



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 2 June 2025

by Mark Caine BSc (Hons) MTPL MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19 June 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/24/3355165

Ark Blake Academy, 6 Morland Road, Croydon CR0 6NA

- 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 Adam Satow of Ark Blake Academy against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref is 24/01883/FUL.
 - The development proposed is described as 'Installation of railings, fences and gates with access control systems to the front of the academy'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. I have used the description of the proposed development provided in the Council's decision notice as it is more concise than that provided in the application form.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area and highway safety.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appeal relates to a recently constructed modern secondary school that is situated in a predominantly residential area. The immediate surroundings typically comprise a mixture of terrace and semi-detached dwellings that are set back behind grassed areas or driveways with low boundary walls. These factors combine to present a relatively spacious layout and character.
5. The school appears to have been purposely designed to be set back from the Morland Road highway to enable a visible strip of public realm, which includes hardstanding, a narrow grass verge, trees and a low wall and rail along its frontage. This open hard and soft landscaped area respects and positively contributes to the spacious layout and character of Morland Road.
6. However, the proposal would enclose this area, and the entire frontage of the school and an adjacent car park. It would have an industrial and stark appearance, and result in the introduction of a visually obtrusive feature, made more significant by its height at approximately 2.4 metres, with little relief from its continuous expanse.

7. Its substantial length, prominent position and design would thereby result in the introduction of a dominant and conspicuous enclosure that would be at odds with the prevailing spacious character of the immediate area. The discordant effect of the proposal would be clearly visible from several vantage points along Morland Road and a number of neighbouring properties.
8. As such, I find that the proposed development would cause unacceptable harm to the character and appearance of the area. It would thereby conflict with Policies SP4 and DM10 of the Croydon Local Plan 2018 (Local Plan) and Policies D3, D5 and D8 of the London Plan 2021 (London Plan). These seek, amongst other matters, high quality design that respects the local context.

Highway Safety

9. No pedestrian visibility splays have been provided by either main party. The nearest gate and sections of fencing to the car park's vehicular access would be of a weld mesh design. However, given their height and proximity to the adjacent footway and this vehicular access I am unable to be certain that visibility would not be impeded, particularly at busier times, for children who may find it difficult to see even above lower boundary treatments. There is also little evidence before me to substantiate that the use of mirrors, CCTV and monitors would mitigate or overcome this harm.
10. Accordingly, I am unable to conclude that the proposed development would not increase the risk of conflict between users of the highway and cause unacceptable harm to highway safety. It would therefore fail to accord with Policies SP8 and DM30 of the Local Plan and Policy T4 of the London Plan. Amongst other things, these require development to not increase road danger or have a detrimental impact on highway safety for pedestrians, cyclists and private vehicles.

Other Matters

11. I am mindful of the security needs of the school. However, I have seen no specific evidence to the effect that the school has been the subject of crime, anti-social behaviour or safeguarding risks, due to the absence of frontage fencing and gates. Moreover, it has not been clearly demonstrated that the proposal is the only practical means of ensuring the immediate security of the site.
12. The appellant's disappointment with the Council's processing of the application, in respect of it not being determined by the planning committee is also noted. Nevertheless, this has not had any bearing on my decision as I have only had regard to the planning merits of the proposal that is before me. In addition, the level of local residents' or MP support or objection for a scheme are not determining factors in the consideration of an appeal.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons given above, the proposed development conflicts with the development plan and there are no material considerations that warrant taking a decision otherwise than in accordance with it. The appeal should therefore be dismissed.

Mark Caine

INSPECTOR