



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 23 April 2026

by **S Burch BSc MSc MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 20 May 2026

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/25/3360431

129-131 Brighton Road & 6-8 Station Approach Road, Coulsdon CR5 2NJ

- 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 Mahan against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
- The application Ref is 24/02203/FUL.
- The development proposed is described as the 'proposed creation of 4no. commercial units for use as offices (Use Class E(g)(i)) at ground floor and retention of ground floor front railing and wall opening along Station Approach Road, creation of rear courtyard, installation of replacement windows and relocation of cycle and refuse storage.'

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. For reasons of precision, I have taken the address used in the heading above from the appellant's design and access statement. The address provided in the application and appeal forms does not include 131 Brighton Road or the units on Station Approach Road, which are clearly included in the red line location plan.
3. I have taken the description of development used in the heading above from the submitted application form. I have however removed the reference to the development being part retrospective, as this is not a form of development.
4. The appeal site is subject to complex planning history. Parts of the Council's reasoning compares the proposed development to various approved schemes¹. However, based on the evidence before me, none of these approvals included planning conditions or obligations which required the works at the appeal site to be implemented prior to any of the flats, or other parts of the development, being constructed. Given this, I have assessed the appeal based on the existing and proposed plans before me.

Main Issues

5. The main issues in this appeal are:
 - the effect of the proposed development on the vitality of the Coulsdon District Centre; and
 - whether the proposed development would provide adequate cycle storage.

¹ 16/04441/FUL, 19/00198/FUL, 19/00140/FUL & 20/04396/FUL

Reasons

Vitality

6. According to the submitted plans, the existing uses of the units to the front of the site, on Brighton Road, are as former A1 uses (now various class E uses). The units to the rear, along Station Approach Road are former B1(b) and B1(c) uses (now use class Eg(ii) and E(g)(iii)).
7. The Council have confirmed that the site is situated within a District Centre, Primary Shopping Area and a Secondary Retail Frontage. However, it then goes on to state that the unit at 6 Station Approach Road is not part of any retail frontage.
8. Regarding the units at 129-131 Brighton Road, Policy DM4 of the Croydon Local Plan 2018 (CLP) states that within the borough's District and Local Centres development proposals and changes of use on the ground floor must accord with the requirements of Table 5.3. This table confirms that offices are acceptable in principle within Secondary Retail Frontage areas as long as it results in an active frontage and does not undermine the retail function of the frontage.
9. As set out by the Council, no alterations to the street frontage are proposed beyond new fenestration, and the proposal would retain the existing street frontage. In this regard, the proposal would retain an active frontage. Retail uses would continue to occupy most ground floor units in the retail frontage area. Accordingly, the scheme would not undermine the retail function of the frontage along Brighton Road. The use of the units at 129-131 Brighton Road as offices is considered acceptable.
10. With regards to the units, along Station Approach Road, as set out above, the evidence indicates that their existing lawful use is for research and development of products or processes and industrial processes. The Council therefore contend that this part of the site is designated as a 'Tier 3/Town Centre Industrial Location,' under Policy SP3 of the CLP. This is not disputed by the appellant.
11. Policy SP3 seeks to offer protection for industrial and warehousing activities. It sets out that planning permission for offices, amongst other uses, will only be granted if various criteria can be met. One of these criteria require there to be no demand for the existing premises. To this end evidence will need to be submitted that a marketing exercise has been undertaken for a minimum of 18 months at a price commensurate with the value of the site for the permitted uses and that active promotion has been undertaken by agents marketing the site.
12. Google street view images, showing a sign on the appeal property on Station Approach which reads 'Commercial Premises to Let' have been submitted. The images are dated April 2021 and July 2023 and the appellant sets out that there was no interest in renting the property. No further sales particulars, verification from the advertising agent relating to interest, or information relating to rental prices has been submitted. Accordingly, insufficient evidence has been submitted to demonstrate the units along Station Approach Road were actively promoted, the price was commensurate with the value of the site, and following this, that there was no demand or interest. Whilst sales particulars relating to the units along Brighton Road have been submitted, as set out above, the use of these units as offices would be acceptable.

13. The appellant contends that there is a need for office space in Croydon and Coulsdon. However, there is no substantive evidence before me to demonstrate this.
14. To conclude, although the use of the units along Brighton Road as offices would be acceptable, it has not been satisfactorily demonstrated that there is no demand for the existing use of the units along Station Approach Road. In this regard, the scheme would harm the vitality of the District Centre. The scheme would therefore be contrary to Policies DM4 and SP3 of the CLP and Policies E2 and E4 of the London Plan (2021) (LP). Collectively, amongst other matters, these policies seek to protect various industrial activities and thus ensure the vitality of District Centres.

Cycle storage

15. The evidence before me sets out how cycle storage for various other approved applications at the wider site was not implemented. This appeal therefore seeks to rectify this breach and provide cycle storage on site for the residents and visitors of the flats on the upper floors of the building, as well as staff and visitors of the commercial units.
16. According to the evidence, a total of 19 cycle spaces, to include 2 visitor spaces should be provided on site. The Council accept that the number of spaces provided is acceptable. However, concerns are raised regarding their location and design.
17. To access the cycle storage for the commercial units, users would have to travel through a bin store in a narrow corridor with multiple bends. This would be awkward and impractical and potentially discourage future users from cycling to and from the site. The visitor space for the commercial units would be located in the lobby of the units along Brighton Road. It is therefore unclear if visitors of the units along Station Approach Road would be able to use this space, particularly if the units along Brighton Road were closed.
18. The residential cycle parking would be located in the lobby of 6 Station Road. This would mean that the residents of flats at 4 Station Road would have to access the lobby of other flats to store their bicycle. This would be inconvenient, impractical and potentially unneighbourly. The positioning of the residential visitor spaces would also be inconvenient given its inadequate width and the adjacent pillar, which would create issues for access.
19. The bicycle stands would be two tier. However, based on the evidence before me, they would not benefit from adequate aisle width to allow residents to manoeuvre bicycles on and off the stands. It has also not been demonstrated that wider adaptive bicycles could be accommodated within the store.
20. Overall, for the reasons set out, the scheme would fail to provide adequate cycle storage. It would be contrary to Policy DM10 and DM30 of the CLP and Policy T5 of the LP. Collectively, amongst other matters, these policies seek to remove barriers to cycling.

Other Matters

21. The scheme may ensure adequate refuse storage and fire safety in accordance with guidelines. These are however considered neutral factors which do not weigh in favour of, nor against, the appeal.
22. The scheme would create office space in an area well served by public transport. The appellant contends that the scheme would also enhance the existing property. However, it is unclear how this would be achieved as the changes proposed to the exterior of the building are relatively minimal. At most, I afford the benefits limited weight in favour of the appeal. The weight afforded to these benefits would not outweigh the harm identified above.

Conclusion

23. The proposal would conflict with the development plan as a whole and there are no other considerations which outweigh this finding. Therefore, for the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal is dismissed.

S Burch

INSPECTOR