



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 September 2020

by Alison Scott BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 17 September 2020

Appeal Ref: APP/Y5420/W/20/3250444

207-209 Mount Pleasant Road, Tottenham, London N17 6JH

- 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 Hilton Booth against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Haringey.
 - The application Ref HGY/2019/3110, dated 18 November 2019, was refused by notice dated 21 January 2020.
 - The development proposed is New flat in loft area & new external staircase.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. At the time of my inspection it was apparent that works have begun at the site and a temporary staircase was in place to the rear of the site.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the street scene;
 - The effect of the proposal on the living conditions of local residents with regard to loss of privacy; and
 - Whether or not the access serves as an acceptable form of entry in respect of living conditions.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. The appellant occupies two attached dwellings as their family home within the short terrace. The appeal site is located on the corner with Griffin Road and has been extended by virtue of a large side and rear extension. The appeal site is prominent from both Mount Pleasant Road and Griffin Road and from the Broadwater Farm Estate to the rear of the site.
5. The rear of the property is two stories with the attic space converted to living accommodation with a large terrace level and railings surrounding it. It is from this terrace that a temporary staircase is currently in situ.

6. The proposed permanent staircase would be created from the ground with a level platform at first floor, then crossing over a rear window to extend up to the attic space. Due to the substantial expanse of staircase required to rise to the roof level and the necessary turns, its metal construction and considerable mass would dominate the rear of the dwelling. This is moreover highlighted as the dwelling is of a considerable height to the rear elevation. As it would extend across a rear window this would also harm the character of this elevation. The projection of the first staircase rise into the rear garden would also extend a significant distance into the rear garden, further emphasising its appearance.
7. Even though the appeal site is not located within a Conservation Area and the structural implications may be such that it is completed to a satisfactory level, given the scale of development proposed, it would not be in context with the appeal property or harmonise with it. Due to its mass, the staircase would take on the appearance more akin to a large commercial fire escape, and not a main entrance into a residential dwelling.
8. The rear elevation is prominent within the street scene, and the proposal would result in a visually discordant form of development clearly seen from beyond the site. It would not be a sympathetic addition to it or make a positive contribution to place.
9. The proposal would therefore be contrary to the Haringey Local Plan 2017 Policy SP11 in its design aims and Policies DM1 and DM12 of the Development Management, Development Plan Document 2017 in its purpose to achieve high quality design. I find direct conflict with Policy 7.4 of the London Plan for development not to cause unacceptable harm to the amenity of the surrounding land, and Policy 7.6 that seeks high architectural quality.

Living Conditions of neighbours

10. The proposed staircase would provide a platform level at the first floor before it would turn and rise to the roof level. Due to the configuration of the appeal property, there would be limited opportunity to directly overlook the rear windows of the attached neighbour at 211 Mount Pleasant Road.
11. There would be opportunity to overlook the rear garden of this dwelling. However, there is an existing sense of overlooking to the gardens from along the terrace. Furthermore, due to the existing terrace level, overlooking already occurs from the site. Moreover, I reason that anyone using the proposed staircase would be unlikely to linger, and in any event, the existing terrace would form the external space to do so.
12. On this basis I do not find that the proposal would result in a loss of privacy to the occupiers of the adjacent dwelling. It would therefore not be contrary to Policy SP11 of the Haringey Local Plan 2017 as this policy does not relate to living conditions, and is not contrary to the Development Management, Development Plan Document 2017, Policies DM1 and DM12 in respect of development protecting privacy and amenity levels to neighbours.

Living Conditions of future occupiers

13. There would not be an insurmountable number of steps to the staircase required to reach the flat. These would be entirely exposed to the elements and would not be conducive to an acceptable standard of entry to the site or contribute to a positive impact as a form of main entrance.

14. As it would be an independent flat, despite its intended use by a family member, there is no evidence presented that ground floor space could be made available to store bicycles and refuse provision which would otherwise need to be carried up and down the flight of stairs. As it would be the sole means of entry, deliveries and the like would be exclusively from this entry point where only an able-bodied person could reasonably access the site. This does not represent inclusive or acceptable access into the flat which is advocated by local policy but also within the National Planning Policy Framework to create places that are safe.
15. The appellant suggests lighting can be applied to the site and pedestrian access would be via its own gate from Griffin Road. This does not negate the fact that the access would be located to the rear of the appeal site via a considerable number of steps. No sense of appropriate entry to a residential development would be created due to the position of the flat within the attic space via the use of the external staircase only.
16. This means of access would not be an acceptable access arrangement into the development. It would therefore be contrary to the Development Management, Development Plan Document 2017, Policy DM2 for development to create accessible and safe environments and DM16 for external structures not to detract from the street scene, and creates a front door where possible. Furthermore, it would be contrary to Policy 3.5 of the London Plan for development to be of the highest quality, in particular externally.

Other Matters

17. I appreciate the family are established within the community and the personal circumstances of the appellant's son who requires their own independent living arrangements whilst living close to the family unit, and the benefits this would bring to the family as well as to his own health and well-being. There are no objections raised by the Council to the principle of the creation of a flat in this location, which I agree can contribute to social and economic benefits to the area. However, the consequence of creating a flat in this location with a separate external access as demonstrated, is not acceptable.
18. Photographic images of other external staircases have been submitted with the appeal by the appellant. It is not apparent from the photos whether or not they serve as main entrances into the buildings, and if indeed they are residential accommodation. Nevertheless, they are of much smaller scale than the proposal and do not dominate the external elevations of the building. The largest staircase appears as a fire escape from a fire exit door and is attached to a block of modern flats. It is not the same circumstances as the appeal before me.
19. The proposal may respect certain criteria contained within local policies, however, that is not to say that the proposal is acceptable development as it is not considered to be policy compliant in its other respects.
20. Complaints by the appellant regarding the Council's service should be in the first instance directed to the Council.

Conclusion

21. Although I have found no harm would arise to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers, I do however find that the proposal represents poor design in this location and the access arrangements would not be acceptable as a sole means of access.
22. On this basis, the appeal is dismissed.

Alison Scott

INSPECTOR