
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 25 April 2017

by Paul Jackson B Arch (Hons) RIBA

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

Decision date: 18 May 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C3810/W/16/3165293

The Marine, Selbourne Road, Littlehampton, BN17 5NN

- 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 William Cove against the decision of Arun District Council.
 - The application Ref LU/153/16/PL, dated 9 June 2016, was refused by notice dated 22 July 2016.
 - The development proposed is a bedsit (resubmission following LU/183/15/PL).
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Preliminary matters

1. The description of the development on the application form notes that the application affects the character and appearance of the Littlehampton Seafront conservation area. The development has also been completed. I have taken these matters into account in considering the appeal.

Decision

2. The appeal is dismissed.

Reasons

3. The appeal property comprises a former public house converted into flats. The bedsit unit subject to appeal is a conversion of the former rear toilet extension to provide a kitchen, living area and shower room. Access would be from a common lobby at the rear of the building through a door from a courtyard. The application differs from the previous application in that a mezzanine sleeping area has been inserted in the pitched roof, accessed via a steeply pitched ladder from the living area. This provides sufficient floor space for a double mattress.
 4. The gross internal floor area of the unit would be 22.5 square metres (sqm) excluding the mezzanine area of 4.5 sqm. The development falls well short of the 37 sqm standard for a single bedroom 1 person unit set out in the National Technical Housing Standards. Whilst the standard does not cover bedsit units, most bedsits are supplemented by communal rooms such as dining areas, laundries and large kitchens as well as outside garden space. There are no such rooms here and whilst the outside space is useful it is not large, bearing in mind it is also used by 5 other flats. I observed that the mezzanine area is in the nature of a platform with very little headroom. Moreover, the ladder access further restricts the practical usefulness of the living area which is already small at about 10.5 sqm. There is no appreciable outlook from either the living area or the mezzanine because all natural light comes from above, through 2 small rooflights, one of which is beyond an intermediate glass screen. Whilst the kitchen is bright and of a useful size of about 5 sqm, it is not part of the general living area, being on the opposite side of the entrance lobby. The toilet and shower are directly off the living area, which
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- may be acceptable for a single person but is an indicator of a cramped accommodation arrangement.
5. To conclude on the effect on the living conditions of future occupiers, a balance has to be struck between the suggested non-mandatory national advice on living space and the practical usability of the accommodation. In this case, the lack of sufficient useful area in the main living space together with the very restricted sleeping area, the lack of a view out and limited daylight indicate that the scheme conflicts with a core principle of the National Planning Policy Framework which is that planning should seek to secure a high quality of design and a good standard of amenity for the future occupants of buildings. The fact that an occupier may be prepared to live in such accommodation does not mean that the planning system should condone it.
 6. Turning to the effect on the conservation area, built development in the area is tight knit. The appeal property is also on a local list of buildings of special character. The conversion of the rear extension does not change the character of the built form of the pub or affect its architectural interest or the contribution it makes to the character of the conservation area. The accommodation would be cramped internally but this would be very difficult to perceive. Objectors refer to the pressure on parking, but it is hard to conclude that the addition of one small unit would lead to an unacceptable impact on parking pressure in the area or that this would lead to a noticeable effect on character or appearance. I conclude that the character and appearance of the Littlehampton Seafront Conservation Area would be preserved. The development would not conflict with the heritage protection aims of saved policy AREA2 of the Arun District Local Plan of 2003 (LP).
 7. There is no doubt that the unit would be within easy reach of local facilities and would be in a sustainable location. Notwithstanding that and my conclusion that the conservation area would not be harmed, there would be a serious conflict with the design quality and amenity protection objectives of policy GEN7 of the LP and the NPPF.
 8. The reasons for refusal refer to policy DMM3 of the LP but I am advised that the correct reference is to policy D DM3 of the Arun Local Plan (2011-2031) Publication Version (October 2014) which relates to external space standards, which sets out minimum standards for gardens and private outdoor space. However due to the stage that the replacement plan has reached, the emerging policies can be given very limited weight. This policy may yet change and any conflict does not weigh heavily against this scheme.
 9. I understand that Arun cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply. The NPPF applies a presumption in favour of sustainable development and aims to substantially boost the supply of housing. Where policies for the supply of housing are out-of-date, as here, the NPPF indicates that permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole. The scheme before me fails to provide an acceptable standard of living accommodation. The disadvantages of providing such accommodation significantly outweigh the addition of a single unit to the dwelling stock. For these reasons the appeal must fail.

Paul Jackson

INSPECTOR