

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 29 November 2021 by B Phillips BSc MSc MRTPI

Decision by B J Sims BSc (Hons) CEng MICE MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 7 December 2021

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/21/3275381

162 Heston Road, Hounslow, TW5 0QU

- 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 Mandeep Khabra against the decision of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00600/162/P6, dated 18 December 2020, was refused by notice dated 26 April 2021.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of part of a retail unit storage space into a studio flat.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Appeal Procedure

2. The site visit was undertaken by an Appeal Planning Officer whose recommendation is set out below and to which the Inspector has had regard before deciding the appeal.

Preliminary Matters

3. The appellant's appeal statement makes reference to other flats and first floor extensions, and therefore appears to have been written for a previous scheme on this site. These elements are not part of the proposal before me, and I have not considered them as such.

Main Issue

4. The main issue in this case is whether the proposal would provide appropriate living accommodation, with particular regard to outlook and the provision of external space.

Reasons for the Recommendation

5. Other than a bathroom window, the proposed studio flat would be served by windows on its side elevation, facing an access passage, and glazed double doors to its rear, which would face and provide access to private garden space.
 6. The access passage is a constrained and partly covered space. The windows facing this space would look directly at short distance towards the walls of the neighbouring property. Given the proximity and massing of the neighbouring side elevation, the outlook from these windows would result in an oppressive and significant sense of enclosure, providing the occupants of the flat with poor living conditions as a result.
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7. Similarly, the plans show that the rear facing double doors would directly face a 1.8m wall set around the private garden space of the flat. Whilst the sky would be visible above, the predominant view, again at short distance, is the wall. The outlook in this direction would also be enclosed, resulting in poor living conditions to the occupants.
8. This private garden space measures 7sqm, in excess of the minimum required for a 1-2 person unit by London Borough of Hounslow Local Plan (LP) Policy SC5, and in accordance with the London Plan. Whilst the garden area would be enclosed by the boundary wall, this courtyard style space is not unusual for ground floor units requiring privacy. The space is adequate to sit out and dry clothes etc and would therefore meet the demands of everyday life for the intended occupants in this respect, as required by LP Policy SC5.
9. However, this policy also sets out communal amenity space requirements. For each flat 25sqm of usable, convenient and quality communal space should be provided for each flat (up to 3 habitable rooms). Whilst only 1 unit is proposed, the appellant states that there are existing flats on the first floor. The proposal would therefore increase the number of dwellings on the site and no mitigating circumstances have been put forward to depart from the requirement for communal space.
10. The appellant sets out that the access passage, whilst accommodating refuse storage for neighbouring businesses, could be landscaped to provide some 65sqm of communal space. The space is used for access by numerous units, and given its constricted, enclosed nature would be an unpleasant space to spend any length of time in. Moreover, its use as communal space would compromise the privacy of the proposed and existing units which directly face the space.
11. I conclude that, due to the failure to provide usable communal external space and appropriate outlook for occupiers of the proposed flat, appropriate living accommodation would not be provided for future occupiers of the development. The proposal is therefore in conflict with LP Policy SC5, which requires new housing development to be the highest quality internally.

Other Material Considerations and Planning Balance

12. The appellants state that the shop unit to the front has been reduced in scale at the request of the tenants for reasons of retail viability and, as the Council notes, this is acceptable in principle. Therefore, the remaining space is not utilised. The development of the flat proposed would make use of this space and the development would represent an efficient use of space. This attracts modest weight in favour of the development.
13. The site is within the Heston Village Conservation Area but this development would have neutral impact upon it so that the character and appearance of the CA as a whole be preserved as required.
14. In addition, it is noted that no public comments objecting to the proposal have been submitted. However, this is a further neutral factor which weighs neither for nor against the proposal.
15. The modest weight in favour of the development does not outweigh the conflict identified with the development plan, matters which carry substantial weight.

Conclusion and Recommendation

16. While I have found no harm in respect of the provision of private garden space, the proposal would not provide appropriate living accommodation nor communal garden space. There are no material considerations that indicate the proposal should be determined other than in accordance with the development plan. For the reasons given above, I therefore recommend that the appeal should be dismissed.

B Phillips

APPEAL PLANNING OFFICER

Inspector's Decision

17. I have considered all the submitted evidence and the Appeal Planning Officer's report and on that basis the appeal is dismissed.

B J Sims

INSPECTOR