
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 26 August 2025

by **F Rafiq BSc (Hons) MCD MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 25th September 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/25/3360045

42 Vulcan Way, Croydon CR0 9UG

- 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 Bamidele Adeoye (Generations of God Church International UK (GGCI)) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref is 24/02147/FUL.
 - The development proposed is the change of use class from commercial unit (B2 General industrial) to place of worship (F1(f) Public worship or religious instruction).
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matter

2. The change of use to a place of worship has already been undertaken and reflected the plans before me. For clarity, I have dealt with the appeal based on the submitted plans.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the appeal proposal:
 - on the availability of employment land,
 - on highway safety in relation to car and cycle parking provision, and refuse/recycling collections, and
 - on biodiversity.

Reasons

Employment land

4. Policy SP3 of the Croydon Local Plan 2018 (Local Plan) sets out a '4-Tier' approach to the retention and redevelopment of land and premises relating to industrial/employment activity. Within Tier 1, which the appeal site falls in, an approach involving the strong protection for industrial and warehousing activities with no loss of Class B floor space is set out.
5. The development subject of this appeal has resulted in the loss of an industrial unit in a location where Local Plan Policy SP3 envisages no uses such as a place of worship being permitted given that 'Tier 1' locations are of the most economic importance to the Borough.

6. The Local Plan sets out support for the provision of places of worship, but Local Plan Policy DM19 also states that community uses should comply with the criteria for D1¹ class uses in industrial locations as set out in Table 5.1 of the Local Plan. Unlike 'Tiers 2-4', which allow changes of use or redevelopment to community facilities, this table seeks to safeguard Tier 1 sites for continued industrial uses.
7. Although reference has been made to a temporary permission and that the site does not require significant physical alteration and could function as an industrial unit in the future, this would not negate harm from the loss of employment land in a location where the Council has set out requires the highest level of protection for industrial and warehousing activity.
8. I therefore conclude that the appeal proposal has had an unacceptable impact on the availability of employment land. As such, it is contrary to Local Plan Policy SP3, which seeks, amongst other matters, to protect all 'Tier 1' existing industrial and warehousing sites.

Highway safety

9. The place of worship subject of this appeal is already operating and information has been provided on the number of vehicles travelling to the site, which is based on actual rather than anticipated attendance. Although no parking stress surveys have been provided, the use has been operating for a number of months and there is no substantive evidence before me that this has given rise to harmful impacts on highway safety as a result of car parking arising from the change of use to a church. The greatest number of cars are on Sundays, when businesses in the area are largely closed and as such, I consider there is on-street capacity to accommodate the parking demand generated by this development.
10. In relation to cycle parking and refuse/recycling collections, although little details have been provided, I was able to see that there is space within the site to provide cycle parking provision. Similarly, given the site is situated in an industrial/commercial area that regularly sees large vehicle movements, I have no reason to find that the servicing needs of the appeal development in relation to refuse/recycling collections could not be satisfactorily accommodated. These are therefore matters that could have been addressed by suitable conditions, had the development been otherwise acceptable.
11. I therefore conclude that the appeal proposal has not had a significant adverse effect on highway safety with regards to car and cycle parking provision or refuse/recycling collections. As such, it is not contrary to Local Plan Policies SP8, DM13, DM29 or DM30 or Policies T4, T5, T6 of The London Plan, which seek to ensure, amongst other matters, that highway safety is not compromised by the provision of car parking. The appeal proposal also does not conflict with Paragraph 116 of the National Planning Policy Framework (Framework), which states that development should only be prevented or refused on highway grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe.

Biodiversity

12. The Council's third reason for refusal related to insufficient information being provided to allow a full assessment of the biodiversity aspects of the development.

¹ Which includes Class F1 (f) following the changes to the Use Classes Order

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment² along with a Biodiversity Net Gain Exemption Statement³ have been provided with the appeal, which confirm that the proposal is exempt from demonstrating a 10% biodiversity net gain, and that there are no direct impacts to any habitats of biodiversity value. The Council considers that the additional information has addressed the third reason for refusal, and I have no reason to disagree.

13. Given the above, I conclude that the appeal proposal does not cause unacceptable harm to biodiversity. As such, it does not conflict with Local Plan Policy DM27 and Policy G6 of The London Plan, which seek, amongst other matters, to have no adverse impact on land with biodiversity value. It also does not conflict with Paragraph 187 of the Framework, which seeks to minimise impacts on and provide net gains for biodiversity.

Other Matters

14. The proposal meets the needs of the Christian community, providing a range of worship and community services. I have not however been provided with any information on alternative facilities that have been considered which are not in a 'Tier 1' existing industrial and warehousing location. Nevertheless, the proposal by providing this community facility, receives support from the development plan and national policy.
15. The external alterations of the appeal development are acceptable in terms of the effect of the character and appearance of the area, and there is no detrimental impact on living conditions. These are however neutral considerations and not ones which weigh in favour of the development.

Conclusion

16. I have found that the proposal has had an unacceptable impact on the loss of a 'Tier 1' industrial site which is of most economic importance to the Borough. Imposing a temporary permission would not overcome the harm and I attach substantial weight to this finding against the appeal.
17. My findings that the development causes no unacceptable harm to highway safety or in relation to biodiversity does not count for or against the appeal. The provision of the church, which provides for the needs of the community, is a positive consideration which weighs in its favour. However, given the lack of consideration of alternative facilities, I attach moderate weight to the benefits of the development, and this does not outweigh the harm that I have found on the loss of a 'Tier 1' industrial site.
18. Religion is an identified protected characteristic under the terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty set out under s149 of the Equality Act 2010 and I have a duty to have due regard to protected characteristics with the aim of avoiding discrimination and to proactively seek equality. For the reasons set out, I conclude that it is proportionate and necessary to dismiss the appeal.

F Rafiq

INSPECTOR

² Arbtech (6 January 2025)

³ Arbtech (20 January 2025)