



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 24 March 2025

by **G Ellis BSc (Hons) MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 April 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/24/3355762

132 St. Andrews Road, Coulsdon CR5 3HE

- 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 Andrew Christoforou against the decision of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref is 24/01311/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of existing dwelling to flatted accommodation creating two new dwellings (three total). Proposed single storey rear/side/front extension. First floor rear and side extension. Loft conversion and rear/side dormer. Internal alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural and Preliminary Matters

2. The Council has withdrawn its second reason for refusal in relation to ecology. It is confirmed that the details set out in the Ecology Appraisal and Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) Statement demonstrate that the site is of low ecological value and that appropriate provision for a 10% net gain of BNG could be achieved. These reports were part of the planning application but contained a “draft” watermark, which has now been removed; however, the content remains unchanged. As such, my considerations focus on reason for refusal 1 as set out in the decision notice.
3. As part of the appeal, the appellant has provided amended plans 576-14 Rev C and 576-15 Rev C, which make changes to the internal layout of Flat C. They do not substantially alter the scheme, and the Council and interested parties have had the opportunity to comment. I consider the implications of these amendments as part of my considerations below, but there would be no prejudice in accepting the amended plans.

Main Issue

4. The main issue is whether the development would provide acceptable living conditions for the occupiers of Flat C, with particular regard to the size of the accommodation.

Reasons

5. Flat C is a split-level design with the bedroom on the first floor and the living accommodation and bathroom within the roof space. The flat is denoted on the

- plans as having a Gross Internal Area (GIA) of 41 sqm and a 1-bedroom, 1-person dwelling.
6. Policy D6 of the London Plan 2021 (London Plan) incorporates the minimum space standards set out in the Government's 'Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard', March 2015 (NDSS). The standards relate to storey height and bedspaces. In line with the table, the minimum GIA for a 2-storey dwelling is 58 sqm, which the proposal falls significantly short of.
 7. It does exceed the minimum size for a 1-person, 1-storey space of 37 sqm; however, the NDSS explains that the table is organised by height to take into account the extra circulation space needed for stairs. As the appellant indicates, if the Government had wanted to set a GIA for a 2-storey "studio", it would have done so. Such an arrangement is not included, and therefore, the flat does not accord with the space standards.
 8. Notwithstanding that, I acknowledge that accommodation over two floors can offer benefits in terms of separating and defining rooms. The Council advocated a figure of 48 sqm as reasonable for the type of accommodation proposed, based on applying an uplift for the stairs/landing area equivalent to the increase in GIA between the 1-storey and 2-storey, 2-bedroom space requirements. Whilst somewhat arbitrary, it is not an unreasonable approach to add GIA for the circulation space. The Council advise that when this is excluded, the usable space for the flat is 35 sqm. There are no specific measurements indicated on the plans for the stair area, but this figure is not disputed by the appellant.
 9. The appellant suggests that the size of the flat could be increased by 3.3sqm, although this space is just highlighted on the amended plans and not directly incorporated into the flat. I agree with the Council that it is unclear how this would be achieved. Also, as the areas would be under 2.5m in height, it would alter the percentage to below the 75% minimum (based on Plan 576-21 A, which indicates that the area over 2.5m is 31 sqm).
 10. Removing the internal wall between the stairs and the bedroom does not alter the size of the flat, but it does increase the size of the bedroom. At approximately 14 sqm, it could accommodate a double bed and is of a sufficient size to be a 2-person space. While the space standards do not imply actual occupancy, it does further point towards the 2-storey space requirements being applicable.
 11. Flat C would be entirely accommodated within the proposed extension and loft conversion, and therefore, the space is not restricted by existing layout constraints. The arrangements for Flat C have been revised several times (Plan revisions A, B, and C), wherein amendments intended to address one issue have introduced others. To me, this suggests that the space is too constrained and that the changes are seeking to circumvent a requirement and maximise capacity, at the expense of designing a quality space. While the proposed flat may be usable, the space standards aim to raise the quality of new homes. The GIA requirements are minimums and exceeding them is encouraged.
 12. In addition, Flat C, as well as Flat B, do not have private amenity space as sought by policy DM10.4 of the Croydon Local Plan (2018). Whilst a reasonable-sized communal space would be provided, it adds to the concerns regarding the property's ability to accommodate the scale of development and the proposed level of occupancy.

13. The property does benefit from separate planning approval for the extensions and alterations (Council reference 23/03789/HSE), but those relate to the property as a single dwellinghouse. This proposal would result in the property accommodating three flats: 1 x three-bedroom- 6 bedspace, 1 x two-bedroom – 3 bedspace and 1 x one-bedroom – 1 bedspace.
14. The additional units would contribute to boosting the housing supply, accompanied by associated economic benefits. However, this must be balanced against other objectives. The supporting text to London Plan policy D6 supports Boroughs in resisting developments with floor areas significantly below the space standards, due to housing need, and in making efficient use of land. I have also not seen any evidence of a housing supply shortfall within the Borough. Whilst I accept the need for some flexibility, there is nothing before me to suggest that this is the only layout, or that the semi-detached property, which is the form of property replicated along the street, could not be optimised in other ways.
15. Therefore, in conclusion, I find that the design of Flat C does not comply with the space standards and conflicts with London Plan policy D6, as well as policies SP4 and DM10 of the Croydon Local Plan (2018), which promote high-quality design and establish standards for internal space requirements to support the living conditions of future occupiers.
16. The Council have not raised any concerns in relation to the impact of the development on the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties, nor that Flat C would not achieve adequate light. I have no reason to disagree, and therefore, I do not find direct conflict with DM10.6.

Conclusion

17. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan when considered as a whole, and there are no material considerations which indicate a decision other than in accordance with the development plan.
18. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G Ellis

INSPECTOR