



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 7 June 2019

by Rebecca Thomas MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20th September 2019

Appeal Ref: APP/L5810/W/19/3223281

167 Ground Floor, Lower Richmond Road, Mortlake, London SW14 7HX

- 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 Ahmed Asaad of Medivet Veterinary Group against the decision of the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames.
 - The application Ref 18/1781/FUL, dated 24 May 2018, was refused by notice dated 4 September 2018.
 - The development proposed is change of use from B1 offices to D1 – non-residential institution.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect on the supply of office space in the area.

Reasons

3. The appeal site comprises an office building to the ground floor, part of a terrace of buildings. The office space is occupied by the veterinary practice Medivet, the appellant. The adjacent building forms the corner plot to Lower Richmond Road and Clifford Avenue, and is currently occupied by the veterinary practice. The change of use would enable the appellant to install CT scanning facilities associated with the veterinary practice next door.
4. The appeal site is located outside the Mortlake Key Office Area (KOA) identified by the Local Plan July 2018 (the Local Plan). Policy LP41 states that there is a presumption against the loss of office floorspace in all parts of the borough and sets out criteria for decision-making when considering the loss of office space at sites outside KOAs. This includes a marketing exercise to demonstrate the lack of demand for office-based use in the location, with none likely in the foreseeable future. The information required is outlined in Appendix 5 of the Local Plan. No marketing report is before me.
5. The Council has also provided the background evidence comprising the Employment Sites & Premises Study, both the December 2016 and May 2017 updates and the employment Floorspace Monitoring report (5 September 2017). These studies have identified significant losses in office space throughout the borough, and the examining Inspector for the Local Plan found the evidence base to be robust. I have no reason to disagree with these

findings and I have no evidence before me to demonstrate alternative conclusions. Given the relatively recent adoption of the Local Plan and the updates to the evidence base, I am satisfied that the material remains relevant. I therefore apply significant weight to these documents.

6. The appellant has stated that it would not be useful to carry out marketing of the office premises to demonstrate the lack of demand for the office space as there is a specific local need, combined with the business needs to be able to expand. Notwithstanding these facts, I have no firm evidence before me to demonstrate that there is or will be no demand for the office space.
7. For the above reasons, the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the supply of office space in the area and would conflict with the aims of Policy LP41 of the Local Plan that seeks, amongst other matters, to support a strong local economy by resisting the loss of office floorspace in order to ensure a range of office premises within the borough to allow businesses to grow and thrive.

Other Matters

8. The appellant says that the only available option for the CT scanner is to use the appeal site. Whilst this might be the case, I am not provided with any evidence to demonstrate that alternative sites have been considered and discounted, and as such I apply little weight to this consideration.
9. I accept that the appeal proposal would enable the expansion of an existing business and provide employment opportunities for additional staff. Nonetheless, I am not persuaded that the harm as a result of the loss of the office space and the conflict with the Local Plan would be outweighed by these benefits or any other consideration and this indicates that the appeal should not be allowed.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Rebecca Thomas

INSPECTOR