
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 November 2019

by Diane Cragg DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 January 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/W/19/3237786
197 Cranbrook Road, Ilford IG1 4TA

- 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 Mrs Thu Pham against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref 2651/19, dated 15 June 2019, was refused by notice dated 16 September 2019.
 - The development proposed is the 'change of use of the 197 Cranbrook Road from a travel agent to a nails salon (Sui Generis)'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on the vitality and viability of Ilford Metropolitan Centre.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a vacant shop unit (Class A1) located on a shopping frontage within Ilford Metropolitan Centre. The shop sits between a travel agency and a beauty salon and is part of a retail frontage identified in the Redbridge Local Plan 2015 – 2030 (adopted 2018) (Local Plan) as a secondary frontage.
4. Policy LP9 of the Local Plan recognises the individual role and strengths of each of the borough's town centres and seeks to promote these attributes to enhance the vitality and viability of each centre. The policy directs town centre uses to Ilford's Metropolitan Centre identifying it as the key regional centre in the Borough. The policy recognises the significance of a strong comparison retail sector and the need to encourage a wider mix of uses in the Centre. Policy LP10 (c) supports diversity in secondary retail frontages by seeking that a minimum 40% of units are used as A1 retail uses.
5. The Council have provided a summary of the number of retail units and the percentage of A1 uses in the shopping frontage containing the appeal site (numbers 151 – 243 Cranbrook Road). This indicates that there are 29 shop units and that just over 31% are in A1 retail use. The table indicates that two of the units are vacant. These figures are not disputed by the appellant and, based on the evidence before me and my own observations, I have no reason to disagree.

6. The change of use of the premises into a nail bar would lead to the loss of a further retail unit and a further reduction in the percentage of retail units in the frontage. As a result, it would lead to an even greater concentration of non-retail uses, thereby causing further change in the character and retail offer of the parade.
7. Policy LP10:1 states that proposals for non-A1 uses in secondary frontages which do not meet the 40% target will only be supported where the criteria in part (d) of the policy are met. Part (d) of the policy requires the consideration of a number of factors. In brief these are that the unit has been long term vacant; if the location and size of the unit offers a prime retail opportunity; the extent to which the use attracts significant number of shoppers/visitors; the extent to which the use contributes to the Council's aspirations and priorities; and the contribution the proposed use will make to vitality and viability. I deal with these in turn.
8. At the time of my site visit I noted that the property was vacant. My attention has been drawn to the fact that the unit was part of the adjacent travel agent shop which has been subdivided into two units. Nonetheless, I have nothing substantive before me to suggest that the appeal site has been subject to continuous or unsuccessful marketing for A1 use for any period of time, or that there is a lack of interest in its occupation as an A1 retail unit. Nor have I reason to believe, based on the evidence before me, that the unit would be unsuitable for other A1 retail uses.
9. The existing unit appears comparable with other units within the parade and occupies a relatively prominent position, it is sited adjacent to the footpath close to a crossing point and leads to other areas of shopping and public transport facilities. I observed that the frontage is well connected to, and accessible from, other commercial frontages, the underground station and surrounding residential areas. Therefore, on the basis of the evidence before me and my own observations I have little reason to believe that the appeal property does not offer a prime or attractive retail opportunity. Furthermore, there is little before me to suggest that, as an A1 unit, the appeal premises lack the potential to generate reasonable levels of customer activity or footfall.
10. The nail bar would provide some employment. However, there is no firm evidence to suggest that the staff numbers would be significantly greater than an A1 use which could occupy the unit at present. In the absence of evidence that the unit cannot be occupied by a A1 retail user this limits the weight that I attach to the benefit of employment opportunities presented by the proposed nail bar.
11. The appellant has referenced the key objective within the local Plan of attracting investment and business growth and The Portas Review (2010) which points to the need for the high street to reinvent itself. It is suggested that the nail bar would diversify the current offer along the frontage and create competition. Further, with changing shopping habits and internet shopping, there is a need for shopping centres to be resilient. However, the letters of objection indicate that there are other units on the parade that provide for the same market as the appeal proposal and the market for the proposed use is limited. Whilst I have had regard to the benefits put forward by the appellant, based on the evidence before me, I am not persuaded that a nail bar would

make more than a very limited contribution to the wider priorities or regeneration objectives for the area.

12. Consequently, on the basis of the evidence before me and my own observations, I am not persuaded that the appeal premises are unsuitable or unattractive for A1 use, or that the proposed development would make a greater contribution to activity and footfall within the centre than a retail A1 use. Nor do I find that the benefits arising from the development would be sufficient to offset or outweigh the harm to vitality and viability which would arise as a result of the further reduction in the retail offer within this secondary frontage. I therefore consider that the criteria in Policy LP10:1(d) of the Local Plan are not met.
13. For the reasons given above I therefore conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect on the vitality and viability of Ilford Metropolitan Centre. The proposal would be contrary to Policy LP9 and LP10 of the Local Plan.

Conclusion

14. For the reasons given above the appeal is dismissed.

Diane Cragg

INSPECTOR