



Appeal Decisions

Site visit made on 6 December 2021

by M Ollerenshaw BSc (Hons) MTPI MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 February 2022

Appeal A Ref: APP/L5240/W/21/3274677

56 South Park Hill Road, South Croydon CR2 7DW

- 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 Jason St Romaine against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 20/05123/FUL, dated 28 September 2020, was refused by notice dated 2 December 2020.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as 'Proposed link in-between no. 54 and 56 South Park Hill Road comprising a two bedroom dwelling over two floors'.
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Appeal B Ref: APP/L5240/W/21/3274684

56 South Park Hill Road, South Croydon CR2 7DW

- 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 Jason St Romaine against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 20/06360/FUL, dated 9 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 14 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as 'Proposed link in-between no. 54 and 56 South Park Hill Road comprising a one unit dwelling over two floors'.
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Decision

1. Appeal A is dismissed
2. Appeal B is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

3. There are two appeals relating to this site as set out above. Although I have considered each on its individual merits, to avoid duplication I have dealt with the two schemes together, except where otherwise indicated.
4. Following determination of the application to which Appeal A relates, the London Plan (the LP 2021) was formally adopted in March 2021 and replaced the 2016 iteration. I have therefore determined the appeals having regard to the relevant policies of the LP 2021. The main parties have had the opportunity to comment on the relevance of this for Appeal A. I am satisfied that no interested party has been prejudiced by this approach.
5. On 20 July 2021, the Government published a revised version of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework). However, the revised Framework

does not materially alter the national policy approach in respect of the issues raised in this appeal.

Main Issue

6. The main issue for both appeals is the effect of the development proposed on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

7. The appeal site relates to the gap between two recently constructed apartment blocks, 54 and 56 South Park Hill Road. These properties are large detached, four storey buildings which are set some distance back from the road and broadly in line with the neighbouring properties on either side. South Park Hill Road slopes up from the junction with Croham Road such that No 54 is on slightly higher ground than No 56.
8. The surrounding area is predominantly residential and is characterised principally by large detached dwellings, flat conversions and purpose built apartment blocks which vary in their appearance and detailing. There is also a school and a nursery within close proximity to the north. Properties are generally situated on large plots with gaps between them and are set back from the road behind front gardens and driveways. Together with the trees and shrubs in the front gardens and street trees, this positively contributes to a spacious and verdant character to the area to which, in my view, it is reasonable to accord appropriate protection.
9. There is currently a sizeable gap between Nos 54 and 56. Both appeal schemes relate to the construction of a dwelling which would bridge this gap at the upper floor levels and link the two buildings together, with an underpass beneath for access to the properties to the rear. The Appeal B scheme is essentially a reduced version of Appeal A with the proposal being set further back from the existing building frontages, lowered eaves level and reduced fenestration to the proposed front elevation. Appeal A would provide a two bedroom dwelling, whilst the Appeal B scheme would be a one bedroom unit.
10. According to the Council, Nos 54 and 56 were permitted on the basis that they would respond sympathetically to the character of the area, by appearing as detached large villa style properties which seek to reflect the appearance of the properties they replaced and neighbouring buildings. Despite the variety of built form in the street scene generally, Nos 52-58 are of broadly similar appearance and distinctive character which results from their scale and design, which includes prominent front gables and bay windows. As a result of this, and the gaps between them, this group of properties appear as distinct individual buildings.
11. The proposed link structure, as featured in both appeal schemes, would be an uncharacteristic addition to buildings of this design and character, joining together two detached buildings which have been designed to be physically and functionally separate. This would erode the separate identities of the properties and would not reflect the pattern of development on this part of the road.
12. In the case of both schemes the link dwelling would be recessed from the frontages of the two buildings. That would reduce the visibility of the proposals from South Park Hill Road. However, due to the siting at high level the proposals would still be visible within the street scene, particularly when

viewed head on. While the Appeal B scheme would feature a greater set back from the building frontages and lower eaves level, it would still be harmful to the distinct character of the two villa style buildings.

13. The appellant has referred to Figure 2.4a of the Council's Suburban Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2019) (SPD), which shows two detached dwellings replaced by a larger building formed of two joined elements. This section of the SPD relates to comprehensive development of neighbouring plots, including a more holistic approach to development in the area, allowing a more resolved approach to character. The appeal schemes, in seeking to link the two buildings together retrospectively, would not follow such a holistic approach, but would represent piecemeal development that I consider would be harmful to the character and appearance of the buildings and the street scene.
14. I accept that there is some variety in the scale and design of properties on South Park Hill Road and, in this regard, I have been referred to a number of examples of other developments within the vicinity of the site which feature buildings closely adjoining or linked. I do not have the substantive details of the planning history of these developments before me. Nevertheless, they appear to have been features of the built environment for quite some time, whilst others appear to be part of the original design concept for the buildings, rather than recent additions and they pre-date the current development plan and the Framework.
15. No 60 includes a vehicular access through it to the rear, whilst the blocks of flats on the western side of South Park Hill Road close to the junction with Croham Road include recessed elements. These are not villa type properties but are of more utilitarian appearance and have a site context materially different to the appeal site. The appellant refers to two villa style buildings at Elmhurst School which feature a smaller linking building between. However, whilst the side of the smaller building is attached to one of the main buildings, there appears to be a gap between it and the other main building, and it does not link the roofs of the main buildings as would be the case with the appeal proposals. At 23 South Park Hill Road a modern extension has been added to the end of a more traditional building and that development is therefore not comparable to the appeal proposals. Therefore, the examples referred to by the appellant do not provide a compelling precedent for allowing the appeal proposals. In any case, I have assessed the appeal schemes on their own merits in accordance with the requirements of the current development plan.
16. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposals would significantly harm the character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policy D3 of the LP 2021 and Policies SP4.1 and DM10 of the Croydon Local Plan (2018). Amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure that development proposals are of a high quality design, which respect and enhance Croydon's varied local character. The proposals would also be contrary to the Council's SPD which outlines, amongst other things, that proposals should improve or positively contribute to local character.

Other Matters

17. The appellant argues that the development proposed would make more efficient use of available space within an urban environment. However, in the manner proposed this would be at the expense of the character and

appearance of the area. The development proposed by Appeal A and B would make a useful contribution towards meeting the Borough's housing needs in a sustainable location close to a railway station, shops and other services, as well as generating increased Council Tax receipts and New Homes Bonus payments. Both schemes would also have economic benefits through the creation of employment opportunities during the construction phase of development and spending in the local area by future occupiers. I have attached some weight to these factors. However, given that the schemes in Appeal A and B would be of modest scale, the weight attributable to these matters is limited and would not outweigh the harm I have identified in respect of both appeals.

Conclusion

18. For the above reasons, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework, and all other relevant material considerations, I conclude that both appeals should be dismissed.

M Offerenshaw

INSPECTOR