the school is closed. However the Temple, the comings and goings particularly from the town centre and the buses on Plashet Grove, provide a certain level of activity and noise in the area. Having regard to the sites town centre location, I consider that the additional activity from a hotel of the size proposed, would not add to the existing level of noise and disturbance to the extent that it would cause material harm to the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring residential dwellings.
10. Policy SP8 of the Detailed Sites and Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) aims to ensure neighbourly development. This includes encouraging the use of sustainable transport to alleviate car parking stress. The proposal would have provision for 7 car parking spaces on site. The property is located close to East Ham Underground Station and numerous bus routes on Plashet Grove and High Street North. The site is in a very accessible location and hotel guests would have a choice of transport options. I note that there are parking restrictions in front of the building and in the immediate area restricting on street car parking. Having regard to these factors, I do not consider that the proposal would result in a significant increase in on street car parking locally causing noise and disturbance for neighbouring residents.
11. I noted on my site visit that the neighbouring property at 238 High Street North is being extended to provide a 4 storey block of 7 apartments. Whilst these new properties would be close to the proposed hotel, the building fronts onto High Street North. The occupant of a residential flat in such a location would expect a degree of noise and activity associated with a town centre location. I therefore do not consider that the appeal proposal would cause harm to the living conditions of these future residents.
12. In summary, having regard to the location of the building in a town centre and the mixed nature of the surrounding land uses, I do not consider that the proposal would generate such additional noise and disturbance so as to adversely affect the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring dwellings. The appeal scheme would therefore comply with Policy 7.1 of the London Plan and Policies SP1 and SP8 of the Detailed Sites and Policies DPD which seek to ensure neighbourly development.

High quality development

13. The proposal does not involve any external alterations to the building. The Council has brought my attention to the Design and Access Statement submitted with the original application which suggests the development would be a '4 star boutique hotel'. In order to provide this, the Council would have expected an upgrading of the building.
14. The appellant advises that the reference to a 'boutique hotel' was to explain that the hotel use would be a small independent business and not part of a major hotel group. In any event, I am mindful that the appeal relates to a change of use of the building only. Any external alterations to the building would need to be the subject of a separate planning application. I therefore do not consider that this matter forms a determinative factor in this appeal.

Other matters

15. Local residents and the Headteacher at the neighbouring High School have objected to the proposal with regard an increase in anti-social behaviour in the area and the potential for public safety and safeguarding issues. I can understand the uncertainties and concerns associated with the changing occupants in the proposed hotel. I recognise that fear of crime forms a material planning consideration. However I have been provided with no evidence that these concerns would be realised and the Council has not raised this as an issue.
16. I also note that there were 6 letters of support to the proposal from local businesses who consider there is a need for a high quality hotel in East Ham and that the development would support the local economy.

Conclusion

17. I have found that the proposed hotel development would not materially undermine the Council's economic, investment and regeneration objectives and would not cause harm to the living conditions of the occupants of neighbouring dwellings. Furthermore the Council's concerns with regard to the quality of the development are not relevant to my consideration of this appeal.
18. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised I allow this appeal.
19. The Council has not suggested any conditions for my consideration in the event that the appeal should succeed. In addition to the standard timeframe condition, I consider that it is necessary to impose a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted plans for the avoidance of doubt.

Helen Hockenhull

INSPECTOR