
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 September 2016

by Emma Tinsley-Evans BSoc.Sc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 24 October 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/16/3150232

21 Walnut Tree Road, Hounslow TW5 0LP

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 against a refusal to grant planning permission.
 - The appeal is made by Mr Jawaid Sheikh against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 01163/21/P9, dated 2 September 2015, was refused by notice dated 15 December 2015.
 - The development proposed is loft conversion featuring hip to gable conversion, rear dormer and 2 No. velux to front slope.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on:
 - The character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the street scene along Walnut Tree Road; and
 - The living conditions of future occupants with regard to internal space and layout.

Reasons

Character and appearance

3. Walnut Tree Road is characterised by 2 storey semi-detached properties. Despite various alterations, the dwellings in this residential cul-de-sac are of a similar style and design. The majority of houses have retained their original hipped roof form, particularly on the appeal site side of Walnut Tree Road.
 4. The appeal property is one of a pair of semi-detached houses on the eastern side of Walnut Tree Road that has been converted into flats. Both properties currently exhibit the characteristic hipped roof form that is prevalent in the street scene. As a pair of semi-detached houses, the appeal dwelling and its neighbour, like many other properties in the street, have retained a balanced and symmetrical appearance.
 5. The creation of a gable ended roof at the appeal property would unbalance the appearance of the pair of houses and remove the sense of symmetry that currently exists. For this reason it would also be contrary to the Council's
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Residential Extension Guidelines Supplementary Planning Guidance 2003 (SPG) which states that the conversion of a sloped hip-end roof into a flat gable-end roof will normally be refused.

6. Given that the appeal dwelling also sits forward of the front building line of the adjacent property at 21A Walnut Tree Road, the proposed gable end would be a prominent feature that is highly visible from the street.
7. Whilst the proposed rear dormer would be set in from the sides of the roof, this would be significantly less than the 1m required by the SPG, and although the dormer would be set up from the eaves by over 1m, it would nevertheless occupy a significant part of the rear roofslope. Despite the use of similar materials to the existing house, the dormer would be an incongruous feature that would be out of proportion with the roof and further unbalance the appearance of the pair of semi-detached houses.
8. Although views of the rear dormer would be limited from Walnut Tree Road, it would be visible from the rear gardens of neighbouring properties and glimpsed from the public footpath to the rear of the appeal site, particularly when the trees are not in leaf.
9. I have seen that velux windows to front roofslopes are not uncommon in the street and I do not consider that those proposed would be a dominant feature of the roofslope or detract from the character and appearance of the existing dwelling. However, without the hip to gable extension the velux windows could not exist.
10. Whilst I note that there are other examples of hip to gable extensions along Walnut Tree Road, I am not aware of the planning status of these or the policy context in which they may have been permitted. In any event, the existence of other roof extensions in the locality does not justify the harm I have identified, particularly as these semi-detached properties with their hipped roofs and sense of balance are part of the prevailing character and appearance of the street scene along Walnut Tree Road, despite the presence of other non-residential land uses in the wider area.
11. The proposal would therefore have a harmful effect on the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the street scene along Walnut Tree Road. The proposal would not accord with Policy CC1 of the Hounslow Local Plan 2015 – 2030 Volume One (LP) which seeks to ensure that all new development responds to the character of the area, including amongst other things, preserving and enhancing particular features that contribute to this. There would be conflict with Policy CC2 of the LP which requires development to respond meaningfully and sensitively to the site, its characteristics and the surrounding buildings, amongst other things. I also find conflict with Policy SC7 of the LP which states that extensions should complement the original building and maintain the character of the area.

Living conditions

12. The proposed development would increase the size of the flat from 2 bedrooms to 3 bedrooms. The existing bedroom at first floor level would be removed allowing for the provision of a separate kitchen area with 2 additional bedrooms in the roof space.

13. Whilst the appellant states that the net internal area of the proposed development would exceed the space provision requirements set out in the Hounslow Unitary Development Plan, this document has been superseded by the LP and does not form part of the development plan for the Borough.
14. Policy 3.5C of the London Plan¹, which is part of the development plan for the Borough, sets out minimum space standards for dwellings of different sizes in Table 3.3. For dwellings with 3 bedrooms over 2 storeys, accommodating 4 occupants, the minimum Gross Internal Area (GIA) is 84sqm.
15. The proposed net internal floor area of the proposed development would be 73.6sqm. It would therefore be reasonable to assume that the GIA of the development would comply with the minimum space standards as set out in the London Plan, given that partitions, cupboards, flights of stairs and voids above stairs would also be included in the GIA.
16. I am not aware of the current occupancy of the existing flat; however, given the size of the current bedrooms, I consider it reasonable to assume that it could accommodate 3 people. An increase in the occupancy to 4 people as a result of the proposed development would not, in my opinion, be excessive or an over-intensive use of the site.
17. Furthermore, whilst the Council considers that one of the bedrooms would not meet the London Plan minimum room size standards, the proposed development would see other improvements to the internal space of the flat by providing a separate, larger kitchen and increasing the number of bathrooms. In addition, there could also be reconfiguration of the internal space.
18. On balance therefore, I do not consider that the proposed development would result in unacceptable living conditions for future occupants with regard to internal space and layout. In this regard I find no conflict with policies CC1 or CC2 which seek to ensure that proposals for development respond to communities, function well and have a positive impact on the amenity of future residents, amongst other things. The proposal would also accord with Policy SC7 which seeks to ensure that development does not result in harm to the amenities of future occupants, amongst other things.
19. Whilst one of the bedrooms may fall short of the minimum room size standards, the GIA of the development would be likely to comply with the overall minimum space standards as set out in the London Plan.

Other Matters

20. I note the concerns of a neighbouring resident that the proposed development would lead to overlooking and loss of light to their property. However, there are no windows in the flank elevation of No 21A nearest the appeal dwelling and the proposed hip to gable conversion would not therefore result in any significant loss of light to this neighbouring property. The proposed side window would be obscure glazed and whilst the windows in the rear dormer would have an outlook to the rear of the properties on Walnut Tree Road, there is already a degree of mutual overlooking and the appeal proposal would not significantly increase this.

¹ The Spatial Development Strategy for London Consolidated with Alterations Since 2011 – March 2016

21. Whilst I also appreciate the neighbour's concerns with regard to drainage problems, there is no firm evidence to suggest that the proposed development would exacerbate any existing issues. In addition, it has also been suggested, including by the Council, that the development is likely to put a strain on parking and refuse facilities. However, I have no evidence before me to substantiate this.
22. The Council has indicated that the conversion of the existing property into 3 flats does not have planning permission, but that this is likely to have occurred more than 4 years ago, so may be lawful. The planning status of the existing property is not for me to consider as part of this appeal. My decision relates to the development for which planning permission was sought.

Conclusion

23. Whilst I have concluded that the appeal proposal would not result in unacceptable living conditions for future occupants with regard to internal space and layout, this does not outweigh the harm to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and the street scene along Walnut Tree Road that I have identified.
24. For the reasons set out above and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Emma Tinsley-Evans

INSPECTOR