
Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 12 January 2022

by Bhupinder Thandi BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 21 January 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/21/3276081

10 High Street, Cranford, Hounslow TW5 9RG

- 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 Ms S Sangha against the decision of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00610/10/P1, dated 17 June 2020, was refused by notice dated 30 November 2020.
 - The development proposed is conversion of the existing single dwelling detached property into two flats and office space with single storey rear extension and two storey part side and part first floor rear extension.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The description of development in the heading above has been taken from the planning application form. However, in Part E of the appeal form it is stated that the description of development has not changed but, nevertheless, a different wording has been entered. Neither of the main parties has provided written confirmation that a revised description of development has been agreed. Accordingly, I have used the one given on the original application.
3. The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) has been published since the appeal was submitted. Both main parties have been given the opportunity to comment on this. My decision is made in the context of the revised Framework and I am satisfied that no interested party has been prejudiced by my approach.
4. The London Plan (2021) (LP) has been adopted in between the time the application was determined and submission of the appeal. Policy 5.2 of the London Plan (2016), listed in the Council's fifth reason for refusal, has been superseded by new policies in the LP. The aims of both sets of policies are broadly similar and I am satisfied that no interested party has been prejudiced by this change of policy.

Main Issues

5. The main issues are:
 - The effect of the proposed development upon the character and appearance of the area including whether it would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Cranford Village Conservation Area (CA);

- Whether the proposed development would provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupiers, with regard to access, amenity space and waste and recycling facilities;
- The effect of the proposed development upon the living conditions of existing neighbouring occupants, with regard to noise and disturbance;
- The effect of the proposed development on the safe and efficient operation of the local highway network; and
- Whether the proposed development would meet appropriate energy and carbon reduction standards.

Reasons

6. The Cranford Village Conservation Area Appraisal sets out that the CA's significance stems from the quality of its early eighteenth-century buildings, which form the heart of the village. High Street retains its village character defined by a group of cottages, the village lock up and pockets of green spaces along the road.
7. The appeal property is a detached two storey dwelling and forms part of a group of dwellings of a similar vernacular that positively contribute to the appearance and spaciousness of the road through their design, setback from the highway and the generous gaps between them.
8. Despite the use of sympathetic materials and the extension being subservient through a set back and lower ridge height the undercroft in terms of its overall form and appearance, extending right up to the boundary, would result in an unduly dominant and cramped form of development within the street scene eroding the sense of space that currently exists. This sense of obtrusion would be compounded by the extensive hard surfaced frontage resulting in an unduly incongruous feature harming the character of the road, despite the presence of other driveways in the area.
9. The loss of the garden and the installation of fencing to subdivide it into private amenity areas, the formation of multiple cycle and refuse storage enclosures and extensive hardstanding to create the driveway and rear car parking area would be out of keeping with the pattern of development in the area. As such, the proposal would have an unacceptable effect on the character and appearance of its surroundings. The imposition of conditions, in my view, would not overcome the harm that I have identified.
10. In light of the above I find that there would be some, albeit limited harm to the character and appearance of the CA. In accordance with Paragraph 202 of the Framework, it is for the decision maker, having identified harm to designated assets, to consider the scale of that harm. This harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use, which I now turn to.
11. In this regard, the proposal would result in office space and would contribute to local housing. It would be located within an accessible location close to local services and facilities. However, the benefits would be modest and I therefore afford them limited weight. Taking into consideration the points above I find that the harm to the character and appearance of the CA would clearly

outweigh the public benefits of the proposal and afford this considerable weight.

12. In my judgement, the proposed development would not preserve the character or appearance of the Cranford Village Conservation Area and would adversely affect the character and appearance of the area. It would be contrary to Policies SC1, CC1, CC2 and CC4 of the Hounslow Local Plan (2015) (HLP) which, amongst other things, expect developments to have regard to local design standards; sensitively and creatively respond to an area's character, the wider context and history of the area; promote and support high quality design and architecture to create attractive, distinctive and liveable places and to conserve and take opportunities to enhance the significance of the borough's network of designated heritage assets.

Living conditions for future occupants

13. The proposed bins would be positioned behind the property along one side of the driveway. Whilst the appellant has not indicated how the bins would be presented and stored along the frontage on collection days there is nothing to suggest that a condition for waste management could not be imposed, if I were minded to allow the appeal.
14. I acknowledge that the proposed development provides two areas of amenity space for the flats. However, the amenity space belonging to the first floor flat would require future occupants to walk across the car park area without any dedicated pedestrian route. This is a contrived arrangement resulting in a poor quality amenity area. Similarly, the access into the ground floor flat involves walking along the undercroft without any dedicated pedestrian route from the road to the entrance. This arrangement would not be suitable for future occupiers resulting in an uninviting environment that would be unsafe and likely to lead to conflict between pedestrians and vehicles. The proximity of nearby parks and green spaces would not overcome the harm that I have identified in this regard.
15. As such, the proposed development would not provide satisfactory living conditions for future occupants contrary to HLP Policies SC5 and SC6 which, amongst other things, seek private amenity space that is usable and affords privacy and security.

Living conditions of existing occupiers

16. The parking area for the flats would be sited to the rear of the property sited next to the boundary with the neighbouring dwelling. This arrangement would result in comings and goings, the sound of car doors and vehicle engines in an area where residents would reasonably expect to enjoy the comfort of their surroundings.
17. These activities would be intermittent and the uncertain and arbitrary nature of them is likely to be more noticeable having an unacceptable impact on the living conditions of future occupants in terms of noise and disturbance.
18. Consequently, I find that the proposal would be contrary to HLP Policy CC2 which, amongst other things, expects development proposals to have a positive impact on the amenity of current and future residents.

Safe and efficient operation of the highway network

19. The vehicular access into the car park area for the flats is only wide enough for a single vehicle to travel along at any one time. The narrow width and length of the driveway and the limited size of the circulation area would make manoeuvring within the site difficult leading to reversing onto the highway increasing the likelihood for collisions with oncoming vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians which would have an unacceptable impact upon highway safety. This arrangement would be unsafe and is also likely to lead to conflict between pedestrians and vehicles within the site.
20. As such, I conclude that the proposed development would adversely affect the safe and efficient operation of the highway and would harm highway safety contrary to HLP Policy EC2 which, amongst other things, seeks to ensure a more sustainable local travel network.

Energy and carbon reduction

21. HLP Policy EQ1 states that all developments will be expected to meet the carbon emission reduction requirements set out in the LP. LP Policies sets out that developments should achieve carbon reductions and include energy efficiency measures.
22. The application was not accompanied by an energy statement. As such, there is no substantive evidence to suggest that the proposed development would be energy efficient or reduce carbon emissions contrary to HLP Policy EQ1 and the LP.

Other Matters

23. I accept that Cranford is a suitable location for new housing close to services and facilities and the proposal would add to the general availability of local housing. However, it would make a very modest contribution to the supply of housing in the area. This contribution would not outweigh the harm that I have identified in relation to the main issues.
24. The appellant has made reference to other examples of extensions and flats in the area. However, I have not been made aware of the individual circumstances that led to them being considered acceptable by the Council. In any case, every appeal must be considered on its own merits. The presence of other developments in the area does not justify the harm that I have identified.
25. The appellant has drawn my attention to paragraphs in the Framework in relation to design and sustainable locations. I acknowledge the Framework is a consideration in planning decisions. However, in this particular case, it is not justification to allow inappropriate development.

Conclusion

26. For the reasons set out above the appeal does not succeed.

B Thandi

INSPECTOR