
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 18 February 2021

by C Hall BSc MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 April 2021.

Appeal Ref: APP/Z5060/W/20/3261280

816 Rainham Road South, Dagenham RM10 8AE

- 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 Michael Madden against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham.
 - The application Ref 20/01168/FULL, dated 4 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 12 August 2020.
 - The development is a proposed conversion of existing four bedroom semi detached house into 2no. flats (1 x one bedroom and 1 x two bedroom), including single storey front and side extensions.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The Local Authority's decision notice refers to several policies within the Draft Local Plan (Regulation 18 Consultation Version, November 2019). However, as the Draft Local Plan may be subject to further change, I only attach limited weight to these policies.
3. Policies GG4, D4, D6, H8, H9, H10 and H12 of the London Plan 2021 (LP) are unchanged from the Intend to Publish version, and have replaced the policies in the 2016 London Plan, both of which are referred to in the Council's decision.

Main Issues

4. The main issues are the effect of the development on (a) the supply of family housing in the Borough; and (b) the living conditions of future occupants of the units with regard to internal floor space, storage and external amenity space.

Reasons

Supply of housing

5. The appeal site consists of a 2-storey, semi-detached dwelling on a residential road in a high-density, urban situation. The surrounding area comprises a mixture of building styles and designs. Policy BC4 of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Development Policies Development Plan Document March 2011 (DPD) states that the Council is seeking to preserve and increase the stock of family housing in the Borough. Consequently, the Council will resist proposals which involve the loss of housing with three bedrooms or more.
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6. The appellant argues that the Council's reason for refusal represents a blanket ban on conversions of dwellings to flats, and that there is demand in the Borough for smaller units. At my site visit I observed the development of flats opposite the appeal site, although I have not been provided with details of the sizes of the units therein.
7. In this case the Outer North East London Strategic Housing Market Assessment, Report of Findings March 2016 (SHMA) is a material consideration that supports the overall need to maintain the Borough's family-sized accommodation. I also note the figures provided in the Council's 2019 Strategic Housing Market Assessment update (SHMA).
8. Although the appellant disputes the Local Authority's position, I have no compelling evidence before me to otherwise challenge the relative mix of market housing need in the Borough, or to demonstrate that the current need for smaller accommodation such as that proposed by this appeal would outweigh the need for larger family housing.
9. I therefore conclude that the proposal would be harmful to the supply of family housing within the borough. This would materially conflict with policies CM1 and CM2 of the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham Core Strategy July 2010, DPD Policy BC4 and policies GG4, D4, H8, H9, H10 and H12 of the LP, which seek to meet community needs, manage housing developments and resist proposals which involve the loss of housing with three bedrooms or more.
10. The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) not only supports the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it makes clear that the range of homes as well as the number is important in order to meet the needs of present and future generations. The Framework does not therefore resist changes to existing housing stock where this would meet a demand for another form of residential accommodation in the area, however this has not been proven in this instance.

Living conditions

11. The Council is concerned that the gross floor area of the flats does not meet the size requirements set out at policy D6 of the London Plan 2021 and the Technical housing standards – nationally described space standard March 2015 (THS). The requirement outlines that a 2-bed, 4-person unit should have a minimum Gross Internal Area (GIA) of 70 square metres (sqm); in this instance the ground floor flat would be 69 sqm. A 1-bed, 2-person unit should be 58 sqm GIA; the first floor flat would be approximately 46 sqm. There are shortfalls in the storage provision for both flats when compared to the THS.
12. The size requirements for residential units are intended to act as a benchmark for high design quality. In my view, any shortfall is unlikely to be appropriate and the proposal therefore conflicts with the standards in principle. Whilst I note that the size of the individual bedrooms would be compliant, the overall scale of the communal areas would result in a cramped and oppressive environment for future occupants. The shortfall in storage space exacerbates the situation.
13. The proposed layout plan shows that the outdoor amenity spaces serving the development would meet the overall space standards of policy BP5 of the DPD, although they would not have the requisite depth. Whilst this would technically result in conflict with LP policy, taking a pragmatic approach I am satisfied that

the gardens would be of a useable and functional shape, adequate to serve the needs of future occupiers of the flats.

14. Although there would be no harm to the living conditions of future occupants of the development with regard to the provision of outdoor amenity space, the size of the internal accommodation of the ground floor flat would result in detriment. The appeal scheme would be contrary to policies BP5 of the DPD and D6 of the LP, which require high quality accommodation and compliance with internal space standards. It would also be inconsistent with the advice in the National Planning Policy Framework which seeks to ensure safe and healthy living conditions.

Conclusion

15. For the above reasons and having regard to all matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

C Hall

INSPECTOR