



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 10 May 2021

by R E Jones BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18 June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/21/3268364

2-4 Lawrence Parade, Lower Square, Isleworth, TW7 6RG

- 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 Harjee Singh against the decision of London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 01101/D2-4/P1, dated 12 May 2020, was refused by notice dated 6 August 2020.
 - The development proposed is described as: proposed change of use of 2,3,4 Lawrence Parade (shops) to 3x2 bedroom self-contained flats with associated amenities.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. The appellant has submitted alternative plans within their evidence. These incorporate changes to the building's internal layout, an internal bike store as well as alterations to the design and arrangement of fenestration. I have no evidence that the plans have been subject to public consultation and they did not form the basis of the Council's decision. Given the nature of the public objections, accepting these revised plans may prejudice the interests of the interested parties. Furthermore, it is not for the appeal procedure to advance proposals. This is best achieved through the submission of revised planning applications. As such, I have proceeded to determine the appeal on the basis of the plans on which the Council made its decision.
3. The appeal site is located within a conservation area therefore I have had regard to section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (the Act), and Paragraphs 193-196 of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework).

Main Issues

4. The main issues in this appeal are: (i) whether the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Isleworth Riverside Conservation Area (IRCA); and (ii) whether the proposal would provide adequate living conditions for future residents of the flats, with particular reference to external amenity space.

Reasons

Character and appearance

5. The appeal site comprises the ground floor of a large modern three storey building located within the IRCA.
6. The building has its primary elevation facing Lower Square, an attractive area of open space that includes benches and landscaping. There are other buildings that surround the square, yet in contrast to the appeal building, these are more historic and refined in their appearance. Nevertheless, along with the appeal building they are neatly arranged around the space to give the square an intimate and relaxed feel. At the appeal building's rear is Iselworth village green, a spacious grassed area surrounded by mature trees. A large archway, that forms part of the appeal building, connects the two areas of open space with a pedestrian path. This provides an important visual link between the two areas of open space and the buildings that surround them. In addition, the archway's width and curved proportions give it an elegant quality that neatly frames the areas of open space that can be seen through it. Therefore, insofar as it relates to this appeal, the conservation area derives some of its significance from the attractive open spaces, the aesthetic elegance of the buildings and the careful arrangement and connections between those elements of townscape.
7. The proposal includes a large secure bike store that would be positioned within the archway. It would extend along most of the archway's length, and project around 2.1m from its inner wall into the space currently used as a public walkway. The bike store's rectangular and utilitarian formation would appear blunt and incongruous within the curved archway and in doing so would harm the architectural qualities of the building. Its scale would also block clear views through the archway of the square and the village green. The consequence of this harm would significantly erode the understanding and appreciation of the townscape and public spaces that the archway currently links.
8. The appellant has provided an alternative storage arrangement with the appeal that would comprise three smaller bicycle store units. I have not been given any details of where in the archway these units would be positioned, however, I have noted that their combined scale would likely have an appreciable visual impact within the space when viewed from the square and village green. Yet, without any clear details of its position I am unable to fully assess the revised storage arrangement.
9. I have considered applying a planning condition to agree the details for bike storage. Nevertheless, I cannot be certain that alternative arrangements would not affect other areas around the appeal site or the habitable space and circulation areas within the flats. A condition in this instance would therefore not be reasonable.
10. The proposed flats would result in changes to the windows and doors on the front and rear elevations of the appeal building. Fenestration currently consists of tall glazing panels that serve the existing ground floor commercial units. Their shape and design differ to the smaller windows on the upper floors which also incorporate brick sills and curved reveals in places. Given that there are already a variety of window formations on the appeal building, the size and design of the new openings, including the entrance doors would not particularly

alter the general appearance of the building. Moreover, the arrangement and placing of the new openings is generally in keeping with those on the upper floors. Accordingly, these changes would have a neutral effect that would preserve the character and appearance of the building and the conservation area.

11. Although, I have found the proposed windows and doors to be acceptable, the proposed cycle store would result in moderate harm to the significance of the conservation area. Accordingly, the proposal would fail to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the IRCA. It would also conflict with Policies CC1, CC2 and CC4 of the London Borough of Hounslow Local Plan 2015-2030 - Volume 1 (Local Plan), which seek to retain high quality urban design and architecture to create attractive and distinctive places, as well as conserving the significance of the Borough's heritage assets. The proposal would also fail to satisfy the requirements of the Act and the Framework.
12. Great weight should be given to a designated heritage asset's conservation. In terms of countervailing public benefits, the appeal scheme would increase housing supply and add to the mix of housing options in the Borough. However, the provision of three new homes would be a limited numerical boost to the housing supply. Other benefits include the contribution the proposal would make to the local economy and the scheme's accessible location close to shops, services and public transport connections. I consider that these factors result in moderate public benefits.
13. The proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset but that is a matter of considerable importance and weight. The public benefits identified do not outweigh that harm.

Living conditions

14. Policy SC5 of the Local Plan requires the provision of a minimum 5m² of private outdoor space for all 1 to 2 person dwellings, with an additional 1m² for each additional occupant. The proposed Flats 3 and 4 would each have an amenity area within the arches at the front of the building. These areas would be partially enclosed by 1.2m high fencing and entrance gates. Flat 2 does not include any external amenity space.
15. In the case of Flats 3 and 4 the external amenity spaces would marginally fall short of the floor area requirements outlined in the above policy. Yet, I would expect that the spaces would be diminished further by the likely need to keep the areas behind the entrance gates and the short thoroughfare leading to the front doors clear of any obstruction so that occupiers/visitors can enter and leave the flat. This would limit the functionality and use of the amenity space to those areas either side of the entrance gates and thoroughfare. These would be small and cramped spaces that would be unappealing to occupiers of a 2-bedroom home, for activities such as outdoor seating, while providing limited opportunities for planting or personal decoration. As a consequence of these shortcomings, future occupiers would be exposed to a poor-quality external living environment that would be harmful to their living conditions.
16. The appellant acknowledges the shortfall in external amenity space at Flats 3 and 4, in addition to the absence of a private external area at Flat 2, and points to the constraints of the site. However, there may be other solutions that are acceptable and accord with the external amenity standards.

17. I acknowledge that the two areas of public open space to the front and rear of the appeal building could provide seating and an attractive outlook for future occupiers of the flats. Nonetheless, I do not consider these would fully address the expectations future residents would have for an area of private outdoor space, or adequately address the shortfall in the area of space provided. The situation would be more acute for the occupiers of Flat 2, who would have no private external amenity space at all.
18. Consequently, I conclude future occupiers would be likely to experience unacceptable living conditions in terms of external amenity space provision. This would fail to accord with the technical standards in Policy SC5 of the Local Plan, and that policy's requirement for high quality external space to meet the demands for everyday life for the intended occupants.

Other Matters

19. The appellant has referred to the Council's decision to approve residential flats at The Old Blue School, a short distance to the south east. Some of those flats would not have any private external amenity space. The full details of that scheme are not before me, however, from what I have gleaned, that case would not be comparable to the appeal scheme as its approval related to material considerations such as bringing a listed building back into use. I have therefore given this matter limited weight.
20. The aforementioned Old Blue School is a grade II listed building. This comprises a large two storey building that incorporates a grand entrance porch and a central clocktower. The setting of the listed building includes Lower Square, which contributes to revealing and framing the building's architectural significance. The appeal building would be positioned perpendicular to that listed building and the proposed changes would not be prominent in its context or encroach unacceptably into its setting. Accordingly, the proposal would not harm its setting.

Conclusion

21. Given the above, the proposal would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the IRCA, nor would it provide acceptable external space arrangements for future occupiers. It would not accord with the development plan and there are no other considerations to outweigh that finding.

RE Jones

INSPECTOR