



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 July 2023

by Martin Andrews MA(Planning) BSc(Econ) DipTP & DipTP(Dist) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 6th September 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/23/3317040

13 Gladeside, Croydon CR0 7RL

- 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 Chris Lesflores, Aspect Living Ltd against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application, Ref. 21/03518/FUL, dated 30 June 2021 was refused by notice dated 23 August 2022.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of the existing dwelling and the erection of a two-storey detached building with accommodation in the roof space comprising 6 flats and the provision of associated landscaping, car parking, refuse and cycle storage.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in the appeal are (i) the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; (ii) the adequacy of communal amenity space, and (iii) the effect on highway and pedestrian safety and convenience, which can be summarised as 'access and parking'.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. On the first main issue, I saw on my visit that the appeal site is a large detached dwelling in a roughly triangular shaped plot that widens to the rear where it adjoins the boundary of the Ashburton Playing Fields, an extensive area of open space. The building, in common with the 1960s brick built houses to the south (Nos. 7-11) directly faces Gladeside, whereas on the northern flank the houses (No. 15 onwards) are at an angle to the road. The wider plot of the appeal site contrasts with those of the adjacent buildings which have plot widths essentially the same as their footprints and parallel boundaries.
 4. I recognise that that the combination of different building orientations and design styles with the greater width of the plot potentially may provide a development opportunity at No. 13. I also acknowledge that, as illustrated in the Design and Access Statement submitted with the application, there is a considerable variety of building design and external materials within the surrounding area. However, whilst taking account of these factors and recognising that elements of the proposed building's design are not without
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merit, I also share some of the reservations in the officer's report and the representations of local residents. Three issues in particular stand out in my view.

5. Firstly, the altered siting and orientation of the proposed building compared to the existing would result in a substantial projection of the side (north east) elevation forward of the front of No. 15. Whilst an element of stagger in the building line at this point is acceptable, the visual impact of this projection in the approach along Gladeside from the junction with Lorne Avenue would be significant, especially when given a further emphasis by the somewhat incongruous double gabled elevation in this position and setting.
6. Secondly, in full frontage view the prominence of the proposed building would be compounded by the appearance of the asymmetric front bay. Whilst I acknowledge that the existing street scene does not have so significant a visual cohesion and clearly definable rhythm that would preclude some variety, I agree with the officer's report that this asymmetry combined with an overly complex and varied roof design fail to relate satisfactorily to the site's immediate context. This would draw the eye and whilst design is inherently subjective I support the Council's contention that the appearance of the development would be harmfully out of keeping with this suburban area.
7. Thirdly, with six flats on an awkwardly shaped site previously occupied by one dwelling, albeit substantial in size, the external space around the building would be in short supply for the various purposes it has to meet. This arises in relation to my appraisal of the second main issue below, but in terms of character and appearance the submitted plans illustrate the predominance of hard surfacing to facilitate the four parking spaces, manoeuvring area and footpath to the rear garden.
8. I acknowledge that extensive hard surfacing does occur at some other individual houses in the road as a result of the occupiers seeking to provide on-site parking. However, its inclusion in the appeal proposal as almost the whole of the front curtilage of a new large building with essentially only token soft landscaping and planting would be a poor design and give the perception of a cramped and overdeveloped site of an excessively urban character. Taking the above points together I therefore conclude on this issue that the appeal scheme would conflict with Policies DM10 & SP4.1 of the Croydon Local Plan 2018 ('the Local Plan'); Policies D3 & D4 of the London Plan 2021, and with Section 12: 'Achieving Well-Designed Places' of the National Planning Policy Framework 2021.

Communal Amenity Space

9. On this issue, the Council argues that whilst the requisite communal amenity space of 62sqm is provided, this is essentially 'left over' space to the side and rear of the building. I agree that this is the case and cannot envisage the lawned area to the northern flank of the building ever being used. Furthermore, the proposed amenity areas at the rear and closest to the two ground floor flats are tight to the rear boundary and would give rise to issues of noise and privacy if used by other residents.
10. With that said, each proposed flat has its own private terrace or balcony. In addition there would be an adequate area for sitting out between the building

and the play area and this would be particularly useful for adults watching their children play. When combined with the fact that the existing gate to Ashburton playing fields (which I used on my visit) is to be retained, albeit not shown on the drawings, I do not consider that the alleged inadequate communal space as a reason for permission to be withheld.

11. There is an outstanding point as to rights of access to the playing fields but as these are owned and operated by the Council and other such accesses already exist to nearby houses, this would appear to be a matter that could be satisfactorily resolved with due process. Accordingly, I do not regard any conflict with Local Plan Policies SP2.8 & DM10 and London Plan Policy D3 to be unacceptably harmful in this instance.

Access and Parking

12. On this issue, the appeal site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level ('PTAL') of only 1a which means that accessibility by the flats' residents would be very poor. Because of this, the Council considers that a minimum of 7 spaces should be the appropriate level of provision for the site.
13. For the appellant it is argued that a parking survey has been carried out in accordance with the Lambeth methodology as recommended and this shows a modest combined parking stress level of 23% and on Gladeside itself of just 17%. Reference is also made to an agreement with officers at 'Pre-App' stage that 4 spaces could be supported if verified by a parking survey, and I note confirmation of this in the Council's Pre-App response letter of 2 June 2021. However, difficulties in communication have meant that the scope of the survey was not first agreed with the Council.
14. Ostensibly, 4 spaces are a reasonable compromise between parking demand and existing availability, but in the event and as explained these would cause a problem in respect of the first issue. And there are also other unresolved highway matters as regards the manoeuvring space shown not being supported by technical evidence and the necessity for an adjustment on sight lines. In a situation where I am unable to allow the appeal because of my agreement with the Council on the issue of character and appearance, it would appear prudent for the highway issue to be a matter for further negotiation on any revised scheme in an amended application, taking into parking account both the data agreed between the parties and the views of local residents that additional parking demand would be problematic.
15. For these reasons I do not consider it necessary or indeed appropriate to reach a conclusion on the disputed issue of access and parking in this appeal.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons explained in terms of the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area and having had regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Martin Andrews

INSPECTOR