The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 June 2017

by G J Fort BA PGDip LLM MCD MRTPI

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

Decision date: 12 June 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/17/3170914
16 Adelaide Terrace, Great West Road, Brentford, London Borough of Hounslow TW8 9PQ

- 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 Amar Rathore against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
- The application Ref 00009/16/P2, dated 1 February 2016, was refused by notice dated 24 February 2017.
- The development proposed is conversion to 3 sc flats.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. I consider the main issues in this appeal to be firstly, whether the appeal proposal would provide adequate internal space, and external amenity space to meet the day-to-day needs of its occupants; and secondly, whether the change of use would result in the loss of dwelling suitable for family housing.

Reasons

Site, surroundings and proposed development

3. The appeal property is a two-storey mid-terrace dwelling, with accommodation in the roof space that has been considerably extended to the rear. The terrace is adjacent to multi-lane Great West Road, and running above that on an elevated deck is the M4 motorway. Behind short brick boundary walls, the terrace has a modest setback from a broad pavement, which has a row of on-street parking bays lining it.

4. The proposed development would see the conversion of the appeal property to provide three self-contained flats, comprising a pair of two bedroom units at ground and first floors, and a single-bedroom dwelling within the roof space.

Internal and external space

5. Amongst other things, Policy SC5 of Hounslow's Local Plan (adopted September 2015) (the Local Plan) incorporates the Government's Technical housing standards- nationally described space standard (the Space Standard). The Space Standard sets minimum gross internal areas (GIA) and built-in storage

requirements for new dwellings. It also sets minimum requirements for ceiling heights and bedroom sizes.

6. For two bedroom, three person units such as those proposed on the ground and first floors the Space Standard requires a minimum GIA of 61 SqM. Both of the proposed two bedroom flats would undershoot this requirement by a considerable amount according to the Council's figures, which are not contested by the appellant, of 54.4 SqM for the ground floor unit, and 39.6 SqM for the first floor. Moreover, neither of these units would supply any built-in storage, which would clearly not provide the minimum 2 SqM per unit of this size required by the Space Standard.

7. Whilst the 1 bedroom unit within the roofspace would supply a GIA that would meet the Space Standard requirement, according to the Council's figures, again not questioned by the appellant, its floor-to-ceiling height of 1.95m would fall considerably below the Space Standard's requirement of a minimum of 2.3m for at least 75% of the dwelling's floor area. Furthermore, the proposed one bed unit would not supply any built-in storage space.

8. As a consequence, taken together, these considerable deficiencies from the minimum requirements set out in the Space Standard and the development plan lead me to the view that the proposed development would not provide internal space adequate to meet the day-to-day needs of its future occupants.

9. In terms of external space, whilst the larger dwelling at ground floor would have access to the existing garden, no such access would be provided for the occupants of the other two flats. This total lack of amenity space, either private or communal for the flats at upper storeys would further limit the ability of the proposed development to meet the day-to-day needs of its occupants.

10. Given the limited depth of the appeal property's setback from the pavement, there is only a very modest amount of space within which to accommodate dustbins at the site. The proposed development would lead to an intensification of occupation of the appeal property and a concomitant increase in the amount of refuse generated at the site combined with a consequent requirement for additional refuse and recycling receptacles, which would be difficult to store in the limited space available. This is a matter that adds further weight against the proposed development in the overall planning balance.

11. Thus for the reasons given above, I consider that the proposed development would not provide adequate internal space, and external amenity space to meet the day-to-day needs of its occupants. The proposed development would therefore conflict with Policies SC5 and SC6 of the Local Plan; and the London Plan Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (adopted March 2016). Taken together, and amongst other things, the policies and guidance seek to ensure that new housing provides the highest quality of internal and external space to meet the demands of the everyday life of its occupants.

Family Housing

12. Policy SC6 of the Local Plan seeks to manage housing conversions and sets a minimum floorspace requirement of 130 SqM for the original house for it to be considered suitable for conversion. In the current case, the Council estimates that the original floor space of the appeal property is around 93 SqM, and

whilst extensions have increased this to around142 SqM, the original floorspace would clearly fall below the Local Plan requirement and as a result conflict with Policy SC6.

13. To the front of the appeal property, the Great West Road and the raised deck of the M4 motorway above that impart a hard engineered character to the streetscene, and the concomitant sound of traffic was a constant at the time of my early evening site visit. However, I saw that the terrace is separated considerably from the Great West Road, and that both the cars parked in the on-street bays and the bollards situated at the pavement's edge act as physical barriers between the passing traffic and the reasonably broad footway.

14. Moreover, to the rear the appeal property and its neighbours have moderately deep and well-vegetated back gardens that offer a strong contrast to the Terrace's front aspect. To the rear too the surrounding environment is more predominantly residential. For these reasons, I consider that the appeal site's proximity to the Great West Road and the M4 do not impair the residential amenity of the appeal property, or the highway safety of its occupants to a degree that would reduce the suitability of its location for family housing.

15. Whilst mindful of the appellant's comments that most of the properties within the Terrace are subject to multiple occupancy, and that the air quality of the surroundings deters families from locating within it, a lack of substantive evidence supplied to me in either of these regards limits the weight that I attach to these matters in the overall planning balance. As a consequence, these considerations do not alter my conclusions on the location's suitability for family housing.

16. Furthermore, my conclusions on the inadequacy of the internal space provided by the proposed development clearly demonstrate that it would not provide a family-sized unit at ground floor. As a consequence the proposed development would not meet criterion (g) of Policy SC6.

17. The proposed development would, as a consequence, result in the loss of a dwelling suitable for family housing, and in this regard clearly conflict with Policies CC1, SC1, SC5 and SC6 of the Local Plan. These policies, amongst other things, seek to manage building conversions and sub-division of the existing housing stock to maintain locations for family housing, and supply family-sized units at ground floor in any residential conversion.

Other Matters

18. The appellant supplied me with copies of plans of the neighbouring property, No 18, which received planning permission for conversion to flats in 2014. However, the determination of this planning application pre-dated the adoption of Hounslow's Local Plan, and the introduction of the Government's Space Standard. Moreover, the Borough's arrangements for refuse collection have changed since 2014, from the collection of plastic bags to the emptying of wheelie bins. Taken together these are material considerations that clearly distinguish that formerly approved development from the current appeal case. Moreover, each proposal needs to be assessed on its own planning merits. Accordingly, the planning consent in respect of No 18 does not provide a precedent for this case to follow given the proposed development's demonstrably harmful effects and conflicts with the development plan.

19. I note that the appellant considers the proposed development would have only a limited effect on the appearance of the dwelling due to the minimal external changes proposed. However, the cluttered congestion of rubbish receptacles in its front yard that would be a concomitant of the proposed development would impart a harmful effect to its character and that of the streetscene more generally.

20. The proposed development could avoid harm to the residents of neighbouring dwellings in terms of privacy and light. However, these matters would merely point to an absence of harm in these regards, rather than a positive benefit of the scheme. As a result it would have only a neutral effect on the overall planning balance.

21. I note the appellant's aspirations to construct the proposed development to meet Lifetime Homes Standards and to meet the requirements of level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes. However, these matters, in the overall planning balance would not outweigh the proposed development's deficiencies in terms of the level of internal and external space provided, or its conflicts with the development plan.

22. As a consequence, none of these other matters, either taken together or individually would alter my conclusions in respect of the main issues in this case.

Conclusion

23. The proposed development would conflict with the development plan insofar as the policies which have been drawn to my attention are concerned. No material considerations have been advanced of sufficient weight to justify a departure from the requirements of the development plan. Accordingly, 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