



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 September 2023

by Nick Bowden BA(Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 9 October 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/Z5060/W/23/3315274

286 Becontree Avenue, Dagenham RM8 2TR

- 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 K Sreeskumar against the decision of the Council for the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.
 - The application Ref 22/01360/FULL, dated 8 August 2022, was refused by notice dated 21 November 2022.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of existing rear outbuilding to 1 x studio flat including provision of 1 x car parking space, 2 x bicycle parking spaces and 2 x bin facilities.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the development on the character and appearance of the area and whether the future occupants of the dwelling would have satisfactory living conditions.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal site is a two-storey semi-detached building with the ground floor and its single storey rear projecting elements used as a local shop. The proposal is for the formation of a new dwelling within a building presently used as a storeroom to the shop together with external alterations to facilitate the conversion.
4. The site is set within the Becontree Estate which, although not a designated conservation area, is recognised as a local heritage asset in Policy CP2 of the Barking and Dagenham Core Strategy (2010) (CS). Part of its significance stems from its origins and period of construction and an important symbol of our past. One of these characteristics is that homes within the original estate feature many rows of terraces in a cottage style, addressing street frontages and benefitting from long back gardens. The buildings themselves are of a simple rhythmic style which is reinforced by the use of a generally consistent palette of materials of brick, render and tiles in addition to strong building lines.
5. The proposed new dwelling would not reflect this pattern of development. It would be a single storey dwelling with no street frontage and occupying a position behind the general building line of properties addressing Becontree Avenue and divorced from this context. The lack of a street frontage would be

highly uncharacteristic of a dwelling in the area and inconsistent with the prevailing pattern of development.

6. It is noted by the appellant that the development amounts to a conversion in a mixed residential and commercial context. However, I consider that the use is significant and even though it may not necessarily be readily apparent in the locality, still changes the character of the area through the nature of its use.
7. While this location to the rear of a shop does not seem incongruous for a store room, used as a dwelling the building would read as an alien and divorced feature that would not have regard to its established character. The proposal would therefore cause harm to the character of the area and would conflict with Policies CP2 and CP3 of the CS, BP11 of the Barking and Dagenham Borough Wide Development Policies Development Plan Document (2011) (DPD), Policies D1, D4, GC4 and HC1 of the London Plan (2021) (LP). These policies promote high quality standards in relation to the design and layout of new buildings and spaces that protect and enhance the historic environment.
8. The Council also cite Policies SPDG1, SP2, and SP3 of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Draft Local Plan 2037 (DLP). I note that the draft plan is at Examination, and therefore at an advanced stage. However, at the current time it does not form part of the statutory development plan and I have not been made aware as to whether there are any unresolved objections in relation to the cited policies. I therefore attach limited weight to those policies in this decision.

Living conditions

9. The proposed dwelling is of a small size however it marginally exceeds the Nationally Described Space Standards and does benefit from a small rear garden. I consider the dwellings overall dimensions to be satisfactory in this regard. Rooms would have a dual aspect in addition to roof lights and would receive sufficient light. One aspect would be to the small rear garden that would offer a private outlook.
10. However, the proposed dwelling would be accessed by way of a relatively long, and narrow side access drive, which would apparently also be used to serve the exiting shop and is situated behind utilitarian metal gates. An access of this nature, shared with a commercial operation, would not present a welcoming entrance to the dwelling. Rather, it would highlight its separation from the street context and location to the rear of a business. Overall, the access arrangements would be uninviting to an extent that would harm the living conditions of the occupiers of the dwelling.
11. The positioning of the dwelling behind the gate may offer some sense of security for occupants. Conversely, this may also have the effect of highlighting the isolated position of the dwelling and its separation from the street.
12. The access arrangements would be unsatisfactory and would not offer a satisfactory sense of arrival at the dwelling to the detriment of the living conditions of the future occupants. The development therefore conflicts with Policies CP3 of the CS, Policies BP8 and BP11 of the DPD, Policies D4, D5 and D6 of the LP and the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Other Matters

13. I recognise that the appeal proposal would provide a new dwelling in an area of housing shortage. However, since I have concluded that the dwelling proposed would not provide satisfactory living conditions, I attach little weight to this and it does not outweigh the harm I have found.

Conclusion

14. I conclude that the proposed development would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the area and give rise to unacceptable living conditions for future occupants. As such, the proposal conflicts with the development plan, read as a whole and I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Nick Bowden

INSPECTOR