
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 9 June 2020

by Andre Pinto BA MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 August 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/W/20/3245534

Land adjacent to Embroidery World Business Centre, Southend Road, Woodford Green IG8 8JT

- 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 Drazal Limited against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
 - The application Ref 3502/19, dated 30 August 2019, was refused by notice dated 30 October 2019.
 - The development proposed is erection of a 3 storey office (B1) block.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. I have adopted the description of the development included in the Council's Decision Notice as it more accurately describes the proposed works.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - the character and appearance of the area; and
 - parking and road safety in surrounding highways.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal site is a strip of land located immediately to the side of the Embroidery World Business Centre, on the corner of Southend Road and the access road that leads to Bourne Court and the Orbital Centre. The area is dominated by large office blocks and, judging from their external, light industrial units which do give the area a distinct commercial character.
5. The Embroidery World Business Centre, which is a single storey structure with a partially pitched and flat roof structure, lies immediately to the side of the appeal. It appears to not have been in use for a period of time and it is of a more dated design when compared to other nearby commercial blocks. Further along Southend Road is the Bourne Court. Bourne Court is two and three storey high commercial building with attractive architectonical detailing, slightly

- set back from the road which, due to its size and design, dominates the streetscene along this specific section of Southend Road.
6. The proposal is for the construction of a three storey office building within an existing grassed area to the front of the building. The existing driveway, which provides access to the Embroidery World Business Centre would be maintained. Access to the new proposed office building is proposed to be from the access road leading to Bourne Court with a footpath along the site and leading to the existing driveway. Due to its corner position, the appeal site would have a significant influence in the character and appearance of the area.
 7. Unit 1D of the Woodford Trading Estate, on the opposite corner of the appeal side, fronting onto Southend Road, is another commercial building, of a similar height to the one proposed, with brick on the ground level and then metal cladding on top. Unit 1D does appear from Southend Road as a very utilitarian buildings which, in my view, does not address the street frontage in a particularly positive way, as it does not include any windows or visible access from the main access road, which greatly contributes to its monolithic appearance.
 8. The proposed new development appears to echo the design of the Unit 1D, by proposing a structure with brickwork at ground floor level and metal cladding on the upper floors.
 9. Policy LP26 of the Redbridge Local Plan (2018) (the Local Plan) states that development that does not take available opportunities to improve the area's character and quality will be refused and also that development should consist of high quality details and materials that respect and improve local character.
 10. The proposed design is more successful and would better engage with the wider public realm than unit 1D, in no small part due to the inclusion of extensive windows along the Southend Road elevation, breaking its form while also providing natural surveillance. Nevertheless, the proposed design would significantly increase the density of the urban form in the appeal site and, due to its prominent location in a corner plot, it would be easily visible from multiple directions, including Southend Road.
 11. Also, the difference in height between the closest elevation of the Embroidery World Business Centre to the appeal site, with the Embroidery World Business Centre being one storey high and the proposed development being three, would also contribute to the further reinforce the overly dominant design of the proposal, particularly in relation to the Bourne Court. This would create a visual imbalance which would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the site.
 12. Although I have not found a conflict with Policy LP14 of the Local Plan, as the proposal would direct business and employment to one of the Council's preferred locations, for the foregoing reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would have an adverse effect on the character and appearance of the area. It would therefore be in conflict with relevant objectives of Policy LP26 of the Local Plan, which seeks to promote development that improves the character and appearance of the area.

Parking and road safety

13. Two car parking spaces have been set aside permanently for the appeal proposal within the Bourne Court parking area, including one designated space for a disabled person.
14. Policy LP23 of the Local Plan states that the Council will ensure that new development provides sufficient parking spaces by meeting the minimum and maximum parking standards set out in the London Plan (2016) (the London Plan). According to Table 6.2 of the London Plan, the proposal should provide a maximum of 1 parking space.
15. The Council claims that the proposal would likely result in an increase in the demand for parking equivalent to a minimum of 15 car parking spaces, considering the scale of the building proposed, anticipated staff and boroughwide averages for people who drive to work.
16. The Council's "Reason for Decision" does state that insufficient information has been provided to demonstrate that the proposal would not result in a material increase in parking pressure on surrounding streets.
17. Although it is likely, considering the site's low Public Transport Accessibility Level, that a significant proportion of staff and visitors would seek to use private transport, Policy LP23 does rely on the standards set within the London Plan and therefore the proposed allocation of one car parking spaces and one designated for a disabled person meets policy requirements.
18. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would not be in conflict with Policy LP23 of the Local Plan, which sets out the Council's policy on securing sufficient cycle and car parking.

Conclusion

19. I have found the proposal to be in accordance with the Council's parking policy. Nevertheless, I have found that the appeal scheme would have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the area.
20. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Andre Pinto

INSPECTOR