



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 October 2022

by Peter White BA(Hons) MA DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25 NOVEMBER 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/21/3289363

41 Fairdene Road, Coulsdon CR5 1RD

- 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 Joe Garner - NewPlace Associates against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 21/02846/FUL, dated 24 May 2021, was refused by notice dated 24 November 2021.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of the existing dwelling and garage and erection of 9 flats together with car parking, amenity space, cycle parking, refuse storage and associated landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant submitted revised plans with the appeal. It advises that they respond to the Council's concerns about detailed design of the proposed front elevation openings not reflecting the traditional proportions of the neighbouring buildings. I note that the Council and other interested parties have been afforded opportunity to comment on those plans during the appeal process, and that the proposed development would remain essentially the same, albeit with some changes to the public facing facades. I have therefore considered the revised plans submitted with the appeal.
3. The Council advises that its Suburban Design Guide SPG (2019) was revoked on 25th July 2022, and I have therefore had no regard to it.

Main Issues

4. The main issue is the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

5. Fairdene Road is predominantly characterised by suburban dwellings in a leafy setting. At my site visit I noted consistency of design in the houses on the eastern side of the road in the vicinity of the appeal site. Most were rendered detached dwellings with tiled roofs, hipped at one end, with bay windows and tile hanging. On the other side of the road there is more variation in design and materials, where the evolution of the street since the early 1900s is more apparent. The appellant refers to a small number of planning permissions for

- new or replacement buildings on the other side of the road¹, and one development opposite the appeal site was underway at the time of my visit.
6. Sloping land levels mean that 41 Fairdene Road (No 41), and other houses on the same side of the road, are on higher ground than the road and houses opposite. In the case of the appeal site, that appears particularly so, and the existing dwelling stands as an elevated building beyond the low front boundary wall, grass bank and small shrubs in its steeply sloping front garden. For the pedestrian, in particular, the landscaped front garden is a notable feature.
 7. The proposed basement feature, cutting through the grass bank of the existing front garden, is an element not seen elsewhere on the road. The undercroft would screen the cars themselves from view. However, at a pedestrian scale, passers-by would have a clear view of the access ramp and elements of the basement. They would appear as an urban feature, contrasting sharply with the suburban scale and character of the area.
 8. The proposed development is designed to be a contemporary reinterpretation of local design features. However, despite references to features seen on other buildings in the locality, including a clay tiled roof with overhanging eaves, tile hanging, and more traditional fenestration, the proposed development would be distinctly different to other buildings in the area. The large asymmetrical gabled element proposed at the front of the building, pale bricks, height of the roof accommodating living space, and visible areas of the basement, make little reference to the existing character of the area, and would contrast with it.
 9. The development would achieve the aspirational minimum height of 3 storeys of Croydon Local Plan 2018 (CLP) Policy DM10.1. However, although the proposed building would be only 0.9m higher than the existing building, its combined width, depth, height, and exposed basement mean it would be unduly large and dominant in the street scene. The substantial width of the proposed development would also reduce the gaps between dwellings that contribute to the character of development on the eastern side of the road. Overall, the proposed development would harm the character of the area, and the proposed landscaping would not mitigate its harmful effects.
 10. The proposed development would therefore harm the character and appearance of the area and conflict with Croydon Local Plan 2018 (CLP) Policies SP4, DM10 and The London Plan 2021 Policy D3, which together require high quality design which respects local character. The Council also referred to CLP Policy DM18, which I have not found to be relevant to this issue as the appeal site is not a designated heritage asset, nor is it identified by the Council as a non-designated heritage asset.

Other Matters

11. Despite the appellant's reference to the close proximity of a train station, and the proposed provision of cycle parking, the appeal site is located in an area of low public transport accessibility (PTAL 2). Provision would also be made for adequate bin storage. Bin and cycle provisions could be secured by planning conditions, but both matters would weigh neutrally in the planning balance.
12. The proposed development would provide a net increase of 8 housing units, contributing towards the windfall element of the local plan housing

¹ And one on the same side

requirement. Local and national policy also acknowledge that small sites can make an important contribution to meeting housing needs. The appeal site is previously developed land, the appellant considers it would make effective use of land, and there would be a net increase in the number of family-sized residential units. There would also be temporary jobs through the construction process and moderate economic benefits to the local area.

13. However, given the relatively small scale of the development, these benefits would not outweigh the harm I identify to the character and appearance of the area, and the consequential conflict with policies of the development plan.
14. Concerns have also been expressed by interested parties about other matters. As I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, I have not considered these matters further as they would not change my decision.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons above, I conclude the development would conflict with the development plan as a whole and the approach in the Framework. There are no other material considerations that would suggest a decision other than in accordance with the development plan would be appropriate. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

Peter White

INSPECTOR