



Appeal Decision

Site Visit made on 22 June 2021

by James Blackwell LLB (Hons)

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 July 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/Z5630/W/21/3270235

25 Latchmere Road, Kingston Upon Thames KT2 5TP

- 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 Mrs Allison against the decision of Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames.
 - The application Ref 20/02896/FUL, dated 17 November 2020, was refused by notice dated 12 January 2021.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of 2 no. flats (C3) to single dwelling house (C3).
-

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the conversion of 2 no. flats (C3) to single dwelling house (C3) at 25 Latchmere Road, Kingston Upon Thames KT2 5TP in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 20/02896/FUL, dated 17 November 2020, and subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved drawings: 03 (Site Location Plan & Block Plan); P-03-001 Rev P0 (Existing and Proposed Plans); P-03-002 Rev P0 (Block Plan); and P-04-001 Rev P0 (Existing and Proposed Elevations).

Preliminary Matters

2. Since the determination of the planning application, the 2016 iteration of the London Plan has been superseded. Policy 3.14 of the 2016 plan was cited in the Council's reasons for refusal, however this has been replaced by Policy H8 of the 2021 version¹. Both parties have had the opportunity to comment on the changes. I have therefore determined this appeal with regard to the most up to date development plan.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is whether or not the proposed development would represent an unacceptable loss of a unit of accommodation.

Reasons

4. The appeal site is a semi-detached property located along a residential street within the Richmond Road Conservation Area. It currently comprises 2 separate

¹ The London Plan, The Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London, March 2021 (The London Plan)

- flats, one at ground floor level and one at first floor. The property was formerly a single dwelling but was sub-divided in the late 1960s. The neighbouring properties are mostly detached or semi-detached dwellings. Whilst difficult to ascertain the extent to which any of these have been sub-divided, externally they have the appearance of family-sized homes.
5. Policy H8 of The London Plan says that *"loss of existing housing should be replaced by new housing at existing or higher densities with at least the equivalent level of overall floorspace"*. Policy DM14 of the Core Strategy² also says that *"the Council will resist the loss of existing accommodation (of all types) and, in particular, dwellings which are suitable for family accommodation. To protect existing family units that meet an identified need, the Council will, where necessary, limit the conversion of family units into houses in multiple occupation"*. The thrust of these policies is therefore to preserve housing stock in order to meet housing need.
 6. The development proposed would lead to a net reduction of one residential unit. However, in place of two separate 2-bedroom flats, the Council would gain a single 4-bedroom dwelling, the building's original use. The total number of bedrooms would therefore remain the same, and the single dwelling would be capable of accommodating the same number of people as the two flats. The overall level of floorspace would also be unaffected, although I acknowledge the appellant's comments that there would be a slight increase to the useable floorspace, as there would no longer be any shared entrance or circulation space.
 7. Strictly speaking, the housing density of the appeal site would be reduced if the development were to be carried out, due to the net loss of one residential unit. However, the net amount of "housing" would remain the same, as there would be no reduction to the number of bedrooms nor to the overarching level of floorspace. Similarly, the contribution that the single dwelling would make to the Council's overall housing supply would essentially remain the same, as the dwelling would still be capable of accommodating the same number of occupiers.
 8. I acknowledge the Council's position that it cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing, and that Policy DM14 seeks to resist the loss of *all* types of accommodation. Nonetheless, it is clear from the policy wording that the preservation of family sized units is especially important in the borough. This is reflected in the Council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA)³ which concludes in respect of the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for Kingston over the plan period, that *"the future pattern of requirements shows a reduction in the proportion of small (one bedroom) units required in 2035, and an increase in the proportion of larger units. 72% of new provision to meet OAN would need to be of three or four bedroom units, and only 5% one bedroom units"*⁴. Although this conclusion specifically refers to a requirement for a reduction in one bedroom units (and not 2-bedroom units as is the case in this appeal), the conclusions of the SHMA do demonstrate a clear need for three and four bedroom dwellings over the plan period within Kingston, which is far greater than its need for smaller units. On the basis that the development would result in a 4-bedroom family dwelling which would

² Core Strategy, Local Development Framework, Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames, Adopted April 2012

³ Strategic Housing Market Assessment for Kingston Upon Thames and North East Surrey Authorities, June 2016

⁴ Paragraph 6.65, p112 SHMA 2016

contribute to the Council's need for larger dwellings, this is a benefit of the development which carries significant weight in my decision.

9. The proposed development would represent the loss of a unit of accommodation. However, for the reasons I have given above, this would not be unacceptable. The development would therefore comply with the aims of Policy H8 of the London Plan and DM14 of the Core Strategy as I have set them out above.

Other Matters

10. The appeal site is located within the Richmond Road Conservation Area (RRCA). Given the proposed development would not include any external alterations, I am satisfied that there would be no adverse visual impact on the RRCA, and its character and appearance would therefore be preserved.

Conditions

11. As well as referring to the approved plans for clarity and enforcement purposes, I have included the standard time condition.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above and subject to the prescribed conditions I conclude that the appeal should succeed.

James Blackwell

INSPECTOR