

Section '4' - Applications recommended for REFUSAL or DISAPPROVAL OF DETAILS

Application No : 15/03169/FULL1

Ward:
Cray Valley East

Address : Old School Studio Main Road St Pauls
Cray Orpington BR5 3HQ

OS Grid Ref: E: 547393 N: 169120

Applicant : Mr Joel Vian

Objections : YES

Description of Development:

Proposed conversion of existing school building into 1x 3 bed, 1x 2 bed and 1x studio apartments facilitated by the raising of the ridge, introduction of dormer windows, alterations to the elevations and access ramp to front entrance.

Key designations:

Conservation Area: St Pauls Cray
Areas of Archeological Significance
Biggin Hill Safeguarding Birds
Biggin Hill Safeguarding Area
London City Airport Safeguarding
London City Airport Safeguarding Birds
Local Distributor Roads
Smoke Control SCA 20

Proposal

Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the existing school studio to three separate residential units. Apartment 1 is proposed to be located to the front of the building. The apartment will host two bedrooms at first floor level with a void allowing views down to the ground floor level from the upper floors. Apartment 2 proposes a studio mezzanine apartment with a bed deck and open plan ground floor. Apartment 3 proposes three bedrooms (one at ground floor and two at first floor) with an open living ground floor area, encompassing the existing outbuilding to the northern elevation. Alterations to the elevations are proposed including the raising of the ridge to allow for a clerestory roof feature, access ramp to the front elevation and conservation roof lights. No off street parking is proposed and gardens for the use of apartment 1 and 3 are located to the rear of the building.

Location

The site is located on the eastern side of Main Road within St Pauls Cray. The building forms an original cluster of school buildings including both the School Hall and the School House which are both within residential occupation. The group of buildings, along with the cottages to the north, are locally listed and lie adjacent to

the Grade II* statutory listed church to the south (St Paulinus). The site is also located within the St Pauls Cray Conservation Area.

Consultations

Nearby owners/occupiers were notified of the application and representations were received which can be summarised as follows:

- The land at the rear adjoins my property and I have been maintaining it at the request of the Council for the past 26 years.
- The current plans put a footpath and access gate on this land which will cause security and privacy issues.
- There is a pond at the rear which holds a variety of wildlife
- There is a retaining wall to the rear which will cause considerable damage to my property.
- Part of the proposal uses part of the land that my neighbour has occupied for the past 25 years, this will cause unnecessary stress and upset for an old couple.
- The access and new gate leading to the path between the old school and the church will be circa 4ft below the retaining wall to the side of 31 Gardiner Close. This will not be difficult to climb over and exit the side gate.
- I am concerned that the plan submitted includes part of my property - namely a strip of land at the end of the garden designated as garden for apartment 3. I request a hold on this application due to the boundary dispute. In addition I am concerned that the school buildings are locally listed and are restricted with regard to external appearance due to the listing. I fail to see how the plans submitted conform to this listing.
- The proposed frontage on the road is not in keeping with the environment in the centre of St Paul Cray.
- The proposed pathway will need light which will intrude on mine and my neighbours privacy and directly looks into my living area.
- The proposed terrace of the 3 bedroom apartment overlooks our kitchen windows which when in use will affect our privacy.
- The proposal to raise the ridge height will restrict the daylight entering our property
- There is no provision for parking
- The plans include no safeguarding measures for the shared common wall and services
- I have concerns regarding the ridge line. I am uncertain as to the impact of the dormer windows as I do not have sight of the plan.
- The raising of the ridge by 0.8m will block out more light and sun into our garden and possibly house especially in the winter months
- The plans reference windows facing the church but no reference is made to our garden or the old school house
- All windows viewable to the Old School House on the ground floor should be frosted and unable to open. The raised slate roof lights overlook our garden and house and should be frosted and unable to open.
- The clerestory is head high and people can see out of this into our garden

- Concerned regarding the maintenance of the appearance and heritage of the school studio in keeping with that of the old school house and school hall.

Comments from Consultees

The Advisory Panel for Conservation Areas has objected stating that the first floor installation is not sympathetic to the design of the locally listed building and overlooks the surrounding areas.

Thames Water - No Objection

Drainage - No Comments

Highways- There is no parking provided with the units. The site is within a very low (1a) PTAL area and so residents are likely to own vehicles. A Lambeth type parking stress survey was supplied with application carried out with photographs indexed on a plan. Residents are likely to want to park as close to their property as possible. In both surveys there is parking available for more than 3 vehicles in the vicinity of the site. On that basis I would raise no objection to the application.

Registered footpath 157 runs along the southern boundary of the application site. It is outside of the site and should not be affected by the granting of planning permission. However, due to its close proximity to the development, the applicant should be made aware, by means of an informative attached to any permission, of the need to safeguard pedestrians using the route, and that it must not be damaged or obstructed either during, or as result of, the development.

Conservation Officer - The proposal drawings are not particularly good in terms of presentation but nonetheless the main changes would be the ramp at the front and the roof/clerestory extension on the central spine roof which would be visible from the church and the adjacent close but not the street. There is a heritage benefit to reusing the building and subject to exterior material conditions I raise no objections

Planning Considerations

The application falls to be determined in accordance with the following policies of the Unitary Development Plan and the London Plan:

BE1 Design of New Development
BE10 Development affecting a locally listed building
BE11 Conservation Areas
H1 Housing Supply
H7 Housing Density and Design
H11 Residential Conversions
C1 Community Facilities
T18 Road Safety
T3 Parking
NE7 Development and Trees

SPG1
SPG2

St Paul Cray Conservation Area SPG

London Plan Policies:

3.3 Increasing Housing Supply
3.4 Optimising Housing Potential
3.5 Design and Quality of Housing Developments
3.8 Housing Choice
5.1 Climate Change
5.2 Minimising Carbon Dioxide Emissions
5.3 Sustainable Design and Construction
6.9 Cycling
6.13 Parking
7.2 An inclusive environment
7.3 Designing out crime
7.4 Local character
7.6 Architecture
7.15 Noise
8.3 Community infrastructure levy

National Planning Policy Framework

Planning History

02/02937/FULL1 - Formation of doorway in existing outbuilding wall to provide access to Garden Cottages - Permitted

Conclusions

The main issues in this case are whether this type of development is acceptable in principle in this location, the likely impact of the proposed scheme on the character and appearance of the surrounding area, and on the amenities of neighbouring residential properties, having particular regard to the indicative layout and design of the proposed scheme, and the impact upon the St Paul Cray Conservation Area, Locally Listed Building and neighbouring II* Listed church.

The application site was visited by the case officer and the aims and objectives of the above policies, national and regional planning guidance, all other material planning considerations including any objections, other representations and relevant planning history on the site were taken into account in the assessment of the proposal.

Principle of Development

Policy C1 states that a proposal for a development or change of use that meets identified health, education, social, faith or other needs of particular communities or areas of the Borough will normally be permitted provided that it is accessible by

modes of transport other than the car and accessible to the members of the community it is intended to serve. Planning permission will not be granted for proposals that would lead to the loss of community facilities unless it can be demonstrated that there is no longer a need for them or alternative provision is to be made in an equally accessible location. The school has evidently been used within a residential capacity since its closure however there is no planning history to this effect. One letter has been submitted as part of the planning statement from Clarkson, Wright and Jakes Solicitors stating that the previous owner of the School house died in February 2009. That owner purchased the property in 1996 to use as her main residence. Council tax records show that the Studio has been in residential use since 1993 and it is therefore the accepted lawful use of the building.

Policy H11 states that a proposal for the conversion of a single dwelling into two or more self contained residential units or into non self-contained accommodation will be permitted provided that the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring dwellings will not be harmed by loss of privacy, daylight or sunlight or by noise and disturbance; the resulting accommodation will provide a satisfactory living environment for the intended occupiers; on street or off street parking resulting from the development will not cause unsafe or inconvenient highway conditions nor affect the character or appearance of the area; and the proposal will not lead to the shortage of medium or small sized family dwellings in the area.

The building has been previously been used within a residential capacity however the exact layout of the units is unknown except for the front portion of the building as indicated on the existing floor plans. The principle of conversion will therefore come down to the scheme satisfactorily addressing the above criteria.

Design

The proposed scheme would include the construction of a clerestory roof feature which would require the ridge height of the central portion of the school building to be raised by 0.8m, and also a dormer window to the rear of Apartment 1. Roof lights are proposed along the south elevation with a pitched glazed roof proposed to the existing toilet outbuilding, which is to become part of the residential accommodation for apartment 3. A canopy and access ramp is proposed to the front elevation to provide level access to the units.

The design alterations to the ridge height and introduction of the dormer window, conservation roof lights and clerestory roof addition would be contained to the rear of the building and will not be visible from the highway. The pitched roof over the existing outbuilding to the northern elevation will be sited 1m above the existing boundary wall, however, this pitches away from Garden Cottages minimising the views of this addition. The clerestory roof feature will be visible from both the north and south of the site, however the Conservation Officer raises no objection to the impact on the setting or special interest of the adjacent Listed Building or locally listed cottages.

In terms of design, Members may consider that the application is acceptable subject to conditions for the submission of materials and larger scaled drawings given the sensitive location of the application site.

Standard of accommodation

The London Plan and London Plan Housing SPG set out minimum floor space standards for dwellings of different sizes. These are based on the minimum gross internal floor space requirements for new homes relative to the number of occupants and taking into account commonly required furniture and spaces needed for different activities and moving around, in line with Lifetime Home Standards. The quality of the proposed accommodation needs to meet these minimum standards.

Policy BE1 in the Adopted UDP states that the development should respect the amenity of occupiers of future occupants.

Apartment 1 proposes a GIA of 86sqm exceeding the London Plan standard. Apartment 2 proposes a floor area of 60sqm exceeding the London Plan Standard. Apartment 3 proposes a floor area of 120 sqm exceeding the London Plan Standard.

The Mayor's Housing SPG requires all new residential development to meet minimum good practice sizes. Whilst it is difficult to ascertain from the drawings, concern is raised with regards to the quality of first floor accommodation throughout the development, the majority of which falls below 2.5m which is the baseline London Plan Standard. Concerns are specifically raised with regards to Apartment 3 of which a large majority of first floor headroom falls below 1.8m in height.

With regard to Apartment 1, it is noted that the ground floor open plan living area and first floor open bedroom decks have apertures facing onto the access ramp to the building to the front, as well as across the front amenity space of the neighbouring property School House to the south and to the north, 1.3m from the flank elevation of number 1 River Cottage. Whilst obscured glazing can be utilised to prevent overlooking and to allow for a degree of privacy with regards to transient people movement within close proximity of these windows, the degree in which this can be utilised is restricted in order to allow for a good sense of natural light provision to the apartment. The existing layout mitigates the impact of this by virtue of non-habitable rooms facing these apertures. Members may consider that Apartment 1 would allow for a poor level of privacy given the proximity to transient pedestrian movements on all elevations, therefore adversely impacting upon residential amenity.

With regard to Apartment 2, the windows within the northern elevation serve both the ground and first floor levels and are sited 1m from the boundary with number 1 River Cottage and 2.5m from the side elevation of the neighbouring dwelling. The habitable room window within the southern elevation is located 950mm from the side elevation of The School House flank side elevation. The first floor level is served by the insertion of 3 x conservation roof lights as well as the high level

windows within the northern elevation. The overall provision of light and outlook with regards to this apartment is not considered satisfactory. Whilst obscure glazing could be utilised within the northern elevation to prevent overlooking with regards to number 1 River Cottage, the proximity of the flank wall to the south would cumulatively allow for a dark and oppressive form of residential accommodation that the insertion of three roof lights would do little to mitigate. Furthermore, velux roof lights are not considered satisfactory with regards to the provision of outlook for the first floor habitable room.

Apartment 3 benefits from the addition of the clerestory roof feature which runs through a centralised position along the roof space and also the addition of velux windows along the south elevation. The windows at ground floor level serving the lounge and lower seating area overlook the neighbouring rear garden of the School House and the front private amenity space of the School Hall. In order to prevent overlooking these windows would be required to be obscurely glazed and non-opening unless above 1.7m from ground floor level, however if this was to occur then the only form of natural light serving the main living area of the apartment would be from the clerestory and the velux roof lights. The reliance on these apertures as the main source of natural light provision would restrict the outlook from apartment 3 and would create a dark and oppressive living area, especially at the ground floor level. It is clear from the cross section drawings also that the clerestory feature is proposed at a height to prevent overlooking of neighbouring properties, however this in turn prevents reasonable outlook from the first floor level.

In terms of amenity space, the development proposes two/ three bedrooms per apartment, which is considered to be a dwelling suitable for family use and in need of external amenity space provision. Private amenity space for Apartment 3 is accessed from the Apartment to the rear and measures 60sqm. The location and amount of space provided is considered acceptable. The outdoor amenity space for Apartment 1 is located to the rear of the garden area and accessed via the public footpath along the southern elevation of the School Hall in close proximity to the statutory listed church and a footpath along the rear of the plot within close proximity of number 31 Gardiner Close.

Whilst concerns with regards to privacy have been received from 31 Gardiner Close due to the unfettered access to the amenity space along the boundary wall, by virtue of the topography of the land it is not considered that people using the access way will be visible when viewed from the neighbouring habitable room windows. However, number 31 Gardiner Close is sited at a higher land level than the Old School Studio and the School Hall and views will be prevalent from the neighbouring habitable rooms into the amenity space provided for apartment 1. Due to the lack of direct access into the amenity space from the apartment, and the inadequate privacy afforded to the area, it is not considered that the outdoor amenity area is satisfactory and as such this is contrary to policy 3.5 and 3.6 of the London Plan and the Play and the Mayoral Recreation SPG.

By virtue of the confined nature of the building and the unusual arrangement of the proximity of the host building to neighbouring dwellings, it is not considered that the development would provide a good level of residential amenity for future

owner/occupiers whilst maintaining a satisfactory relationship with neighbouring properties. Whilst some lenience should be applied due to the locally listed nature of the building and the surrounding properties and the need for the development to be sensitively undertaken, cumulatively the arrangements of fenestration and private outdoor amenity space and the provision of inadequate head heights at first floor level is considered to unduly impact upon the residential amenity of the owner occupiers of the apartments and lead to an overall overdevelopment of the School Studio.

Impact on adjoining properties

As noted above, several habitable room windows are proposed that will look into the rear amenity space of the School House and whilst these could be conditioned to be obscurely glazed and non-opening, this would not provide satisfactory natural light provision for Apartment 3. Furthermore, the raising of the ridge to incorporate the clerestory feature would unduly overshadow the rear amenity space of the School House and appear imposing and overbearing when viewed from the neighbouring property, effectively enclosing the area. Whilst concerns have been received with regards to the impact of the proposed velux windows upon overlooking, due to the low level of these internally and the ability to obscurely glaze the windows, it is not considered that this would occur to a detrimental level.

The windows within the northern elevation of apartment 2 serves both the ground and first floor levels and are sited 1m from the boundary with number 1 River Cottage and 2.5m from the side elevation of the neighbouring dwelling, facing into the rear amenity space. Whilst obscure glazing could be utilised within the northern elevation to prevent overlooking with regards to number 1 River Cottage, it is not considered this would result in a satisfactory level of residential amenity for the future owner/occupiers of the apartment and therefore would allow for overlooking of the rear private amenity area and the rear habitable room windows of the dwelling within the side elevation.

Impact upon the Conservation Area, Locally Listed Building and adjacent Listed Buildings

The Conservation Officer raises no objections to the scheme and welcomes the re-use of the vacant building. It is not considered that the proposed external additions and alterations would adversely impact upon the setting or special character of the listed building nor wider conservation area and as such are considered compliant with policy BE11 and BE10 of the UDP.

Highways

No objections are made on behalf of highways who consider there to be sufficient on street parking within the vicinity of the application site, evidenced by the submission of a parking survey.

Cycle parking

The Applicant has provided sufficient cycle parking.

Refuse

All new developments shall have adequate facilities for refuse and recycling. The applicant has not provided details of the location of refuse storage bin storage or their means of enclosure, however a condition could secure these details if permission was to be forthcoming.

On balance, the application is considered to be unacceptable and it is recommended that permission be refused

RECOMMENDATION: APPLICATION BE REFUSED

The reasons for refusal are:

- 1 The proposed development, due to inadequate head room, outlook, fenestration and provision of outdoor amenity space would fail to provide a satisfactory standard of living accommodation for its future occupants. The proposals are therefore contrary to Policy 3.5 Quality and Design of Housing Developments of the London Plan (2011), The London Plan Supplementary Planning Guidance: Housing (November 2012) and Policies BE1 and H7 of the Unitary Development Plan.**

- 2 The development, by virtue of the raised ridge height would unduly compromise the residential amenity afforded to the owner occupiers of The School House and number 1 River Cottages and would allow for an unduly prominent structure that would cause a detrimental loss of natural light and overshadowing. By virtue of the fenestration design, overlooking will occur from the ground floor flank windows contributing to a loss of privacy contrary to Policy BE1 and H7 of the Unitary Development Plan.**