
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 July 2019

by T J Burnham BA (Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29th July 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/19/3227297

St Andrew's Vicarage, Julien Road, Coulsdon CR5 2DN

- 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 Quantum Homes against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 18/05112/FUL, dated 5 October 2018, was refused by notice dated 14 March 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Construction of a part one / two / three / four storey development comprising 9 flats, a vehicular access from Woodmansterne Road to semi-basement parking with 11 car parking spaces and refuse storage, boundary treatment around the site, landscaping, playspace, cycle parking, and ancillary works'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. A revised description of 'Erection of a three/four storey building comprising 9 flats with creation of vehicular access off Woodmansterne Road and basement parking area' has been included on the decision notice and appeal form. As this succinctly describes the development and has been adopted on the appeal form, I have determined the appeal on this basis.
3. Amended plans 'Revision E' were the plans on which the Council made their determination and on which I have determined the appeal.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area and the quality of the communal amenity space provision.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. The appeal site sits in a prominent location on the corner of Julien Road and Woodmansterne Road within a predominantly residential area. While not demonstrating uniformity, the area is dominated by dwellings of traditional appearance, design and materials, which incorporate pitched roofs of various forms and which show a fairly even balance between glazing and walling.

6. Julien Road is characterised by large two storey detached dwellings, the bulk and mass of which are broken up by spacing between them. Woodmansterne Road incorporates a wider range of house types and some properties on the southern side of the road are of three storey design to the rear by reason of the slope of the land. On Woodmansterne Road, some spacing between dwellings is a common, if not uniform feature.
7. The immediate area is not therefore particularly densely developed and the large garden to the rear of 2 Woodmansterne Road opposite the site and the spacing of properties on Julien Road give the street scene a sense of space.
8. The proposal would involve the introduction of a large building offering accommodation over four floors of significant bulk and mass. With its footprint occupying a large proportion of the site, it would disrupt the sense of space described above. Its prominence would be increased through the proximity of its elevation to Julien Road.
9. The impact of the building would not be significantly mitigated through the utilisation of the slope on the site, which would see the lower ground floor largely cut into the slope, nor the design of the building which would step back from Woodmansterne Road, it's set back from this road or the fact that the proposal would sit below the ridge height of 2 Julien Road.
10. The proposal would also introduce a building of very modern design and form. In particular, the use of flat roofs throughout would be especially at odds with the prevailing pitched roof type. The heavily glazed public facing elevations would see a dominance of glazing over walling. These design features would be at odds with and significantly harmful to the established character and appearance of the area.
11. In making this assessment I have been mindful of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) which at paragraph 127 states that planning decisions should not prevent or discourage appropriate innovation or change (including increased densities). However, the NPPF also advises that developments be sympathetic to local character, including the surrounding built environment, which the proposal would fail to achieve.
12. The appeal site, by reason of its corner location and elevation above Woodmansterne Road is particularly prominent. Consequently, the proposal would be very readily apparent from the public domain such that it would have a significant detrimental influence on the street scene.
13. For these reasons, therefore, the proposal would be significantly harmful to the character and appearance of the area. Consequently, in this regard, it would conflict with Policies 7.1, 7.4 and 7.6 of the London Plan (2016), Policies SP4.1, SP4.2 and DM10 of the Croydon Local Plan (2018) which seek good quality architecture and design appropriate to the character of the area as well as Paragraph 127 of the NPPF.
14. Since the decision was issued the Council have adopted the Suburban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and both parties have drawn this to my attention. This guidance acknowledges the necessity to build more homes and amongst other things sets design guidance on how this should be achieved. In relation to suburban residential development one design approach suggested is that a development be 'innovative and original'. The appellant

considers the proposal falls into this description. Even if this were the case in relation to the proposal, the guidance suggests that such development must respect the existing character of an area and not create negative impacts on it. Given that the appeal proposal fails to do so I do not consider that it finds favour with the guidance within the recently adopted SPD with which the proposal would conflict.

Communal Amenity Space

15. Both parties acknowledge that the proposed communal amenity space provision would be generous and I have no reason to disagree with this. There also appears to be no disagreement between the parties relating to private amenity space. The Council, however, are concerned in relation to the siting of the proposed communal amenity space.
16. One area of amenity space would be tucked to a rear north east corner of the building, which as discussed above is of significant bulk and mass. Due to the orientation of the building comparative to the amenity space it would therefore suffer from a significant degree of overshadowing which would limit its appeal.
17. The larger area of amenity space would be located to the front of the building and would be more pleasant to use. However, for the majority of flats it would have to be accessed either through traversing the stair well and crossing the undercroft car park or by leaving the site to walk around the development to gain access via Julien Road, Woodmansterne Road and the car park access drive. Neither option is particularly desirable, especially as any resident children would be likely to seek to utilise the communal amenity space on a regular basis. While I accept that London squares can provide good communal amenity space which would need to be accessed via a highway, the appellant notes that the open space proposed here is of a different design and layout and therefore not directly comparable.
18. I therefore share the Council's concerns. For the reasons outlined above, the smaller area of communal amenity space by reason of its siting in relation to the bulk and mass of the building would be of poor quality, while the larger area would suffer from poor access arrangements. Due to these fundamental issues, conditions relating to its detailed provision and management proposed by the appellant would not mitigate the harm identified. Consequently, in this regard the proposal would conflict with Policy 7.4 of the London Plan (2016) and policies SP4 and DM10 of the Croydon Local Plan (2018) which require high quality open space within this type of development which should enhance social cohesion and wellbeing.

Other Matters

19. It is noted that a detrimental impact on residential amenity is identified by the Council within the first refusal reason. However, at part 4.9 of the Council's report it is concluded that the relationship of the appeal proposal with adjoining occupiers is acceptable. I have no substantive reason to disagree with this view and have not identified any significant harm to the living conditions of nearby occupiers. The appellants acceptance of a condition in which they could agree materials details with the Council is noted, however the use of particular finishing materials would not serve to overcome harm identified in relation to the bulk, mass and design of the building.

20. I acknowledge public benefit in the scheme which would see the provision of 9 residential units, however this benefit would not outweigh the harm identified. I also accept that land needs to be effectively used in order to assist in meeting the required housing targets, however this should not be achieved at the detriment of the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

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

T J Burnham

INSPECTOR