
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 10 March 2020

by Paul Thompson DipTRP MAUD MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 27th March 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/19/3242835

Street Record, Manor Vale, Brentford TW8 9JP

- 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 Tendler (Manor Vale Lodge Ltd) against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00133/AW/P6, dated 15 September 2019, was refused by notice dated 4 December 2019.
 - The development proposed is conversion of roof space within Blocks A, B & C to create 6 Studio Flats.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development provides adequate living conditions for future occupants, in terms of internal and external space.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is situated within an area predominantly residential in character and concerns three of the four separate blocks of flats in Manor Vale. Each block is of three storeys but the roofspaces of Blocks A, B and C, the subject of this appeal, have already been converted to provide seven 2-bedroom flats (the consented scheme). This followed the grant of permission at appeal¹. However, as the Inspector for that appeal was not required to find in relation to the internal and external space requirements for the consented scheme, that appeal decision is not therefore comparable with the appeal before me.
4. Policy SC5 of the London Borough of Hounslow Local Plan (2015-2030) (the LP) requires that development proposals demonstrate compliance with the Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS), paragraph 10(i) of which requires that the minimum floor to ceiling height is 2.3m for at least 75% of the Gross Internal Area (GIA) of each dwelling.
5. Less than 50 per cent of the GIA of each of the proposed studio flats would achieve the required ceiling height, which is not disputed by the appellant. As such, the quality of the internal space of each of the proposed studio flats would fall somewhat short of what is required by the Council's policy, leading to a cramped and claustrophobic living environment.

¹ Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/17/3177013, which relates to planning application 00133/AW/P4

6. I appreciate that the ceiling heights of the flats in the consented scheme may also fail to meet the aforementioned requirements. The circumstances behind the Council's decision to accept this position are not before me. Nonetheless, in any event, I have considered the individual merits of the appeal scheme and found harm for the reasons outlined above. Therefore, the apparent absence of harm in relation to the internal space within the flats in the consented scheme would not outweigh the harm I have identified.
7. The appellant has also accepted that the appeal scheme does not include any additional external space. I note that the Officer Report suggests that previous proposals were not found to be harmful in this respect, as the existing external space was sufficient to meet the needs of the occupants of the flats in all Blocks. However, in the case of the appeal scheme, the existing external space would not be of sufficient size to serve the additional occupants associated with the proposal. Moreover, the space would be deficient by around ten square metres. Whilst this may not be significant in spatial terms, it would add to my concerns regarding the living conditions of future occupants of the proposed studio flats.
8. For the reasons outlined above, I conclude that the proposed development would not provide adequate living conditions for future occupants, in terms of internal and external space. Hence, the proposal would not accord with Policies CC2 and SC5 of the LP. Together these policies require that development proposals should function well in themselves and in their effect on surrounding areas and have a positive impact on the living conditions of current and future residents. In terms of internal space standards this means demonstrating compliance with the NDSS and, for external communal space, flats with up to three habitable rooms should be provided with 25sqm of space, less any private space provided. Proposals should also show how the aspect, usability, sense of enclosure and prevailing pattern established by local character have been considered in external open space proposals to create sufficiently high-quality living conditions.
9. I have not found in relation to Policy CC1 of the LP in respect of this main issue, as the policy does not refer to living conditions.

Conclusion

10. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Paul Thompson

INSPECTOR