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## Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 December 2020

**by M Philpott BA(Hons) MA MRTPI**

**an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State**

**Decision date: 7<sup>th</sup> December 2020**

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**Appeal Ref: APP/W5780/W/19/3242261**

**19 Natal Road, Ilford IG1 2HA**

- 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 Sadir Hussain against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Redbridge.
  - The application Ref 2926/19, dated 8 July 2019, was refused by notice dated 14 October 2019.
  - The development proposed is described as 'Conversion of a single dwelling house into two self-contained flats (1x 2bed & 1x 3 bed) with garden access for both flats, stair on the rear garden, driveway for two car park, secured cycle parking in rear garden and separate bin storages for each flat'.
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### Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

### Procedural Matter

2. In an attempt to overcome some of the Council's objections to the proposal the appellant has provided revised drawings in support of the appeal. These show the proposed external staircase and first floor rear entrance doorway to the upper floor flat further from the shared boundary with 21 Natal Road. This constitutes a minor change to the scheme and I note that the Council and the occupiers of No 21 have had an opportunity to comment on it. I have therefore taken the revised drawings into account. I do not consider that adopting this approach has prejudiced the views of any interested parties.

### Main Issues

3. The main issues are: (i) the effect of the proposal on the supply of larger housing; (ii) the effect of the proposal on the character of the area and the living conditions of the occupiers of neighbouring properties; and (iii) whether the proposal would provide an appropriate standard of accommodation for the future occupiers of the development in respect of internal space.

### Reasons

#### *Supply of larger housing*

4. The site comprises a 7 bedroom, mid-terrace dwellinghouse with a small area of hardstanding to its front and a garden to its rear. Natal Road and the surrounding roads are predominantly characterised by terraced residential properties; however, there are a range of commercial properties in Ilford Lane

a short walk away. Based on the evidence before me, the dwelling constitutes a larger home that is suitable for occupation by a family.

5. The proposal would result in the creation of a 2 bedroom ground floor flat and a 3 bedroom flat on the upper floors. Both would have access to the rear garden. An external staircase would facilitate access to the garden from the upper floor flat at first floor level.
6. The Council states that there is a need to protect family housing in the borough to maintain a balanced housing stock that reflects overall need. Policy LP5 of the Redbridge Local Plan (RLP) prioritises the provision of family sized homes. RLP Policy LP6 sets out that the conversion of larger homes into smaller self-contained flats will only be supported where all its criteria are met. Amongst other things, it requires conversions to be located in a Metropolitan, District or Local Centre as designated by the RLP. It also requires conversions to result in the provision of at least one family sized home comprising 3 or more bedrooms at ground floor level.
7. The site is near to but outside Ilford Lane Local Centre. It is not within any other Metropolitan, District or Local Centre. In addition, the proposal does not include a 3 bedroom ground floor flat. It therefore fails to accord with RLP Policy LP6. The appellant states that the site is located in the Ilford Investment and Growth Area and the Ilford Lane Cultural Hub as designated by the RLP. However, RLP Policy LP6 does not indicate that conversions are supported in such locations.
8. The appellant contends that there is little rental demand for a dwelling of this size and some of the rooms would likely be sublet if it were occupied by a single family. However, the evidence provided in these respects is anecdotal. It is also advanced that it would be possible for small families to occupy the flats and the upper floor flat would have the same number of rooms that the dwelling had originally. However, the proposal would nonetheless fail to satisfy the criteria of RLP Policy LP6 and I do not have firm and substantive evidence which indicates that this policy does not reflect the housing needs of the borough.
9. I therefore find that the proposal would result in the loss of larger housing. It thus fails to accord with RLP Policy LP6, which seeks to control the conversion of larger homes. However, I find no direct conflict with RLP Policy LP5, as it prioritises rather than requires the provision of larger homes as part of dwelling mixes for housing developments.

#### *Character and living conditions*

10. The Council considers that the character of the area would be harmed because it mostly features family homes and the proposal would result in an increase in activity, noise and disturbance. However, a reasonably high level of activity is likely to be generated by the occupiers of the existing dwelling as a result of its size. Furthermore, the area features a high number of residential properties and comings and goings along the road are likely to be frequent. In this context, I do not consider that the activity, noise and disturbance generated by the proposed flats, or the comings and goings to and from them, would have a significant impact on the character of the area in general terms.
11. Notwithstanding this, the proposal would harm the living conditions of the occupiers of No 21. The first floor bedrooms located next to the party wall are

proposed to become a reception room and a kitchen and dining room. It is very likely that more activity, noise and disturbance would be generated from these proposed rooms than bedrooms. Moreover, noise and disturbance would arise from the occupiers using the external staircase, which would be close to the rear windows of No 21.

12. The staircase would provide for views of the rear elevation and the garden of No 21. It would also result in a loss of outlook from the neighbouring property to the extent that it would be overbearing. Whilst screening could be installed to prevent loss of privacy, this would not address the other concerns identified.
13. The appellant has suggested that the staircase could be omitted from the proposal. However, no drawings have been provided in this respect. In any event, this would constitute a substantial change to the proposal and the Council and interested parties would need an opportunity to consider its implications. I have not therefore considered this matter further.
14. The proposal would not have a harmful effect on the living conditions of the occupiers of 17 Natal Road as the rooms nearest to that property would be used in a similar manner to the existing ones. In addition, the external staircase would be set away from the neighbouring property. However, this does not address the harm that would be caused to the living conditions of the occupiers of No 21.
15. I find that the proposal would not have a harmful effect on the general character of the area. However, it would harm the living conditions of the occupiers of No 21. It is contrary to RLP Policies LP6 and LP26, which seek to protect the living conditions of the occupiers of property.

#### *Standard of accommodation*

16. The Council puts forward that the standard of accommodation for the ground floor flat would be unsatisfactory on the basis that it would have a floor area of 69 square metres. However, the appellant contends that its floor area would be well in excess of the 70 square metres required by the Space Standards<sup>1</sup>.
17. Based on the information before me, I cannot reach a definitive conclusion as to the exact size of the ground floor flat. However, as the flat would only be 1 square metre smaller than the requirement if the Council's measurements are accurate, and this is unlikely to result in significantly different living conditions than if the requirement was met, the evidence does not indicate that the amount of internal space would be inappropriate. The external staircase may lead to a reduction in light to and outlook from some of the ground floor flat's rear windows; however, these impacts would be limited.
18. The proposal would therefore provide an appropriate standard of accommodation in respect of internal space. In respect of this matter, I find no conflict with RLP Policies LP6 and LP29 and London Plan Policy 3.5, which seek to ensure that development has an appropriate amount of internal space and accords with the Space Standards.
19. The Council also refers to Standards 27 and 31 of the London Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance in respect of this main issue. However, they relate to private external space and ceiling height requirements. The Council

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<sup>1</sup> Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard

has not expressly raised concerns in these respects and thus I have no evidence which indicates that there are conflicts with those standards.

### **Other Matters**

20. The appellant puts forward that the proposal would make effective use of an underutilised building, but I do not consider this to be the case as a result of the harm that would be caused. Nevertheless, the proposal would increase housing stock in the borough in an accessible location and could help to support local businesses. I also have no reason to doubt that the accommodation would be provided to a high standard and incorporate energy efficiency measures. However, I do not consider that these matters outweigh the harm identified.

### **Conclusion**

21. For the above reasons, the appeal is dismissed.

*Mark Philpott*

INSPECTOR