



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 October 2022

by S Poole BA(Hons) DipArch MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 04 November 2022.

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/W/22/3291897

58 & 60 Woodhurst Road, London SE2 0HE

- 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 Antonio Muscat (SIA Design Build Ltd) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Greenwich.
 - The application Ref 21/3605/F, dated 5 October 2021, was refused by notice dated 13 December 2021.
 - The development proposed is the subdivision and extension of existing dwellinghouses to provide 9 self-contained units including the construction of a part 1 / part 2 storey extension to the full width of the property at the rear, single storey basement extension and construction of five dormer windows to the side and rear roof slopes. Creation of a communal garden and private terraces. Provision for refuse & recycle storage, cycle & car parking.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. I have adopted the description of development provided on the appeal form in the banner heading above as this more clearly describes the proposal than the description given on the application form.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - (i) the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the application site and its surroundings;
 - (ii) whether the proposal would provide acceptable living conditions for future occupiers, with particular regard to dwelling sizes, outlook, natural light and amenity space provision;
 - (iii) whether the proposal would provide an acceptable mix of dwelling sizes;
 - (iv) the effect of the proposal on the living conditions of the occupiers of 56 Woodhurst Road, with particular regard to outlook; and
 - (v) the effect of the proposal on highway safety, with particular regard to vehicular access and egress.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal site is occupied by a pair of semi-detached, 2-storey houses with long gardens to the rear, beyond which there is a lane that provides access to private garages. There is a notable fall in levels between Woodhurst Road and the lane. The pair of houses are situated in a residential street comprising a mix of semi-detached and terraced houses. They form part of a group of 5 semi-detached pairs of similar age and appearance with very pronounced chalet-style gables facing the street and hipped roofs to the rear. The unity of the group of semi-detached houses is a matter to which I attach significant weight.
5. The appeal site is bounded to one side by a strip of public space that links Woodhurst Road to Bendmore Avenue and provides vehicular access to the lane. This area of open space allows open views towards the side elevation of 60 Woodhurst Road and the rear of the pair of houses. The appeal properties are therefore relatively prominent elements in their local environment.
6. I note that 58 Woodhurst Road has been the subject of multiple planning applications and appeals in recent years. Planning permission was granted at appeal¹ in 2019 for development including the creation of a basement and a double-storey rear extension, to enable the formation of a 3-bedroom flat, and installation of a side dormer. As this permission was granted more than 3 years' ago and there is no evidence before me that it has been commenced, it does not form a fall-back position. A separate appeal² was dismissed in 2020 for a scheme comprising the extension of No.58 and its conversion into 3 flats. My colleagues' observations in respect of these appeals are matters to which I attach weight, albeit these earlier proposals only relate to half of the appeal site.
7. The proposal would comprise the extension and subdivision of the pair of houses to create 9 self-contained flats. The works needed to create the flats would include the erection of a part single storey, part two storey rear extension, the formation of a basement and the expansion of the roof including the installation of dormer windows, hip to gable additions and raising the ridge. In addition, a car parking area would be formed to the rear and provision made for refuse and cycle storage.
8. The proposal would retain the prominent chalet-style roof form at the front and the dormers in the side slopes of this element would be suitably constrained. However, the formation of the raised element of roof to the rear with side-facing gables would result in an overly prominent and incongruous roof form that would be highly visible from the public realm and entirely at odds with the character and appearance of the host property and the surrounding area.
9. Whilst a number of the houses in the group have modest single-storey additions to the rear, the pairs of houses retain their hipped roofs and symmetrical arrangement at upper levels to the rear. The proposal would include the formation of a mishmash of elements to the rear including terraces and hipped and gable roofs. This would exacerbate the harm identified above.

¹ Ref: APP/E5330/W/19/3227400, dated 24 October 2019

² Ref: APP/E5330/W/19/3236373, dated 19 February 2020

10. Due to their height, bulk, siting and design the proposed additions would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of the host properties and their surroundings. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies DH1 and DH(a) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan: Core Strategy with Detailed Policies (2014) (CS) which, among other matters, require a high quality of design, limited to a scale and design appropriate to the locality. The proposal is also contrary to the aims of Policy D3 of the London Plan (2021) (LP) and the guidance in the Council's Residential Extensions, Basements and Conversions Guidance Supplementary Planning Document (2018) (SPD).

Living Conditions of Future Occupiers

11. The proposal would create 9 self-contained dwellings including and a pair of 1-bedroom flats on the first floor with internal floor areas of about 44sqm (Units B and F) and a 1-bedroom flat within the roof (Unit C) with a floor area of 44.5sqm. These units include bedrooms capable of accommodating a double bed and would therefore be suitable for 2 people. These flats do not accord with the internal space requirements for 2-person 2-bedroom flats set out in the LP. Similarly, the 2-bedroom flat on the ground floor (Unit H) includes 2 large bedrooms and would therefore be capable of accommodating 4 people. The floor area of this unit is a long way short of the LP requirement for a 4-person, 2-bedroom flat.
12. A pair of 3-level, 2-bedroom, 4-person dwellings would be created at the front (Units A and D) with internal floor areas of 82.7sqm each. Whilst the LP does not set out space standards for 3-level, 2-bedroom dwellings, units A and D would only be slightly larger than the requirement for 2-storey, 2-bedroom dwellings. The effect of the additional flight of stairs has not therefore been taken into full account.
13. The proposal would provide a pair of 2-bedroom units at basement level with bedroom windows facing small lightwells. Outlook from these rooms would be very restricted and levels of natural light poor. This would be particularly the case in respect of the rear bedroom of Unit 1 due to the close vicinity of the flank wall of 56 Woodhurst Road. In addition, Unit B would not have any outdoor amenity space and the outdoors spaces associated with Units A and D would not be private or provide adequate amenity.
14. For these reasons the proposal would result in unacceptable living conditions for future occupiers. It therefore fails to accord with LP Policy D6, which states that housing development should be of high-quality design and provide adequately-sized rooms with comfortable and functional layouts which are fit for purpose and meet the needs of Londoners. There is also conflict with CS Policies H5 and DH1, which seek high quality residential development, and the aims of the Mayor's Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (2016).

Dwelling Mix

15. The appeal site is occupied by a pair of good-sized family dwellings with gardens. The proposal would provide 9 self-contained dwelling units each with either 1 or 2 bedrooms. As such the proposal would result in the net loss of accommodation suitable for family occupation. Whilst the CS identifies a need for 1- and 2-bedroom units, it also identifies a similar level of need for 3, 4 and 4+ bedroom dwellings in the borough. I note that the area surrounding the

appeal site predominately comprises houses. However, there is no evidence before that there is an over-riding need just for new small dwellings.

16. For these reasons I conclude that the proposal would provide an acceptable mix of dwelling sizes. It is therefore contrary to CS Policy H2 which states that a mix of housing types and sizes will be required in all developments including conversions and developments should contain a proportion of 3, 4 and 4+ bedroom units. There is also conflict with the aims of LP Policy H10 in this respect.

Living Conditions of Neighbouring Residents

17. The proposal would include a substantial rear extension. Whilst this would have a stepped arrangement, it would include a 2-storey element close to the boundary with 56 Woodhurst Road with a prominent rear-facing gabled roof. Due to its siting, height and extend of rear protrusion this element, combined to a degree with the adjoining single-storey feature, would result in a reduction in outlook from the nearest garden-facing aperture in No.56. In this context, where open rear aspect is the norm, the sense of enclosure created would be of a level that would be unneighbourly.
18. Due to its siting, layout and height I therefore conclude that the proposal would have an unacceptable effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of No.56. The proposal is therefore contrary to CS Policy DH(b), which aims to protect the amenity of adjacent occupiers.

Highway Safety

19. The appeal proposal would provide 5 car parking spaces at the rear of the site accessed from Woodhurst Road via open space to the side of the appeal site and the un-made lane to the rear of the site. The spaces would be arranged at an angle to allow cars to access them in forward gear. However, this layout would require cars to exit the spaces in reverse gear, therefore resulting in cars reversing within the public open space that links Woodhurst Road to Bendmore Avenue and is used as a pedestrian route. This would result in potential harm to pedestrian safety.
20. As the proposal would provide 9 dwellings in a location with a comparatively low public transport accessibility rating it is likely the 5 car spaces would be well-used. Potentially, on occasions, there would be cars entering and leaving the parking area at the same time. As the spaces are accessed via a narrow lane, this scenario would result in cars having to reverse along the pathway onto Woodhurst Road. There is further potential harm to both pedestrian and vehicular safety in this respect.
21. Due to its siting, layout and scale, I conclude that the proposed car parking area would have an unacceptable effect on highway safety. It therefore fails to accord with CS Policy IM4 and LP Policy T4. Amongst other matters, these policies seek high standards of safety and developments that do not increase road danger.

Other Matters

22. I recognise that the London Plan requires boroughs to proactively explore the potential to intensify the use of land to support additional homes and workspaces, promoting higher density development, particularly in locations

that are well-connected to jobs, services, infrastructure and amenities by public transport, walking and cycling.

23. I note the proposal would provide a net increase in housing which is a benefit. However, the dwellings would all be small and situated in an area with comparatively low public transport accessibility located some distance from services and amenities. For these reasons the proposal is not compatible with the aims of sustainable development set out in the Framework and the London Plan. The uplift in housing provision of the type proposed in this particular location is therefore a matter to which I attached limited weight.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should fail.

S Poole

INSPECTOR