



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 8 November 2022

by Jane Smith MA MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 14 DECEMBER 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/W/22/3297933

2 Senlac Road, London SE12 9NA

- 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 Clive Male against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref DC/21/124504, dated 22 November 2021, was refused by notice dated 3 March 2022.
 - The development proposed is erection of a two storey one bedroom dwelling house, together with the provision of a car parking space, cycle storage and bin store.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a small builders' yard, providing outdoor storage for building materials and equipment, together with a single storey office/cabin and a storage shed. It is surrounded by existing dwellings and their rear gardens. The yard is enclosed by fencing and boundary walls, which screen much of the existing use from view.
4. The surrounding housing is varied in design but generally of typical early to mid-20th century suburban character. Along Senlac Road, many of the older dwellings incorporate strong architectural detailing, such as generous eaves, deep bay windows and porches, as well as decorative features incorporated into facing brickwork and hanging tiles. External materials include a mix of render and facing brick. Most of the existing dwellings are two storey, with steeply pitched roofs of varied form but similar overall height. They follow a consistent building line, set towards the front of regular plots, with longer gardens to the rear.
5. While the proposed dwelling would respect the established building line, it would stand on a much smaller plot than the surrounding dwellings, which significantly limits the available space to the sides and rear. While the proposed design responds to the limited scale of the plot and maintains a degree of separation from the side and rear boundaries, this results in a building of a markedly smaller scale than the surrounding dwellings. In particular, the shallow roof pitch would have a significantly lower ridge line than the adjacent

- property. While this may help to prevent the proposed dwelling having an overbearing visual impact, it is a significant departure from the steep roofs and consistent ridge lines which are currently a unifying feature of the street scene.
6. The smaller proportions of the proposed dwelling and the lack of space around the sides and rear are indicative of a cramped form of development. The proposed dwelling would appear squeezed into the site, in a manner which would appear incongruous in the context of the surrounding dwellings.
 7. While the external materials would reflect those used in the surrounding area, the proposed elevations lack the level of visual interest found on many of the surrounding dwellings. The front window openings would be comparatively small, and the proposed front porch would be of rather utilitarian appearance. The proposed front gable to some extent reflects that of the adjacent property at no. 4 Senlac Road, however the front elevation would lack the degree of articulation found on that adjacent property. Overall, the proposed design fails to respond positively to the quality of building detailing found elsewhere in the vicinity, which would be further to the detriment of the character of the street scene.
 8. The layout of the site frontage, incorporating parking and soft landscaping, is broadly consistent with existing site frontages. However, this does not of itself overcome concerns about the scale and design of the proposed dwelling and its relationship with the existing street scene.
 9. The existing builders' yard is well screened by boundary fencing and is not visually intrusive. The existing close boarded fence is typical of boundary treatments on corner plots in a suburban area. Therefore, while there may be modest benefits from introduction of an element of soft landscaping, there is little evidence of a need to 'tidy up' the site and I have given this consideration limited weight.
 10. For the above reasons, I conclude that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. It would conflict with Policies D1, D3 and D6 of the London Plan March 2021, Policy 15 of the Lewisham Core Strategy adopted June 2011, Policies DM30 and DM32 of the Lewisham Development Management Local Plan adopted November 2014 (DMLP) and with relevant paragraphs in the National Planning Policy Framework July 2021 (the Framework). These policies, amongst other things, require all proposed development to attain a high standard of design, responding positively to the context of the site and surrounding area.
 11. The proposed development would also conflict with the Lewisham Small Sites Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) October 2021. While this SPD is supportive of housing development on small sites in principle, it directs such development mainly towards other parts of the Borough, with higher Public Transport Accessibility Levels. It furthermore requires that such schemes should positively contribute to the wider area through their design quality. Similarly, while the Grove Park Neighbourhood Development Plan encourages development of a range of dwelling sizes, that is not at the expense of other policies which require a high standard of design.
 12. The reason for refusal also refers to Policy DM31 of the DMLP and the Lewisham Alterations and Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (LAESPD) adopted April 2019. Both relate to the alteration or extension of

existing buildings, which is not directly relevant to the proposed development in this case, since the existing structures on the site would be demolished or removed. Therefore, I have given Policy DM31 and the LAESPD limited weight. However, this does not overcome the conflict I have identified with other aspects of the development plan, as set out above.

Other Matters

13. The proposed development had been amended following refusal of a previous application, in response to advice from Council officers. The application was also recommended for approval. However, Local Planning Authorities are not bound to accept the recommendations of their officers and my consideration of the appeal has been based on the evidence before me.
14. While the proposal would contribute to the supply of housing, any such benefits would be very limited and would not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the area. I acknowledge that some interested parties expressed support for the provision of a new home in place of the existing use. The Framework similarly promotes the effective use of previously developed land in meeting housing need. However, such support is not at the expense of ensuring that all such development is well designed and appropriate to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.
15. Although I have noted that the Council did not object to the proposed loss of an existing employment use, this is a separate consideration from the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area. While support has been expressed by some interested parties for removal of the existing builders' yard, I have been provided with little evidence of any current conflict between the existing commercial and residential uses. As such, while recognising that removal of 'bad neighbour' uses can in some circumstances be a benefit of redevelopment, I am not persuaded that any such benefit would outweigh the harm I have identified in respect of the main issue above.
16. I have noted the appellant's comments highlighting the absence of identified conflict with development plan policies relating to indoor and outdoor space standards, the effect on living conditions within neighbouring properties, provision of access and parking, energy and water efficiency measures and the effect on heritage assets. However, even if I were to consider that there would be no unacceptable effects on any of these issues, this would not outweigh the harm I have identified above to the character and appearance of the area.
17. Consequently, no other matters outweigh the clear harm that would result from the proposal, as set out in the foregoing main issues.

Conclusion

18. The proposal conflicts with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations, including the Framework's provisions, which outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given above and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Jane Smith

INSPECTOR