



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 April 2025

by **J Heppell BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 5 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/24/3358036

99 Downlands Road, Purley, Croydon CR8 4JJ

- 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 Amandeep Kalra against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref is 24/02856/FUL.
 - The development proposed is to convert an existing 1.5 storey bungalow into a pair of sustainable semi-detached houses by adding an additional storey and roof.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appeal was accompanied by a Desk Based Phase 2 Botanical Assessment, in consequence of which the Council withdrew the second reason for refusal. I am satisfied that no party has been prejudiced, and I have therefore determined the appeal having regard to this assessment.

Main Issues

3. In light of the above, the main issue in this appeal is the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is situated in a mainly residential area notable for its significant levels changes. The site contains a detached chalet bungalow which sits above road level and is accessible by steps. Nearby properties comprise detached and semi-detached houses, along with a church located adjacent to the site and a care home further along Downlands Road. The proposal is to construct a pair of semi-detached houses.
5. The existing dwellings on the higher side of Downlands Road possess hipped roofs and projecting gables, in a style that was popular in the interwar period; where loft conversions have taken place, rooflights rather than dormer windows have generally been installed in the fronts of houses. The church, being a larger building, departs from this prevailing local character, but is nonetheless two storeys high with a roof pitch similar to nearby houses. It follows that the roofline of the buildings in Downlands Road, along with the style of the houses, are defining elements of the character and appearance of the area.

6. The chalet bungalow on the appeal site is the smallest property in the immediate area, and to that extent there is scope to intensify the residential use on the site, whilst respecting the character and appearance of the area, which the Council acknowledges. However, the roof design of the proposed houses would not respect the prevailing roofline in Downlands Road. The eaves would be too high and the pitch of the roof too steep, there would be an overreliance on a large crown roof, and the front and side dormers would be oversized and thereby exacerbate the bulk of the roof form. The result would be an overly dominant building which would conflict with the character of its surroundings.
7. Because of their height in relation to the relatively narrow floor plan, the proposed dwellings would have a pronounced vertical emphasis, at odds with nearby semi-detached houses which have a comparatively wide footprint in relation to their height. The appellant has drawn my attention to the aim of Policy DM10.1 of the Croydon Local Plan 2018 (CLP) of achieving a minimum height of three storeys. However, the policy does this in the context of promoting high quality proposals which respect the scale, height, massing and density of the surrounding area. Given my conclusion that the proposal would not reflect the local context, it cannot benefit from the encouragement given to three storey buildings.
8. Furthermore, despite the incorporation of arched windows and brick corbal patterns, the front elevations of the proposed houses would lack the articulation and detailing exhibited by existing houses in Downlands Road. Whilst new developments need not precisely replicate existing buildings, there is an expectation that they will adopt an appropriately contextual approach, which the appeal scheme does not do sufficiently.
9. The adverse effects I have identified would be exacerbated by the proposed car parking arrangements. Whilst a number of the houses on the higher side of Downlands Road have garages at street level, these are generally absorbed into the sloping ground at the front of the houses, such that the landscaped frontage to the houses is maintained. By excavating a large area to provide two parking spaces, a significant area of hard surfacing and a long retaining wall would be created, with consequent harm to the landscaped appearance of this side of the road.
10. I therefore conclude that the proposed development would harm the character and appearance of the area, in conflict with Policy D3 of the London Plan March 2021 and Policies SP4 and DM10 of the CLP. Together these policies advocate a design-led approach which optimises the capacity of sites while enhancing local context by, amongst other things, respecting the development pattern, layout and siting of the surrounding area, and ensuring that the design of roof-forms positively contributes to the character of the area.

Other Matters

11. The appellant's Desk Based Phase 2 Botanical Assessment confirms that the grassland on the site does not meet the criteria for priority habitat calcareous grassland and is of local value only. As such, the Council is satisfied that, were the appeal to be allowed, the matter could be controlled by a suitably-worded condition requiring the mitigation measures outlined in the report to be implemented in full. I see no reason to disagree with the Council and, had I been minded to allow the appeal, I would have attached a suitably-worded condition to this effect.

12. I note that the proposal would deliver two family homes on a sustainably-located brownfield site in accordance with the Council's aim of delivering 40% of its housing target to 2040 on small sites. I recognise that the proposal would bring an economic benefit to the area from Council Tax payments and the net spend of new residents, as well as creating jobs during the construction period. I further note that the proposed dwellings would be energy efficient with low carbon production. However, these benefits taken together are insufficient to outweigh the harm I have identified to the character and appearance of the area.
13. An interested party has highlighted the cumulative impact of recent developments on the area, including new flats which I noted on my site visit. I am nonetheless satisfied that the redevelopment of a single dwelling plot would not add to the cumulative impact of recent development such as to, by itself, conflict with Policy DM10 of the CLP.
14. Potential adverse impacts on the living conditions of 97 Downlands Road have been raised. Having viewed the appeal site from no 97, that property's side-facing secondary windows would retain a satisfactory outlook, notwithstanding the proposed increase in height, given that the proposed dwellings would occupy a similar footprint to the existing bungalow, which is set slightly forward of no 97.
15. The appellant has submitted a drainage strategy which demonstrates that surface water runoff can be satisfactorily controlled in order to prevent flooding. The amount of car parking proposed appropriately reflects local parking standards and would not give rise to highway danger.
16. An interested party has queried whether the proposed houses would be accessible since they rely on stepped access, but as I am dismissing the appeal, this issue is not determinative.

Conclusion

17. For the above reasons, the proposal conflicts with the development plan, when read as a whole. Material considerations do not indicate that a decision should be taken other than in accordance with the development plan. I therefore conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

J Heppell

INSPECTOR