



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 May 2023

by A Wright BSc (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29 JUNE 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/22/3310484

1A Meadow Rise, Coulsdon CR5 2EH

- 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 Philip Holmes against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref 21/06097/FUL, dated 4 March 2022, was refused by notice dated 28 June 2022.
 - The development proposed is demolition of the existing house and erection of 9 flats together with car parking spaces, communal amenity space, cycle parking spaces, refuse / recycle facilities and associated landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

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

Reasons

3. Located in a residential area, the site comprises a well screened, single storey diminutive, detached dwelling with accommodation in the roof space. It is a prominent site situated towards the bottom of a hill linking Woodcote Grove Road and Smitham Bottom Lane, on the corner of Meadow Rise. There are some irregular plots and building lines due to the convergence of roads, but the dwellings on this side of Woodcote Grove Road and Meadow Rise face the roads and follow a similar building line. The area has a suburban, verdant character with predominantly large detached and semi-detached two storey Arts and Crafts style houses and boundary trees and hedges, though there is some variety in building styles, types and footprints in the wider area, and the appeal property has a different height and design to other nearby houses on the same side of the street.
4. The proposal would replace the existing house with a block of flats incorporating four levels of development within a part two storey and part four storey building, including accommodation within a double storey roof arrangement. I note that the building has been redesigned following the Council's earlier refusal of a different scheme (planning application ref 21/02692/FUL).
5. The part of the development facing Meadow Rise would include a four storey gable and a rearward extension with two storey walls and a double storey

catslide roof which together would occupy a significant length of this frontage. Although there would be a small inset to the rear projection to provide a visual break, due to the angle of the road, the building would be significantly closer to the road than the other dwellings on this side of Meadow Rise and would project considerably further than the dwelling on the opposite corner of the street. The overall length of the proposed building on Meadow Rise, combined with its height and close proximity to this road, would result in a large, bulky building which would not reflect the size, height and massing of the existing dwellings in this street. Located on a prominent corner plot, this part of the development would be particularly incongruous in views from Smitham Bottom Lane and Meadow Rise, detrimental to the street scene.

6. The Croydon Local Plan 2018 (the Local Plan) clearly envisages the replacement of existing detached houses with flats to increase density and massing. Policy DM10 of the Local Plan states that proposals should seek to achieve a minimum height of three storeys whilst respecting height and massing, amongst other things. At my site visit, I observed the redevelopment which has taken place at 105 Woodcote Grove Road which is part four storey and, from the examples provided by the appellant, recent three and four storey redevelopments have also occurred in the wider locality in accordance with Policy DM10.
7. The appeal site has a wider frontage along Woodcote Grove Road than other nearby dwellings and the trees along this boundary would be retained. This elevation of the proposed building would be broader than the other dwellings in this street, with a roof approximately 3m higher than the adjacent dwelling. Although the roof would be visible from parts of Woodcote Grove Road, due to the position of the building set back from the road, with a comparable building line to the existing houses, and its location at the lower end of the hill, it would not be particularly prominent in the street scene and would fall within the parameters of Policy DM10.
8. There is no dispute that the proposed building is of a high-quality design which uses materials and architectural features to give a modern interpretation of the Arts and Crafts style houses in the vicinity and, in this respect, it would accord with national, London and local planning policies. However, although there is reference to the development being low rise and presenting itself as a sensibly scaled-up model of the large detached dwellinghouses characteristic of the local area, for the reasons set out above, the proposal would not reflect the mass and height of the existing dwellings on Meadow Rise.
9. Overall, I conclude that the proposal would harm the character and appearance of the area. This would be contrary to Policy D3 of the London Plan 2021 and Policies SP4 and DM10 of the Local Plan. Together, these require developments to respond to local distinctiveness and respect local character, height and massing. It would also conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) which requires development to be sympathetic to local character. This is a planning harm to which I attach considerable weight.

Other Matters

10. The appellant refers to the site being within a designated area of moderate intensification in the draft Croydon Local Plan Review 2021 (the draft Local

Plan). Whilst this would allow an increase in the density and massing of development, any proposals would need to be within the broad parameters of the existing local character. The Council advises that the draft Local Plan was subject to consultation in early 2022 and will be subject to further evidence gathering and review, with a further consultation programmed for early 2024. As such, the revised plan is clearly in the early stages of preparation, and so I afford it little weight.

11. I note that the proposal would make more efficient use of the land and contribute towards the supply of housing on a small, windfall site with good access to services and facilities, consistent with local, London and national planning policies. Although the appellant refers to different housing targets in section 4 and Policy SP2.2 of the Local Plan and Policies H1 and H2 of the London Plan, there is little evidence that the Council is not meeting the needs for housing in its area, including dwellings expected to come forward on small and windfall sites. Therefore, I give limited weight to this matter.
12. The appellant notes that the Council did not raise concerns in relation to several matters, including the suitability of the site for residential intensification, the living conditions of existing or future occupiers, housing standards and mix, unit sizes, parking, and effects on trees. There is no compelling evidence before me that would lead me to come to a different conclusion to the Council on these matters. Nevertheless, compliance with the development plan in relation to these issues is a neutral factor.
13. The Council sets out a requirement for a financial contribution towards sustainable transport improvements via a legal agreement but the appellant disputes the need for this. Given my conclusions on the main issue, I have not found it necessary to consider this matter further.

Planning Balance

14. I have found harm to the character and appearance of the area, which attracts considerable weight. The draft Local Plan and delivery of housing each attract limited weight and the remaining matters only neutral weight, which accordingly does not outweigh the harm I have found.

Conclusion

15. For the reasons given above, the proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no material considerations, including the Framework, that would outweigh that conflict. Therefore, the appeal is dismissed.

A Wright

INSPECTOR