

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 6 December 2016

by G J Fort BA PGDip LLM MCD MRTPI

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

Decision date: 19 December 2016

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/16/3158174

Spring Grove Court, 193 Spring Grove Road, Isleworth, London TW7 4AL

- 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 I Seehra against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 01048/H/P3, dated 10 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 27 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is removal of existing outbuildings and construction of 2-storey, 2-bedroom house with associated car parking and amenity space.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. I consider the main issues to be firstly, the effects of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area; secondly, its effects on the living conditions of the occupiers of 1 and 2 Spring Grove Court in terms of light and outlook; and thirdly, the effect of the proposed development on highway safety.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. The appeal site is a small level area, principally bounded by close-boarded fencing. Flat-roofed outbuildings of a limited scale occupy part of the site, within which at the time of my site visit cars were parked. Accessed by a long relatively narrow drive from Spring Court Road, the appeal site is bounded in the main by the generous rear gardens of surrounding dwellings, some of which contain small outbuildings. The side boundary of 1 and 2 Spring Grove Court, a two-storey residential building which faces the access adjoins the appeal site. On the other side of the access road is a bungalow of modest proportions and plot size. At the end of the access road is a small block of residential garages.
 4. The appeal scheme would secure the development of a two-bedroom house with an irregular footprint. Predominantly of one and a half to two storeys, though with a single storey element, the proposed development would have a complicated roof form incorporating flat, half-hipped, dormer and gable elements. A garden area would be provided to the front of the proposed
-

- house, adjacent to the access drive with parking for one car to the rear of the garden.
5. The proposed dwelling would be very tightly bounded, directly adjoining the boundaries to the gardens to its north, and very close to its other boundaries. The site coverage of the proposed development, combined with the constrained nature of its immediately surrounding plot would impart a cramped appearance to the building, which would be of jarring variance to the predominantly more generous plotting of the surrounding development grain. The positioning of the appeal scheme's garden space roughly perpendicular to the proposed dwelling itself, and separated from it to a substantial degree by the garden of 195 Spring Grove Road, would only serve to exacerbate the proposed development's overall incongruity in these regards.
 6. Whilst I note that the bungalow across the access from the scheme has a tighter plot it does not form a precedent that should be followed if harm to character and appearance should occur. In the current case, the air of cramped congestion on the plot would be intensified by the detailing of the scheme, the unusual footprint and overly complicated roof of which would give the proposed development a shoehorned character. Moreover, due to these characteristics of the scheme, it would read as an incongruous element within the wider residential development pattern where more regular building forms are predominant. Whilst I noted that some rear roofs inter-visible with the appeal site have large dormers, I saw none with a similar level of contrived complexity to that of the appeal scheme's roof treatment. As a result, the appeal scheme would read as a visually jarring development, and cause harm to the character and appearance of its surroundings, which the use of the proposed facing materials would not mitigate to any significant degree.
 7. Whilst the proposed development would not be very visible in public views, it would nevertheless be widely visible from surrounding residential properties, where its incompatibility and incongruity with the surrounding development grain would be readily discernible. Thus for the reasons given above, the proposed development would cause material harm to the character and appearance of its surroundings, and as a consequence would conflict with Policy 7.4 of The London Plan: The Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London Consolidated with Alterations since 2011 (the London Plan); and Policies CC1 and CC2 of the Hounslow Local Plan (the Local Plan). Taken together, and amongst other things, these policies seek to ensure that new development responds sensitively and creatively to local character, has regard to the pattern and grain of existing spaces, and functions well in terms of its effects on surrounding areas.

Living Conditions

8. The proposed development would be located to the north-east of 1 and 2 Spring Grove Court, at a distance of around 5m from its closest flank wall. The proposed flank wall that would be closest to the boundary of Nos 1 and 2 would be of a limited scale and depth. A tall close-boarded fence is already in place along this boundary. Due to these factors, and combined with the limited fenestration on the flank wall of Nos 1 and 2 Spring Grove Court, I consider that the proposed development would neither materially reduce the outlook available to the occupants of Nos 1 and 2, or interfere with the amount of natural light available in habitable rooms or the garden. The proposed

development would thus cause no material harm to the living conditions of the occupants of Nos 1 and 2 in these regards, and as a consequence, I can perceive no conflict with Policy CC2 of the Local Plan insofar as it seeks to ensure that new development is sensitive to the amenity of current and future residents.

Highway Safety

9. The existing access to the site is long and narrow, with limited opportunities to let vehicles pass one another. I saw that emerging visibility to Spring Court Road, which is elevated above the level of the access, is constrained to one side by a tall brick gate pier, and beyond that to both sides by a belt of mature shrubbery, and beyond that, at the time of my site visit, by cars parked either side of the access. Spring Court Road is a bus route, and when I visited cars parked on both of its sides severely limited its effective width. Whilst only a snapshot in time, representations received indicate that the level of parking I observed was not of an unusually high level.
10. Although these are obvious shortcomings of the access, I saw at my site visit that the appeal site is currently used for car-parking. Consequently, I consider that the proposed development would not necessarily lead to a material increase in car movements along the access. However, given the constrained visibility I consider that cars emerging from the access onto Spring Grove Road would have to do so in forward gear. Whilst there would be limited space to turn on the appeal site itself, I noted that there was adequate space available in front of the garages to perform such a manoeuvre. Consequently, I consider that no materially more harmful effects would occur as a result of the proposed development in this regard, over and above those of the existing use of the appeal site.
11. I note concerns regarding the ability of service and emergency vehicles to access the drive. However, I consider that the limited scale of the proposed development would not add to the current volume of service and emergency service vehicle visits to a material degree, and furthermore the space in front of the garages would allow adequate opportunity for smaller vans and ambulances to manoeuvre. The incidences when fire appliances would be required to access the site would be rare, and thus would not weigh heavily against the proposed development in the overall planning balance.
12. As the amount of vehicle movements that would result from the proposed development would not be materially more than those caused by the current use of the site, I consider that the access arrangements would not cause a harmful effect on highway safety. Consequently, I can discern no conflict with Policy EC2 of the Local Plan in this regard, which, amongst other matters seeks to ensure that development avoids adverse impacts to the transport network.

Other matters

13. I note that the principle of the development is not contested by the Council, and that the proposed development would avoid harmful effects to the privacy of the occupiers of adjacent properties. The proposed development would also supply an additional unit of housing in a reasonably accessible location. However, these matters, either individually or cumulatively do not outweigh my overriding concern regarding the harm that the proposed development would cause to the character and appearance of the area.

Conclusion

14. The proposed development would avoid materially harmful effects to highway safety and the living conditions of the occupants of Nos 1 and 2. However, in the overall planning balance the material harm that the development would cause to the wider character and appearance of the area clearly and demonstrably outweighs the lack of harm in these other respects.
15. Paragraph 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework establishes that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: the economic; the environmental; and the social. The proposed development, like any proposal for residential building, would have some social and economic benefits. However, due to the appeal scheme's limited scale they would be of modest proportions, and thus only attract limited weight in its favour. It would also re-use a brownfield site that weighs in favour of the proposed development, albeit to a limited degree. However, these positive aspects of the proposed development are clearly and demonstrably outweighed by the material environmental harm that would be caused to the character and appearance of its surroundings.
16. The proposed development would thus not comprise sustainable development for the purposes of the Framework; and neither would it meet the requirements of the development plan insofar as the relevant policies that have been brought to my attention are concerned. No material considerations would outweigh this conflict. Consequently, for the reasons given above, and having regard to all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

G J Fort

INSPECTOR