
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 3 April 2025

by Ryan Cowley MPlan (Hons) MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 May 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/E5330/W/24/3354746

Garages at rear of 136 Woodhill, Woolwich, Greenwich SE18 5JL

- 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 Ethan Collins, on behalf of Blue Phoenix Developments, against the decision of the Council of the Royal Borough of Greenwich.
 - The application Ref is 24/1255/F.
 - The development proposed is a one bed end of terrace property.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. In the banner heading I have set out a truncated form of the description of development in the application form, omitting that which is unnecessary to accurately describe the scheme.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal site and surrounding area, including the Woolwich Common Conservation Area (CA).

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises an 'L' shaped parcel of land, extending beyond the rear boundary of 134 and 136 Woodhill and running along the side of No 136. It currently features a vehicular access and detached garage, which would be demolished as part of the proposal. The site is enclosed by timber fencing on all sides, with a metal access gate to the front.
5. This part of Woodhill sits in the north of the CA, within a narrow strip encompassing part of the street. In the vicinity of the appeal site, the CA is primarily characterised by a mix of semi-detached and terraced, 2 or 3 storey dwellings of traditional proportions and appearance. Within the street scene however there are examples of more contemporary architecture and several blocks of flats. Notably, the evidence indicates that the terrace of dwellings adjoining the appeal site was constructed in the 1960s.
6. The CA is centred around the historical aspects of both the Royal Military Academy within the Woolwich Barracks and Woolwich Common. In so far as it relates to this appeal, the significance of this part of the CA is derived from the

composition and traditional appearance of buildings and their historic relationship and contribution to the setting of Woolwich Common to the south.

7. The terrace adjacent to the appeal site is not of historic or architectural significance and, in this regard, its contribution to the significance of the CA is limited. Nevertheless, it remains well-preserved, and the dwellings are modest in scale. They appear well-balanced, with consistency across front elevations and in their relationships to the street. Overall, they do not detract from the prevailing character and appearance of the area and have a neutral effect on the CA.
8. The proposal would introduce a contemporary 2-storey dwelling adjoined to the existing end property at No 136. It would have an elongated wedge-shaped footprint, with a single storey rear projection. The dwelling would be very narrow at the front, appearing little more than half the width of the adjoining houses. The ground floor would sit at a lower level to that of its immediate neighbours. The proposal would feature tall, narrow, dark grey/green windows, misaligned to the white frames and wider openings of other windows in the terrace. The proposed brickwork, timber cladding and zinc roof would further differentiate it.
9. The proposal would thus be out of keeping with the existing terrace both in terms of its design and proportions. It would appear shoehorned in to the narrow space at the side of No 136, with the cramped nature of the development accentuated by the vertical emphasis of the proposed fenestration. The misalignment of windows and divergence in finishing materials would further unbalance the terrace. This would undermine the uniformity of the terrace, and its unassuming presence. In turn, it would become a detracting feature in the street scene. Notably, the Council's Conservation Officer objected to the application for similar reasons.
10. The proposal would thus have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the appeal site and surrounding area, including the Woolwich Common Conservation Area. It would conflict with Policies D3 and HC1 of the London Plan March 2021 and Policies H5, H(c), DH1, DH3 and DH(h) of the Royal Greenwich Local Plan Core Strategy with Detailed Policies Adopted 30 July 2014. These policies, among other provisions, seek to ensure that development proposals, including new residential development and development on backland and infill sites, achieve a high quality of design, enhance local context and respond to local distinctiveness, including through their layout, orientation, scale, appearance and shape, and maintain the character of the area. They also seek to ensure that proposals affecting heritage assets and their settings conserve their significance, and preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation areas.
11. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) indicates that decisions should promote an effective use of land while safeguarding the environment, and substantial weight should be given to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes. Significant weight should be given to outstanding or innovative designs that promote high levels of sustainability or help raise design standards, provided they fit in with the overall form and layout of the area. The Framework also seeks to significantly boost the supply of homes.
12. At the time of the decision, the Council only had 2.46 years of housing land supply (HLS). The proposal would therefore provide a valuable contribution to the local housing supply. The construction would provide a temporary boost in employment and additional residents may also contribute to the local economy and vitality of

the community. The development would use previously developed land in an existing urban area. However, given the harm identified above, the proposal would not fit in with the area, and it has not been demonstrated that the site is suitable.

13. With respect to paragraph 215 of the Framework, less than substantial harm would be caused to the significance of the CA, a designated heritage asset. Paragraph 212 of the Framework is clear that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. Having regard to the above matters and given the scale and context of the proposal, I consider the public benefits before me are modest and insufficient to outweigh the identified harm.

Other Matters

14. Paragraph 11(d) of the Framework indicates that the presumption in favour of sustainable development is engaged where the policies which are most important for determining the application are deemed out-of-date. This includes, for proposals involving the provision of housing, situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a 5-year HLS, such as in this case.
15. Paragraph 11(d) stipulates that planning permission should be granted, unless the application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed. Footnote 7 of the Framework confirms that such policies include those relating to designated heritage assets. As set out above, I consider that the policies within the Framework relating to proposals affecting heritage assets provide a clear reason for refusing the proposal, and therefore it would not benefit from the presumption in favour of sustainable development in this instance.
16. My attention has been drawn to the Grade II listed buildings located at 118 and 120 Woodhill, and Beresford Terrace. Sections 66(1) of the Act requires special regard to be given to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. The significance of both sets of buildings is derived from their historic fabric, including their traditional design features, materials and fenestration. They have special interest as relatively well-preserved and unified examples of the architecture of the period. Additionally, Beresford Terrace has historic associations with the nearby military institutions of Woolwich.
17. The proposed dwelling would be located some distance along the street from Nos 118 and 120 and, as these buildings are set further back from the footpath and the appeal site only occupies a narrow stretch of street frontage, the proposal would not feature prominently within the setting of the listed buildings. Likewise, the traditional features of Beresford Terrace are experienced primarily from Hillreach, on which the appeal proposal would have limited influence. The proposal would therefore not cause harm to the significance of the listed buildings or their setting. Notably, the Council's Conservation Officer did not highlight any concerns in respect of this matter, and it did not feature as a reason for refusal.
18. I understand that the proposal for this site has been amended since the previous planning application and appeal. However, this does not indicate that the appeal scheme before me is acceptable with regard to the main issue.
19. While the Council may not have visited the appeal site as part of their consideration of the appeal proposal, they indicate that they used digital means to

assess the scheme and had visited the site recently as part of their consideration of the previous planning application. In any event, this decision is based on my own observations and the evidence before me, and this does not lead me to a different conclusion on the main issue.

20. Other than where set out above, I have not identified conflict with any other relevant parts of the development plan or national policy and guidance. However, the absence of harm or development plan conflict with respect to other relevant matters weighs neither for nor against the proposal.

Conclusion

21. The proposal would conflict with the development plan, taken as a whole. I have found no material considerations that indicate the appeal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. Consequently, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

Ryan Cowley

INSPECTOR