



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 February 2025

by F Rafiq BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 March 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/A5840/W/24/3349833

Gabriel House and Walker House, Odessa Street, London SE16 7HQ

- 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 Tom Tanner (Southern Housing Ltd) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Southwark.
 - The application Ref is 24/AP/0786.
 - The development proposed is the retention of a communal bicycle store and proposed retrofit of the internal bicycle store to include steel stand.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. At the time of my visit, the bicycle store was already in place. The submitted plans reflect the development that has been undertaken. Amended plans were submitted to and accepted by the Council during the course of the application which showed a retrofitted steel stand internally within the store. These were considered by the Council before making its decision and I have determined the appeal on this basis.
3. I have utilised the description of development from the decision notice in my heading above as this more accurately describes the proposal than that on the application form.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on (i) the character and appearance of the area, and (ii) safety and the risk of crime.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site is a broadly rectangular area of land that is situated between two blocks of residential flats. The open areas between these blocks comprise of hardstanding areas for parking and access, grass amenity spaces with other areas containing various planting. Despite the long linear form of the four storey blocks, the open areas around them provide a spaciousness to the urban character of the area.
6. The bicycle store is situated in a prominent location, and highly visible from surrounding vantage points. Although it has only resulted in the removal of a small grassed area, it is a sizeable structure with the two units extending to 4.22m in

width and to a height of 2.15m. It would be smaller than existing outbuildings elsewhere on the estate and subservient to the nearby residential blocks, but its siting in an exposed location would result in it appearing conspicuous. Other outbuildings which I was able to see at the time of my visit are mainly formed of brick walling material unlike the appeal development, whose metal form would further draw attention to it. Although the use of metal as a durable material, can be found on balconies, walkways and railings, these features are on much larger buildings and are not comparable to the proposed cycle store which will be predominantly formed in a grey metal material. The on-street cycle stores are smaller and have a curved roof design which results in them appearing as considerably smaller structures than the appeal proposal. The use of orange signage, perforated panels and double doors would not overcome the harm by virtue of the store's prominent positioning, excessive scale and choice of materials.

7. I therefore conclude that the appeal development has an unacceptable impact on the character and appearance of the area. As such, it is contrary to Policies P13 and P14 of The Southwark Plan 2019-2036 and Policies D5 and D8 of The London Plan March 2021, which seek, amongst other matters, development that responds positively to the existing townscape, character and context.

Safety and Risk of Crime

8. The flat roof design of the cycle store gives rise to the potential for people to climb the structure. An alternative pitched roof may not eliminate such a risk, but such a scheme is not before me. Reference has been made to anti-climb measures such as paint as well as signage that could be effective as a deterrent. Whilst the visual effects of such measures will require consideration, to my mind, a suitably worded condition to address this matter would have been possible, had the development been otherwise acceptable.
9. I therefore conclude that appeal development is not unacceptable in relation to safety and the risk of crime. As such, there is no conflict with Policy P16 of The Southwark Plan 2019-2036 or Policy D11 of The London Plan March 2021, which seek, amongst other matters, development to minimise potential physical risks and for them to be designed with security measures that are proportionate to their use and function.

Other Matters

10. The cycle store encourages a sustainable form of travel as an alternative to the private car and provides residents with a place to store cycles that would prevent obstructions and fire safety issues elsewhere. The appellant has also set out that the design and location of the cycle store maximises usability as it is in a convenient location that benefits from lighting and natural surveillance. The current siting avoids the removal of any parking spaces or any established trees or vegetation, but I have not been provided with any substantive evidence that demonstrates that all potential locations between Gabriel House and Walker House have been considered. With this in mind, I attach moderate weight to these benefits.
11. The appeal site is not in a conservation area, nor near a listed building and given the size of the concrete base, it will not unacceptably increase flood risk. These are however neutral matters and not ones which weigh in favour of the development.

Planning Balance and Conclusion

12. I have found that the proposed development is harmful to the character and appearance of the area. This harm would be long lasting and would be contrary to the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework). I ascribe this substantial weight.
13. The appeal scheme's benefits attract moderate weight for the reasons set out. As such, they do not outweigh the harm identified.
14. I conclude that the proposal does not accord with the development plan as a whole, and there are no other considerations, including the Framework, that indicate that I should take a decision other than in accordance with this. The appeal is dismissed.

F Rafiq

INSPECTOR