



Appeal Decision

Hearing held on 14 May 2024

Site visit made on 14 May 2024

by Jonathan Bore MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 24 May 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/24/3337943

Croydon Court Hotel, 597-603 London Road, Thornton Heath, London CR7 6AY

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Croydon Court Ltd against the decision of London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref is 23/02699/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the demolition of existing buildings at the rear and the construction of a three-storey rear extension to provide an additional 63 aparthotel guestrooms, the reconfiguration of the existing car parking layout and associated landscaping.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues in this case are, firstly, the effect of the scheme on the character and appearance of the site and locality; secondly, whether the scheme provides the right level of car parking in view of its public transport accessibility; and thirdly, the effect on highway safety and the free flow of traffic on London Road.

Reasons

The effect on the character and appearance of the site and the locality

3. The extension would occupy an open area at the rear of the hotel and its facade would face Dunheved Road North. It would be set back from the pavement edge so as to retain views of part of the back of the Croydon Court Hotel, and its buff brick would reflect the colours in the area. In scale it would have some commonality with the proposed extension to the adjacent Irvine Court, which has planning permission but has not been built.
4. But despite this, it would detract from the character of the area. Its reconstituted stone piers, long, vertically-paired window openings and flat-roofed metal clad top storey would be of a strikingly different design from the traditional pitched roof style of the original hotel and, despite being lower, it would not appear subservient to it. It would also clash in appearance with the brick villas in Dunheved Road North, as well as the traditionally clad pitched roofs and gables of some of the more recent buildings and extensions in the road. It is true that much architectural quality in the area is uninspiring, but

the scheme's deliberately contrasting style would appear intrusive and out of keeping in its surroundings. It was suggested at the hearing that a condition could be imposed which would allow a material other than metal for the top storey, but that would not do enough to ensure that the scheme respected the area's character.

5. The extension would also be deep, substantially filling the remaining open part of the plot, and would extend a long way down Dunheved Road North, removing the greenspace and parking at the rear of the building. Whilst there is clearly scope to make better use of urban land here, the scheme would represent an excessive amount of building on the plot, creating an over-hard appearance.
6. Parking would be re-provided at the front of the Croydon Court Hotel, but this would harm the street scene by taking away the only large remaining piece of greenspace at the front of the row of hotel buildings on London Road. The proposed tree planting would not sufficiently offset the harm. At the hearing a condition was suggested that would increase the space available for tree planting at the expense of a small number of parking spaces, but this would not go far enough to compensate for the loss of the greenspace.
7. The scheme would achieve biodiversity gain and would have green roofs and other green initiatives, and its urban greening factor would not be too far below the target of 0.3 recommended by London Plan Policy G5. However, these technical calculations do not tell the whole picture. In practice the development would result in a loss of pleasant greenspace in a position where it is of visual benefit and practical use.
8. The extension would come within 15 metres of kitchen and bedroom windows at Irvine Court, and obscure glazing would be needed in three of the hotel rooms to avoid a loss of privacy. This is symptomatic of the excessive scale of the proposal and its lack of sensitivity to its surroundings. The need for obscure glazing would be removed if the proposed extension to Irvine Court were built, but there is no certainty of this.
9. There is an extant planning permission for the redevelopment of the whole site, including the adjacent hotels, to provide a much larger hotel in a modern style. However, any scheme involving extensions rather than redevelopment must have appropriate regard to the characteristics of the existing buildings and the surrounding area.
10. In conclusion, the scheme would harm the character and appearance of the site and the locality. It would be contrary to London Plan Policy D3 and Croydon Local Plan Policies DM10 and SP4, which taken together seek to ensure that proposals are of high quality and respect the scale, height, massing, density and appearance of the area, and ensure that development in the grounds of an existing building is subservient to that building.

Whether the scheme provides the right level of car parking

11. The scale of the extension combined with the proposed ratio of 0.20 parking spaces per room would require car parking to be re-provided at the front of the hotel, causing a loss of greenspace, as discussed above. Some parking would be required to meet the operational needs of the hotel, but the scheme fails to take the opportunity to provide a level of parking commensurate with its high

public transport accessibility rating, contrary to Local Plan Policy DM30. This adds to the other objections to the scheme.

The effect on highway safety and the free flow of traffic

12. The proposed two-way access arrangement on to London Road would have some deficiencies. The opening is not especially wide, so even if the entrance had lane markings, there would be occasions when vehicles wishing to enter the site would need to wait in London Road to allow others to come out. It is also likely that some vehicles would need to swing into the oncoming lane on London Road to enter or leave the site. Moreover, the piers either side of the entrance would partly obstruct sightlines between drivers and pedestrians.
13. On the other hand, the access would serve a relatively small car park and would not be especially busy, and emerging drivers would be able to see oncoming pedestrians through the adjoining railings. The potential impact on the free flow of traffic would therefore not be severe, and highway safety would not be jeopardised, so the scheme would not conflict with Local Plan Policy DM29. However, this does not change the balance of my conclusions.

Other Matters

14. The Council did not pursue its reason for refusal in respect of drainage and flood risk. The finer details of cycle parking could probably be dealt with through modest design changes which could be sought by condition. The submitted draft unilateral obligation under s106 would satisfactorily address various Croydon Local Plan policies. The potential economic and visitor benefits that would arise from the scheme are not in dispute. But none of these matters alters my conclusions on the main issues.

Conclusion

15. I have considered all the other matters raised, but they do not alter my conclusions. For the reasons given above, the appeal is dismissed.

Jonathan Bore

INSPECTOR

APPEARANCES

FOR THE APPELLANT:

Herbert Lui	Studio Moren, Architecture
Richard Quelch	Q Square, Planning
Ignus Froneman	Cogent Heritage, Townscape
Chris Blamey	RGB Consulting, Engineers
Eva Vazaka	Space & Place Design, UGF/Landscape

FOR THE LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY:

George Clarke	Planning Officer, Croydon Council
Mary Toffi	Principal Transport Planner, Croydon Council
Georgina Betts	Deputy Team Leader, DM, Croydon Council

DOCUMENTS

Hearing statements on planning, design, urban greening, transport and townscape, and associated documents, from the appellant
Hearing statement and associated documents from the local planning authority
Statement of common ground
Draft s106 planning obligation
List of suggested conditions

PLANS

A-025-311 P1, A-025-204 P1, A-100-301 P5, A-025-202 P1, A-025-201 P1, A-000-300 P2, A-100-350 P2, A-050-201 P1, A-110-313 P2, 2304-DR-L-002 P1, A-050-202 P0, A-110-312 P1, A-100-304 P4, A-025-250 P1, A-025-205 P1, A-050-203 P0, A-170-302 P0, A-100-305 P3, 2304-DR-L-001 P1, A-025-203 P1, A-050-204 P0, A-100-302 P5, A-170-301 P0, A-100-303 P5, A120-311 P1, A-110-311 P1, 2304-DR-L-003 P2