



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 March 2023

by M Cryan BA(Hons) DipTP MSc MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 1 June 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/22/3306935

Garages at Land adjoining 27 Helder Street, South Croydon CR2 6HT

- 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 M Mehta of Sterling Rose Homes against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 22/02158/FUL, dated 23 May 2022, was refused by notice dated 8 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of 3no. garages and the erection of one two-storey 4-bed house, including associated works.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Application for costs

2. An application for costs was made by Mr M Mehta of Sterling Rose Homes against the Council of the London Borough of Croydon. This application is the subject of a separate Decision.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; and
 - Whether there would be an overprovision of on-site car parking and, if so, if this would unacceptably promote use of the private car rather than more sustainable modes of transport.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a row of three single-storey garages (described by the appellant as being vacant) facing Helder Street, and an area of land behind them which was previously part of the rear yards or gardens of Nos 172 and 172A Selsdon Road. The proposed development is the demolition of the garages and the erection of a two-storey, four-bedroom house, with front and rear gardens.

Character and appearance

5. The proposed dwelling would be built attached to the end wall of No 27 Helder Street, which sits at the eastern end of a short row of modest two-storey terrace houses with a pitched roof and hipped ends. There are a variety of building and roof types in the area around the appeal site, including Knights Court, a flat-roofed three-storey block of flats on the opposite side of Helder Street, the gable-ended single storey extension at the rear of No 172A Selsdon Road, and a flat-roofed garage next to the site at the end of the rear garden of No 174 Selsdon Road. However, being connected to it, the proposed dwelling would have a particularly close visual relationship with No 27 Helder Street.
6. The house would be built in a traditional style, and though it would be broader than No 27, it would have approximately the same rhythm of fenestration, and follow the same eaves and building lines as its immediate neighbour; in these matters the proposal would be acceptable. However, it would have a hipped, flat-topped roof (effectively a crown roof, though it was not described as such by either main party) and, although the pitch of the roof slopes would match those of No 27, it would nevertheless look rather squat when viewed alongside its neighbour. It would not read well as a continuous addition to the terrace row (such as might be achieved by extending the roof of No 27¹), but instead would have an incongruous and jarring appearance.
7. The Council's officer report (although not the decision notice) also indicated that it considered the proposed use of copper brown aluminium window frames would also fail to respect the overall character of the street. I saw on my site visit that most of window frames in the surrounding area are white, both within Helder Street and slightly further afield on Selsdon Road. At the same time though, it was not necessary to look far to find examples of other colours. The copper brown colour would be subdued and smart rather than garish, and it also seems to me that modern aluminium frames would be likely to be more sympathetic in their proportions and more durable than a good many of the white uPVC window frames in the area. I consider that the windows, and indeed the other materials proposed, would be acceptable. However, this does not outweigh the other harm which I have found.
8. I conclude that the form and height of the roof mean that the proposed dwelling would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. The development would therefore conflict with Policies SP4, DM10.1 and DM10.7 of the 2018 Croydon Local Plan, and Policy D3 of the London Plan 2021. Together, and among other things, these policies seek to ensure that development is of a high quality, respects the scale, height, massing and appearance of the surrounding area, and that the design of roof forms positively contributes to the character of the local area.

Car parking and use

9. The appeal site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level ("PTAL") of 4, signifying that it has a good level of public transport connectivity. Policy T6 of the London Plan 2021 states that car-free development should be the starting point for all development proposals in places that are well-connected by public transport, though it recognises that "appropriate" disabled persons' parking for

¹ The officer report implies that this would be the Council's preference, although I recognise that ownership questions may mean that this is not a feasible option.

Blue Badge holders should be provided. Policy T6.1 of the London Plan 2021 sets a maximum parking provision of 0.5 to 0.75 spaces per dwelling² (which common sense suggests to me should mean a maximum of one space for a single dwelling). The proposal includes two off-street parking spaces on the front forecourt; this would exceed the maximum sought by the development plan.

10. The submitted drawings show a ground floor room identified as the proposed dwelling's fourth bedroom, which the appellant suggests is "in order to attract families with dependents". It was argued that, in view of the need to ensure genuine housing choice by ensuring that disabled parking provision (which the supporting text to Policy 6.1 advises "in some circumstances [...] may include visitor parking for disabled residents who might have regular visitors such as carers"), the provision of two spaces would therefore be justified.
11. Neither of the two proposed spaces would meet the size requirements for "Blue Badge" parking spaces. The Council also pointed out that the good public transport connections in the area mean that visitors, including carers, would be likely to be able to use more sustainable means of transport to reach the site. In the light of the appellant's comments about the poor accessibility of South Croydon railway station for disabled passengers, there may possibly be a case for providing a single off-street parking space of a size suitable for use by a person with disabilities. However, I am not persuaded that it would be necessary to provide two private off-street car parking spaces as the appellant intends; this appears to be more a matter of preference.
12. The over-provision of car parking space would be likely to promote the use of the private car by future occupiers of the development rather than other, more sustainable modes of transport. The proposal therefore conflicts with Policy DM30 of the CLP, and with Policies T2, T6 and T6.1 of the London Plan 2021. Among other things, these policies seek to facilitate and increase walking, cycling and public transport use, and to reduce the impact of car parking in areas with good public transport accessibility; this includes by the application of maximum car parking provision standards as I have summarised in paragraph 9 above.

Other Matters

13. The Council considered that the proposed redevelopment of the site for housing would be acceptable in principle. It also considered that the development would not lead to any unacceptable harm to living conditions for neighbouring residents. Based on the evidence which has been put before me, and my observations during my site visit, I see no reason to take a different view on either of these points. These are neutral factors which do not weigh in favour of the appeal proposal.

Conclusion

14. The proposed development would provide one new dwelling, which would make a small contribution to increasing the supply of housing locally; this would be a very modest benefit of the scheme. The appeal site is in an area which is well-located for access to shops, other services and transport links, and there would also be likely to be some very minor benefits for local businesses arising from

² For a dwelling with three or more bedrooms in an Outer London location with a PTAL of 4

there being an additional household in the area. Given the small scale of the proposal, I consider that these social and economic benefits in total carry at most very moderate weight in favour of the scheme.

15. However, I have found that the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area, and the over-provision of off-street parking would support the use of the private car rather than more sustainable modes of transport. These are matters which carry considerable weight, and outweigh the benefits associated with the proposal. The scheme would conflict with the development plan taken as a whole, and there are no other considerations, including the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework, that outweigh this conflict.
16. For the reasons set out above, I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

M Cryan

Inspector