



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 January 2025

by **A M Nilsson BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/M1595/W/24/3346516

13-15 Clarence Road, Grays RM17 6QA

- 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 Mr Kamran Ijaz of Old Street Holding against the decision of Thurrock Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 23/01141/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described as proposed roof conversion and mansard extension to the front of the building to provide an additional floor of accommodation and rear roof extension to provide two additional floors of accommodation. The extension to the building is proposed accommodate office space.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on 1) the character and appearance of the area, and 2) the living conditions of occupants of the neighbouring hostel, 17 Clarence Road, with regard to privacy, outlook, and noise and disturbance.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. The appeal property is a two-storey terrace building located within Grays Town Centre. It comprises two commercial units at the ground floor level and has a two-storey off-shoot to the rear. The property sits between the entrance to a small shopping centre and another two-storey property of similar design and scale.
4. The proposed development would involve the conversion of the existing roof to form a mansard extension and the creation of a further two floors of office space to the rear, one of which would also be in the form of a mansard roof.
5. Together with the adjacent commercial units leading towards Cart Lane, collectively these units have a consistency in their scale, design and rhythm. This consistency extends to the roof form whereby there is a pleasant harmony to their continuity in an otherwise varied town centre built environment.
6. The proposed development would harmfully disrupt this uniformity, breaking the otherwise uninterrupted roofscape across these properties. The level of intervention across the entire street facing roof slope, comprising of the mansard

and the dormer windows would cumulatively exemplify the harm that would be caused. I acknowledge that the adjacent shopping centre uses mansard style roofs, however this is part of a purpose-built development which the appeal building is clearly separate and delineated from. There is no compelling reason, in design terms, why the appeal building should align with the shopping centre. The resulting arrangement would appear inharmonious and juxtaposed.

7. At the rear, the proposed additional two floors would considerably add to the overall scale and mass of the building. Due to the increase in height above the frontage of the building it would fail to appear subservient or subordinate to the building it extends. Whilst the overall height would be similar to the off-shoot from the adjacent property, that property has a single ridge equivalent height as opposed to the more solid and bulkier appearance of the proposed addition. Given, however, the set back from the frontage, there would be a limited impact on the street-scene and I find that the harm caused by this element of the development would be secondary to that of the proposed alteration to the frontage.
8. I therefore conclude that, due to its overall design and scale, the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would be contrary to Policies CSTP22 and PMD2 of the Thurrock Local Development Framework (2015). These policies require, amongst other things, that developments are of a high-quality design, must contribute positively to the character of the area, and must promote a continuity of street frontages.

Living conditions

9. The appeal property sits adjacent to an existing hostel which extends from the rear of the adjacent commercial units on Clarence Road. The hostel element is across three storeys and includes windows in its side elevation which overlook the appeal site at the rear.
10. The Council raised concerns in relation to the impact of increased comings and goings at the appeal site due to the introduction of new office space. This somewhat contradicts the Council's finding that the proposed office use would not have a detrimental impact on the occupiers of the existing first floor residential accommodation, subject to conditions restricting hours of operation and capacity.
11. It is not clear why the imposition of such conditions would not also adequately mitigate any adverse impacts relating to the hostel accommodation. Given the town centre location, where there is an existing level of commercial activity, including at the rear of the site, I do not consider that the proposed development would cause harm to the living conditions of the occupiers of the adjacent hostel in terms of noise and disturbance, particularly given the opportunity to impose appropriate planning conditions were the appeal to have been allowed.
12. The proposed development would involve the increase in the scale and height of the building which is overlooked from the adjacent hostel. Due to this increase in scale and height, the development would adversely impact the outlook from windows of the hostel. However, the hostel, by definition, would not provide permanent residential accommodation for occupants, and this reduces the adverse weight to be given to the impact.
13. I acknowledge concerns expressed by the Council in terms of overlooking from the proposed dormer windows to the side of the development. This impact could be

overcome by the use of obscure glazing in the proposed development, and this could have been secured by planning condition had the appeal been allowed.

14. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would cause minor harm to the living conditions of occupants of the adjacent hostel in terms of outlook. It would be contrary to Policy PMD1 of the Thurrock Local Development Framework (2015) which outlines, amongst other things, that developments will not be permitted where they would cause, or likely cause, unacceptable effects on amenity.

Other Matters

15. The proposed development would result in the creation of new office accommodation. This would comply with the Government's objective of supporting economic growth as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) (the Framework). There is, however, no quantitative data submitted with the appeal to demonstrate the significance in terms of economic growth that would be delivered and therefore this limits the weight which can be given to this benefit.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

16. The harm that I have identified that would be caused to the character and appearance of the area and the minor harm to living conditions, attracts significant weight that outweighs the benefits associated with the proposed development.
17. The proposed development would therefore conflict with the development plan and there are no identified other considerations, including the Framework, that outweigh this conflict.
18. For the reasons set out above, and having had regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

A M Nilsson

INSPECTOR