



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 May 2021

by J D Westbrook BSc(Hons), MSc, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 18th June 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/L5240/W/20/3261844

11 Blackhorse Lane, Croydon, CR0 6RT.

- 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 Viktor Lleshi against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Croydon.
 - The application Ref: 20/01439/FUL, dated 25 March 2020, was refused by notice dated 21 May 2020.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of a dwelling house (use class C3) into two self-contained flats.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issue in this case is the effect of the proposed conversion on the housing mix in the Borough of Croydon, with particular reference to the supply of family housing with three or more bedrooms.

Procedural Matter

3. There are errors in the Council's Officer Report in that reference is made to the appeal property being semi-detached when it is a mid-terraced house, and reference is also made to neighbouring houses which are given the wrong addresses. I have described the appeal property in its correct context below, and the errors do not have any bearing on the main issue of the case.

Reasons

4. No 11 Blackhorse Lane is a mid-terraced, four-bedroom house situated on the western side of the road, close to its junction with Woodside Court Road. It has a long single-storey rear extension, and a loft conversion with a rear dormer to provide living accommodation in the roof space. There is a long narrow rear garden.
5. The proposed development would involve largely internal alterations to convert the house into two flats. On the ground floor would be a one-bedroom, two-person flat, and on the first-floor and loft area there would be a two-bedroom, three-person flat. There would be minor alterations to the doors and fenestration in the rear elevation, and the rear garden would be divided in two to give private amenity space to each flat, with direct access from each. There

would appear to be no concerns expressed by the council regarding the adequacy of the internal floorspace of each flat or with the amount of private amenity space provided for each flat.

6. The Council contends that the proposal would result in the subdivision and loss of an original three-bedroom dwelling, for which there is an identified need in the Borough. The development would therefore conflict with Policy DM1.2 and SP2.7 of the Croydon Local Plan (LP). Policy DM1.2 indicates that the Council will permit the redevelopment of residential units where it does not result in the net loss of three-bedroom homes (as originally built), or the loss of homes smaller than 130m². Policy SP2.7 indicates that the Council will seek to ensure that a choice of homes is available in the borough that will address the borough's need for homes of different sizes. This will be achieved by, amongst other things, setting a strategic target for 30% of all new homes up to 2036 to have three or more bedrooms.
7. In this case, the appeal property is currently, after a loft conversion, a four-bedroom house. It was apparently a three-bedroom house when originally constructed. On this basis, the proposed conversion would conflict with Policy DM1.2. Paragraph 4.10 of the LP notes that analysis of the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) suggests that approximately 50% of homes should have three or more bedrooms. It goes on to note that analysis suggests that to meet this demand on the sites likely to come forward for development is impractical, but that a doubling of the outturn for family houses achieved since 2011 is a realistic target. On this basis, the proposal would also conflict with the objectives of the LP with regard to meeting the identified need for homes with three or more bedrooms.
8. The appellant contends that the larger flat would be a small family dwelling and refers to Paragraph 4.13 of the LP, which states that a good quality design can mean that a smaller two-bedroom property is suitable for smaller families. That may well be the case, but the shortfall in housing identified in the SHMA specifically relates to homes with three or more bedrooms, which is the case in the appeal property. The proposal would lead to a net loss of such a home.
9. The appellant has provided information from a Streatham Estate Agency that deals with properties in Croydon. The information indicates that the yield for buy-to-let properties in the UK is highest for two-bedroom homes. However, there is no evidence to suggest that the same figures apply in Croydon and, in any case, UK investment yield does not necessarily equate with the need for specific types of property in Croydon. Further information from the estate agent indicates that properties of a range of sizes – including those of three and four bedrooms – have been successfully rented in Croydon recently.
10. None of the above information from the estate agent contradicts the Council's SHMA, and I find that the net loss of a home with three or more bedrooms, as is the case with the appeal property, would be harmful to the housing mix in Croydon, and would conflict with Policies DM1.2 and SP2.7 of the LP.

Other Matter

11. The appellant makes note of his desire to convert the house in order to rent the one-bedroom to help with living costs due to his ill condition. I have no details of his ill condition but I have sympathy with his situation. Nevertheless, this does not outweigh the fact that the house currently provides a family home of

a size that would appear to be in limited supply in the borough, the loss of which would be harmful to the housing mix in Croydon – albeit to a limited extent.

Conclusion

12. The proposed development would be harmful to the housing mix in Croydon, with particular reference to the supply of family housing with three or more bedrooms, and it would conflict with Policies DM1.2 and SP2.7 of the LP. Accordingly, I dismiss the appeal

J D Westbrook

INSPECTOR