



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 June 2020

by Guy Davies BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 16 June 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/20/3245652

19 Broom Road, Croydon CR0 8NG

- 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 Sreekumar Sreedharan Nair against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 19/04495/FUL, dated 20 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is demolition of existing storage shed and erection of a single storey outbuilding for use as a one-bedroom dwelling house.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on:
 - The vitality and viability of the neighbourhood centre
 - The living conditions of future occupiers, with regard to size, outlook and light.

Reasons

Vitality and viability of neighbourhood centre

3. The site lies at the rear of a parade of shops forming part of a neighbourhood centre. Policies DM5 and DM6 of the Croydon Local Plan 2018 seek to ensure that the vitality and viability of neighbourhood centres and shopping parades are maintained and that they continue to serve local communities by ensuring, amongst other objectives, that changes of use on the ground floor of the shopping parade fall within a specified range of retail and commercial activities as set out in Table 5.7 of the Plan. Residential use is not one of the specified activities.
4. The appellant argues that the site has a separate storage and distribution use to the retail premises at the front of the parade. However, it is physically and functionally attached to the retail premises with internal access from one to the other, and having regard to the existing floor plans is clearly intended to be ancillary to the use of the retail floorspace at the front of the unit. I consider it forms part of the shopping parade.

5. The storage space is not used by the current retail occupier. While that may be the case now, future retail occupiers may have a need for ancillary storage and preparation space. It is important that any change that might reduce the attractiveness of the retail premises is avoided, particularly in secondary locations where such premises may be vulnerable to fluctuating demands in the retail market.
6. The loss of ancillary storage space would therefore have an adverse impact on the long term future of the retail unit. This would cause harm to the vitality and viability of the shopping parade and neighbourhood centre and would conflict with Policies DM5 and DM6 of the Croydon Local Plan 2018.

Living conditions of future occupiers

7. Policy SP2 of the Croydon Local Plan 2018 requires all new homes to meet technical housing standards¹. The proposed unit at 45m² falls between the minimum floor areas required for a 1 person, 1 bedroom home and a 2 person, 1 bedroom home. The bedroom shown on the proposed plans is large enough for a double bed, although the appellant says that the unit is only intended for a single person.
8. The size of the bedroom is only marginally above the threshold to be described as a double. It could be reduced in size by a small change to one of the internal partitions so that it fell within the definition of a single bedroom, which would lead to the unit meeting the required minimum space standard for a 1 person, 1 bedroom home. Given the relatively small internal change that would be needed to achieve compliance with the space standard, I do not consider that my assessment of this issue should turn on this factor alone.
9. Rooms within the proposed dwelling would be lit by high level slit windows in the external elevations of the building, and larger windows that would face into a small enclosed yard in one corner of the site and an open lobby at the side.
10. These windows would provide adequate daylight to internal rooms, which could be further improved if needed by a skylight over the living area as suggested in the appeal statement. However, they would provide almost no outlook and sunlight would be severely restricted. As a consequence, the internal living conditions would feel oppressive and claustrophobic, and occupants would be visually cut off from the surrounding environment. The accommodation would therefore not provide adequate living conditions for future occupants and would conflict with Policies SP2 and DM10 of the Croydon Local Plan 2018, which require new homes to be designed to an acceptable quality.

Other Matters

11. The proposal would provide an additional small unit of accommodation to the housing stock assisting in meeting housing demand in the area. However, this limited benefit would not outweigh the harm identified above.
12. It is argued that the revenue stream from a residential dwelling would help support the continued operation of the retail unit, but there is no mechanism to ensure that the revenue would be used for such a purpose, or once built that the two uses would even remain in the same ownership. I therefore give this argument limited weight.

¹ DCLG Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard, March 2015.

Conclusion

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

Guy Davies

INSPECTOR