



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 December 2020

by J Bowyer BSc(Hons) MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 4th December 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/20/3246722

31 Clifford Road, South Norwood, London SE25 5JJ

- 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 Wong against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 19/03561/FUL, dated 29 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 8 November 2019.
 - The development proposed is described as 'demolition of existing polycarbonate roof structure and erection single storey extension and formation rear dormer'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of development in the banner heading above is taken from the application form. At Part E of the appeal form, it is stated that the description of development has not changed. Nevertheless, a different wording has been entered which describes the development as 'demolition of existing polycarbonate structure. Erection of part 2-storey, part single storey rear extension and erection of rear dormer window. Change of use of commercial unit to Class C3 (dwellings) resulting in the provision of 2x2-bed flats'. As this reflects the description stated on the Council's decision notice which I consider provides a more accurate representation of the proposal, I have determined the appeal accordingly.
3. The Council's first reason for refusal cites the effect of development on the significance of the Church Street Conservation Area (CA). However, the CA area boundary plan before me indicates that the appeal site is instead within the South Norwood CA. The application and appeal stage evidence of both the Council and the appellant also refer to the South Norwood CA rather than the Church Street CA. I am therefore satisfied that the name of the CA stated within the reason for refusal is an error, and that no party would be unfairly prejudiced by my determination of the appeal on the basis that the site is within the South Norwood CA.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are (i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the South Norwood CA; and (ii) whether or not the proposal would provide adequate refuse and cycle storage.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

5. The South Norwood Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2007 (CAAMP) identifies that much of the special interest of the CA derives from the intact state of the old shopping streets and the supporting side streets which together create an interesting mix of styles, materials and quality. Many of the buildings within the CA retain original features, and the arrangement of buildings on typically strong building lines is a further notable characteristic which adds to the quality and distinctiveness of the area.
6. The appeal site forms the end of a small terrace of three buildings which is in a prominent position close to the junction of Clifford Road with Doyle Road. Across the terrace, the proportions of windows above the ground-floor level are fairly consistent, and there are similar small dormers to the front and rear of each building. As a consequence, and notwithstanding a modest rear extension on the appeal site and some variation in ground floor fenestration, there is a strong sense of uniformity across the group overall. The mansard roof form of the terrace, and retained features such as the shopfront cornice, fascia and corbels to the appeal building further add to its distinctiveness. Taking these factors together, I consider that both the appeal building and wider terrace contribute positively to the character and appearance of this part of the CA, and thus to its significance.
7. Windows and doors within the CA are traditionally timber, but I am satisfied that the use of uPVC on the appeal building would not in itself be inconsistent given the numerous examples that I observed nearby, including to 33 Clifford Road adjacent to the site. The entrance door and low level basement window to the front of the building would also be similar to features to No 33. However, in combination with the position of the ground floor window and its height above the head of the door, I find that the removal of the fascia would notably diminish the clear visual distinction between the ground and first floor levels of the appeal building and would detract from its character and appearance.
8. To the rear of the site, I do not consider that the depth of the proposed extension would be excessive against the building. Screening by the boundary treatment to the appeal and neighbouring sites would also limit the visual impact of the lower ground floor level on the surrounding area, but the upper part of the extension would be readily visible from Doyle Road. This element would be set in from the boundary with No 33, but would be visually jarring against the host building given the very close proximity of its side to the window at the rear of the building. It would also disrupt the appearance of the existing consistent building line to the rear of the terrace, exacerbating the unsympathetic nature of the development and its prominence.
9. At roof level, the rear dormer would be of significant bulk and mass, with no set back from the rear wall of the building below. It would also fill most of the width of the site, with the outer edge of the dormer set awkwardly close to the side of the upper sloping section of the host roofslope. As a result, I find that the dormer would be a conspicuous and disproportionate addition which would dominate the original form of the host building.
10. Taken as a whole, I find that the proposed development would be overbearing and harmful to the character and appearance of the host building. The prominent

position of the appeal site would exacerbate the visual impact on the area, and there would as a consequence be harm to the significance of the South Norwood CA. Given the relatively localised impact of the proposal, I find that this harm would be less than substantial in the terms of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which goes on to advise that this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of development.

11. The proposal would make effective use of the previously developed site within an area benefitting from good public transport accessibility, and would result in a net gain of one dwelling towards the supply of housing locally. In these regards, it would align with objectives within the Framework, the London Plan – The Spatial Development Strategy for London Consolidated with Alterations Since 2011 (LP), and the Croydon Local Plan 2018 (CLP). However, the contribution would be limited by the small scale of the development. Moreover, the main parties refer to planning permission previously granted on the appeal site¹ which includes conversion of the building to 2 flats. There is no compelling evidence before me that similar benefits could not also be delivered in accordance with this permission without detriment to the CA. Even taken together, I therefore find that public benefits of the proposal would be insufficient to outweigh the less than substantial harm to the CA, a matter to which I give considerable importance and weight in accordance with the Framework.
12. For these reasons, I conclude on this main issue that the proposal would harm the character and the appearance of the host building and the South Norwood CA. It would accordingly conflict with Policies SP4, DM10 and DM18 of the CLP and Policies 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8 of the LP. Collectively, these policies broadly require high quality development which reinforces and is sympathetic to local character, and which conserves and enhances heritage assets. There would also be conflict with guidance within the Conservation Area General Guidance Supplementary Planning Document 2013 which seeks development that preserves or enhances the special character and appearance of the CA.

Refuse and Cycle Storage

13. No provision for cycle storage or the storage of refuse and recycling to serve the development is shown within the site. At my visit, I saw that the rear garden is accessible via a path from Doyle Road, and is currently used to store refuse and recycling for the appeal property. Following the development, Flat A within the lower ground and ground floor levels of the building would have access onto a retained area of garden. Although there are steps within the garden, I see no reason that continued storage of refuse and recycling here, nor provision for cycles, would be inappropriate to serve this dwelling, with further details sought by an appropriately worded condition.
14. However, Flat B within the first and second floor levels of the building is not shown to have direct access to the rear garden. Although I noted some storage of refuse and recycling to the front of other nearby buildings, this was within defined frontages or gardens. The boundary of the appeal site does not include outside space to the front of the building, and it would not therefore be possible to accommodate storage here, nor to provide appropriate screening. Accordingly, I am not satisfied that suitable refuse, recycling and cycling storage to serve the occupiers of Flat B could be accommodated within the site. In contrast to the planning permission previously granted where the

¹ Application reference 18/01901/FUL

information before me indicates that both flats would have access to the rear garden, it would not therefore be appropriate to defer consideration of provision for Flat B to a planning condition.

15. I therefore conclude on this main issue that it has not been demonstrated that the proposal would provide adequate refuse and cycle storage. As a consequence, there would be conflict with CLP Policies SP4, SP8, DM10, DM13 and DM30 and Policies 6.9 and 6.13 of the LP which require, amongst other things, that minimum standards for cycle parking are met, and that suitable space to store refuse and recycling is sensitively integrated within a building envelope or site so as to avoid visual intrusion.

Other Matters

16. I have considered examples of other developments brought to my attention by the appellant, including developments of flats at 51 Clifford Road and 10 Lower Addiscombe Road. I do not have full details of the circumstances that led to these proposals being accepted, but from the information before me, neither are within the South Norwood CA, or reflect the form and arrangement of the appeal proposal. Accordingly, they are not directly comparable to the development before me which I have in any case considered on its own merits.

Conclusion

17. The proposal would conflict with the development plan when it is read as a whole and there are no material considerations which indicate that a decision contrary to the development plan should be reached. For the reasons given above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Bowyer

INSPECTOR