



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 4 June 2021

by S Poole BA(Hons) DipArch MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 01 July 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/20/3264278

41 Woodcrest Road, Purley CR8 4JD

- 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 Abdulla El Hilly, Infinity Homes Group, against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 19/06036/FUL, dated 23 December 2019, was refused by notice dated 3 June 2020.
 - The development proposed is demolition and erection of a three storey building with accommodation in the roof, comprising of 3 x 3 bedroom units and 5 x 2 bedroom units, together with associated car parking, cycle parking, refuse storage and landscaping
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The appeal is accompanied by a set of revised drawings. These show a scheme that is substantially different from that considered by the Council. In particular, the car parking arrangement, entrance arrangement and appearance of the revised scheme materially differ from that shown on the application drawings. Whilst I note that the appellant has made efforts to consult widely on the revised scheme, it is tantamount to an entirely new planning application and therefore warrants full and thorough scrutiny by the Council. Considering this appeal on the basis of the revised drawings submitted with the appeal would be contrary to the Wheatcroft Principles¹.
3. The information before me indicates that the scheme was amended after the planning application was submitted and the drawings listed on the Council's decision notice are not in fact the drawings ultimately assessed by the Council's planning committee. In the absence of evidence to the contrary the appeal is assessed against the drawings identified by the appellant as being presented to the Council's planning committee and therefore the plans on which the decision was made.

Application for costs

4. An application for costs was made by the appellant against the Council of the London Borough of Croydon. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

¹ Bernard Wheatcroft Ltd v SSE (1982)

Main Issue

5. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the street scene.

Reasons

6. The appeal site is occupied by a large two storey detached house. Like its neighbours to either side it is set a significant height above the level of Woodcrest Road and its garden rises further to the rear. The house has a garage at lower ground floor level with a short driveway partly bounded by retaining walls. The ground floor of the house is accessed from the street via steps. The property has a prominent asymmetrical front gable with a partial catslide roof that matches that at the neighbouring house, 39 Woodcrest Road.
7. Woodcrest Road is part of a planned suburban residential estate primarily comprising detached houses of similar age and appearance. Whilst houses differ in their detailed design, they feature common characteristics such as curved bay windows, prominent gables, catslide roofs and half-timbering. This, together with the front gardens where retained, gives the portion of the street surrounding the appeal site with a high-quality garden suburb type feel, a matter to which I attribute significant weight.
8. The proposal would comprise the demolition of the house, substantial excavation within the front half of the site and the erection of a 3-storey building with accommodation within the roof to provide 8 self-contained flats. A forecourt at the front would provide space for 5 cars and refuse storage and sunken terraces to the rear would provide light to, and amenity space for, lower ground floor rooms. The street frontage of the building would be symmetrically arranged with a centrally positioned gable that would protrude forward of the main building line in the street and include an inset terrace below the apex.
9. Properties in the portion of Woodcrest Road to either side of the appeal property generally retain their front gardens and these features positively contribute to the character and appearance of the street scene. Where garages and driveways have been formed these are generally secondary to the garden areas. In the few instances where larger off-street parking areas have been created in front of houses this has had a detrimental impact on the appearance of the area due to the loss of vegetation and preponderance of hard landscaping and retaining walls.
10. The proposal would include the formation of an off-street car parking area that would occupy almost the entirety of the front part of the site. To achieve this at the same level as the road tall retaining walls would be needed along the boundaries shared with the properties to either side. The large hard landscaped area and prominent retaining walls, albeit landscaped, would be alien and incongruous features in this part of Woodcrest Road that would have an unacceptable effect on the appearance of the street scene.
11. Whilst the proposal would be only slightly taller than the building it would replace, it would extend closer to its side boundaries than is generally the case in the street and would have a bulkier roof form. The extremely prominent gable, the steeply pitched roof form and symmetrical frontage would be at odds with the more informal and generally more asymmetrical front elevations that

prevail in this section of the road. Due to its bulk, scale, massing and design the proposal would be an overly prominent and incongruous element in the street scene.

12. The appellant has referred to various recent developments and planning permissions for flats in the surrounding area where the density of development has been increased. As each planning application and appeal needs to be considered on its individual merits having regards to the particular physical characteristics of each proposal and site context I attribute limited weight to these schemes. In particular I note that the nearby development at 57 Woodcrest Road occupies a far wider and flatter site than the appeal proposal, is a less dense form of development and has a more informal appearance. The prominence of the nearby scheme at 32 Woodcrest Road is somewhat off-set by the fact it is sited below road level.
13. For the reasons set out above I conclude that the proposal would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the street scene. As such the proposal conflicts with Policies SP4.1 and DM10 of the Croydon Local Plan (2018) which, amongst other matters, require high quality design that respects and enhances local character. There is also conflict with the aims of Croydon's Suburban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2019) which essentially seeks to ensure that where more intensive development is proposed it adequately respects the characteristics of its context.

Other Matters

14. I recognise that the appellant sought pre-application advice from the Council and the proposal has gone through a number of reiterations including an earlier withdrawn planning application. I also note the appellant's assertion that the Council has been inconsistent in its approach to schemes of this nature. However, these matters do not outweigh the clear harm identified above.

Conclusions

15. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, including representations made by local residents and the Member of Parliament for Croydon South, I conclude that the appeal should fail.

S Poole

INSPECTOR