
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 December 2017

by David Reed BSc DipTP DMS MRTPI

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

Decision date: 8 January 2018

Appeal Ref: APP/B5480/W/17/3179318
191 North Street, Romford RM1 1DT

- 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 Rab Ahmed against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Havering.
 - The application Ref P0503.17, dated 24 March 2017, was refused by notice dated 11 May 2017.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of store building and erection of residential block comprising 7 no. flats (2 x 2 bedroom and 5 x 1 bedroom) with parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and its potential redevelopment;
 - whether the proposed flats would provide acceptable living conditions for future occupiers in relation to internal floor space, external amenity space and outlook;
 - whether the car parking provision would be acceptable; and
 - whether the proposal would make adequate provision for school places.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The proposal is for a residential block comprising seven flats following the demolition of the single storey outbuilding to the rear of No 191, a two storey building fronting onto North Street. The block would front onto Brooklands Approach, a private road leading to a series of large industrial buildings running behind the properties on the south western side of North Street. Planning permission has recently been granted for a replacement single storey building comprising two flats on the site under reference P1287.16.
4. The block would have an L shaped footprint with the main two storey pitched roof section, including accommodation in the roofspace, being parallel to Brooklands Approach. There would also be two flat roofed sections, two and

single storey respectively, stepping down across the rear of the site. The 18 m long principal façade facing Brooklands Approach, with a series of living room balconies and bedroom windows, would only be set back a metre or so from the road, whilst the elevation facing the host building would be wide with a full height gable end and few windows to relieve its impact. The building would not relate satisfactorily either to the frontage development along North Street or the adjacent industrial buildings. As a result it would appear isolated in its context, a jarring and excessively bulky building, out of place and unduly prominent in views along Brooklands Approach.

5. The south west elevation facing the adjacent industrial building would be hard up along the common boundary. It would have a full height gable end, extend the full width of the site and only have one small window to break up the otherwise unrelieved flank wall. The size and close proximity of this flank wall would be overbearing in relation to the neighbouring site and this would unduly prejudice any future redevelopment for residential purposes.
6. The proposal would therefore cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area and would prejudice future redevelopment of the adjacent industrial site for residential purposes. This would conflict with Policy DC61 of the Havering Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD 2008 (HCSDCP) which requires development to maintain, enhance or improve the character and appearance of the local area, to respond to distinctive local building forms, to respect the scale, massing and height of the physical context, and not to prejudice the satisfactory development of adjoining land.

Living conditions

7. The Council claim that one ground floor and one first floor flat would be below the national internal floor space standard for a one bedroom flat. However, the flats concerned are not identified and the submitted floor plans show the flats would meet the minimum size standard of 50 m². This objection to the scheme is therefore not made out.
8. The five flats on the first and second floors would be provided with an external balcony for private use and access to a communal garden alongside the parking area. However, the two ground floor flats would only have access to the communal garden. Whilst a shared garden may have been regarded as acceptable to serve just two flats under the permitted scheme, the current proposal is for the space to serve seven flats. The lack of any private space for the two ground floor flats would conflict with the expectation in the Havering Residential Design SPD 2010 that both private and communal amenity space should be provided in flatted schemes.
9. The living room and bedroom windows of flat 1 on the ground floor would face Brooklands Approach only a metre or so from the road. This would provide a poor outlook for the occupiers particularly with the likelihood of large vehicles entering and leaving the industrial area. The proposal can be distinguished from that behind Nos 151- 153 North Street which lies alongside the access road to Riverside Close, an existing residential scheme.
10. The ground floor flats would not therefore provide acceptable living conditions for future occupiers in relation to external amenity space and in the case of flat 1 outlook. This would be contrary to Policy DC61 of the HCSDCP which seeks to ensure development meets the needs of people of all ages.

Car parking

11. The appeal site enjoys a high Public Transport Accessibility Rating (PTAL) of 5 which is likely to encourage the use of public transport and discourage car ownership. The scheme would provide five car parking spaces which would meet the maximum standard in this location of less than one space per flat. However, the spaces would be partly provided in an undercroft arrangement under the proposed building and the layout plan omits any details of the necessary supporting columns. As such the ability to provide five spaces with sufficient manoeuvring space within the site has not been demonstrated. This would conflict with HCSDCP Policy DC33 which seeks to ensure that adequate parking spaces are provided – this includes being adequate for easy use.

School places

12. The Council is seeking a financial contribution towards the provision of school places to comply with HCSDCP Policies DC72 and DC29 and the approach in the Planning Obligations SPD 2013 for a 'standard charge' of £6000 per dwelling. The appellant does not dispute the contribution but no unilateral undertaking has been submitted to secure its provision. However, in view of the findings set out above, there is no need for this matter to be considered further.

Other matters

13. The concerns identified under the first main issue do not arise in the case of the planning permission for a single storey flat roofed building on the site. There is also an extant permission for the redevelopment of No 191.
14. The appellant has submitted an acoustic report which demonstrates that, with suitable double glazing, the proposal would meet the necessary internal noise standards given the proximity of nearby industrial buildings and traffic noise from North Street. The Council have not disputed the report.
15. The appellant draws attention to numerous residential redevelopment schemes in the vicinity of the site which are put forward as precedents. However, from an examination of the plans and a site visit to the completed schemes none are directly comparable in terms of design or surroundings to the appeal proposal.

Conclusion

16. The proposal would provide five additional dwellings over and above the extant planning permission on an underused site in a sustainable location. This would make a useful contribution to the Borough's housing needs and have social and economic benefits for the area. However, having regard to the deficiencies of the scheme identified above, the appeal should be dismissed.

David Reed

INSPECTOR