
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 14 August 2017

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 25th August 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/C5690/W/17/3175074

294A Brockley Road, Crofton Park, London SE4 2RA

- 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 Matthew Johnson against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Lewisham.
 - The application Ref DC/17/100023, dated 31 January 2017, was refused by notice dated 31 March 2017.
 - The development proposed is described as the subdivision of the existing flat over two floors into 2 one bed, one person flats of high design quality.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the occupants of the proposed flats would experience satisfactory living conditions, with particular regard to the amount of internal space.

Reasons

3. Amongst other matters, Policy 3.5 of the London Plan 2015 (Incorporating March 2016 Minor Alterations) seeks to ensure that housing provides an appropriate level of quality and amenity for its occupants. Lewisham Development Management Local Plan 2014 DM Policy 32 takes a similar approach and refers to the London Plan's standards. Both policies set out a minimum space standard (based on GIA) of 37sqm for a one person/bed space unit, and 50 sqm for a two person/bed space unit. The Mayor of London Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance 2016 ('SPG') sets out further details of that approach. The space standards in both those policies and the SPG accord with the DCLG Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard 2015 ('THS'), to which Policy 3.5 specifically refers.
4. The scheme would involve the conversion of the existing three bedroom flat to 2 one bedroom flats. In its officer report and statement, the Council calculates that those flats would have a GIA of approximately 42sqm and 46sqm, respectively. However, the appellant states that as each would have a single occupant, they would comply with the above standards.
5. The scheme is described as providing 'one bed, one person flats'. However, paragraph 4.4 of the Planning Statement sets out that each bedroom would be

large enough for a double bed, and drawing no. 718/13/E shows that the bedrooms would exceed the minimum 11.5sqm floor area required for two bedspaces in the THS.

6. I have not been presented with a mechanism by which the number of occupants in each flat could be appropriately controlled, and it seems to me that bedroom size and the number of bedspaces is a reasonable indicator of the potential number of occupants. Consequently, on the basis of the available information, although each flat is described as being for one person, I am not persuaded that they would be so occupied.
7. Each flat would receive appropriate daylight, would have quieter areas and sufficient headroom, and there would be a separate utility and bike store. However, each flat would fall short of the standard required for a two bedspace unit. Consequently I am not satisfied that within each flat there would be sufficient space for the activity, rest, storage and furniture requirements of more than one occupant. Those occupants would therefore experience unsatisfactory living conditions.
8. Even if the flats would be singularly occupied as the appellant suggests, DM Policy 32 sets out that, in order to provide flexible and adaptable housing, and to provide long term, sustainable solutions to housing needs, single person dwellings will not be supported other than in exceptional circumstances. I have limited evidence before me of local housing needs here. However, turning to the exceptional circumstances cited in that policy, this site has a PTAL rating of 4, which is good but not highly accessible, and I am not satisfied that this scheme is of exceptional design quality.
9. Summing up, DM Policy 32 resists the provision of single person dwellings other than in exceptional circumstances. From the evidence before me, I am not persuaded that such circumstances exist here. Furthermore, based on the size of the bedrooms and the number of bedspaces, it seems to me that occupation of each flat by more than one person would be likely. On that basis, the scheme would provide unsatisfactory living conditions for the future occupants, by reason of inadequate internal space. Although the scheme would address development plan policies which seek to make the best use of development opportunities and to provide additional housing, those benefits would not outweigh the harm that I have found.
10. I have considered this scheme in light of the previously dismissed appeal on the site. However, having considered it on its merits, it would conflict with the development plan when considered as a whole. Consequently, having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR