



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 19 September 2025

by Gary Deane BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23 September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/G5750/W/25/3367994

686 Romford Road, Manor Park, Newham, London E12 5AJ

- 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 Harbinder Pal Gogna against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Newham.
 - The application reference is 25/00663/FUL.
 - The development proposed is to divide existing E(a) retail unit into two E(a) retail units, the installation of a new shop front facing First Avenue, new door for existing retail unit facing First Avenue.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural matters

2. The name of the appellant is given as M/S Zaavia Limited on the planning appeal form, whereas the name appearing on the application form lodged with the Council is Mr Harbinder Pal Gogna. As the right of appeal rests solely with the original applicant, I have proceeded on the basis that Mr Harbinder Pal Gogna is the appellant in this case.
3. The address of the site stated on the planning appeal form is 686A Romford Road. I have assumed that this is an error, given that the address of the site provided on fascia sign at the front of the appeal premises, the application form and the decision notice is 686 Romford Road.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on the vitality and viability of Newham's town and local centres, and on the character and appearance of the local area.

Reasons

Newham's town and local centres

5. Policy J2 of the Newham Local Plan 2018 (LP) identifies the site as being within a Micro Business Opportunity Area (MBOA). MBOAs are defined as areas that are considered to have potential to provide for incubator and micro business space. The accompanying text to LP Policy J2 makes clear that such uses should not be of a scale that would cause town centre impacts.

6. The proposal is primarily to subdivide the existing ground floor retail unit and introduce a shopfront to the side return of No 686, which faces First Avenue. The appellant states that no additional retail floorspace would be created nor would a new use result. Nevertheless, the proposal would create an extra retail unit and introduce a visually strong commercial presence in the street scene along First Avenue. The appeal scheme may also intensify commercial and pedestrian activity in and around the appeal premises.
7. The LP defines retail development as a town centre use. As such, the proposal is also subject to the requirements of LP Policies J1 and INF5, which direct such uses to designated town and local centres first. That focus is intended to maximise the effect on the vitality and viability of the designated centres in terms of spend through, for instance, linked trips. It also takes advantage of the accessibility and pedestrian movements that are already evident within these locations. As the site falls outside a designated centre, it would conflict with these policies.
8. Each of the 2 retail units would be small scale and the appellant states that the appeal scheme would create 3 additional jobs that would benefit the local economy. Even so, the proposal would not be an exception to allowing small employment business to be located within MBOAs, as set out in LP Policy J2.
9. On the first main issue, I conclude that the proposed development would have a harmful effect on the vitality and viability of Newham's town and local centres. It therefore conflicts with LP Policies S1, SP6, SP7, J2 and INF5, and Policies SD6, SD7 and E9 of The London Plan (TLP). Combined, these policies seek to maintain the health of town and local centres, including a robust retail provision. It is also contrary to the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) insofar as they seek to ensure the vitality of town centres.

Character and appearance

10. The appeal premises occupy a prominent corner position at the junction of Romford Road and First Avenue with a ground floor shopfront that wraps around the front corner of the building. The existing shop primarily faces Romford Road, which is predominantly commercial in character. During the mid-day site visit, there was a steady flow of traffic along this highway, the footways were well-used and the commercial premises fronting Romford Road appeared to be generally busy. The resultant vibrancy of this area contrasted markedly with the relatively quiet and calm conditions and the settled residential character of First Avenue, with its orderly residential terraces and limited street activity.
11. The proposed shopfront would introduce a sizeable shopfront to the First Avenue elevation of No 686 together with a new glazed entrance door. As a result, the side return of the appeal premises would more closely resemble that of a shop typically found within a commercial area or a town centre. When seen from First Avenue, the commercial appearance of the new shopfront would be incongruous and obtrusive within its predominantly residential context. Although I saw that some existing buildings in the local area include some commercial features such as advertising, these properties were generally of poor design quality. To my mind, new development should aim to achieve high design standards, in line with the expectations of planning policies at the national and local levels.
12. The Council's Urban Design and Conservation Officer is also critical of the submitted design, the materials to be used and the lack of detail in relation to the

intended signage and security shutters and grills. However, these matters could be covered by conditions if the appeal scheme were otherwise acceptable.

13. Nevertheless, I conclude on the second main issue that the proposed development would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the local area. Accordingly, it is contrary to LP Policies S6, SP1, SP3 and SP8, and TLP Policies D1, D3, D4 and D8. Together, these policies seek to deliver good design that is appropriate to the context of the local area. It is also at odds with the Framework, which states that development should be sympathetic to local character and add to the overall quality of the area.

Other matters

14. I share the Council's view that the living conditions of others would not be adversely affected by the proposal. There is no persuasive evidence that the appeal scheme would lead to a significant increase in on-street parking. Conditions could also be imposed to cover the arrangements for waste storage. However, these considerations do not outweigh the significant harm that I have identified.
15. The Officer's Report notes that the site is within the zone of influence of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (as amended) require the decision maker to undertake an Appropriate Assessment where there are likely significant effects caused by proposals, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects. The Officer's report concludes that the proposal is outside of the scope of the Epping Forest Mitigation Strategy and that it would generate no likely significant effect to the SAC in terms of increased recreational pressure. As I am dismissing the appeal for other reasons, there is no need for me to carry out any further assessment.

Conclusion

16. Overall, the proposed development conflicts with the development plan, when read as a whole. There are no material considerations, including those of the Framework, which indicate that the decision should be taken otherwise than in accordance with the development plan.
17. For the reasons set out above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Gary Deane

INSPECTOR