



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 March 2022

by David Wyborn BSc(Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 06 May 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/21/3283162

38 and 40 Homefield Road, Chiswick, London W4 2LW

- 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 & Mrs Stallworthy against the decision of London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00622/38-40/P1, dated 22 January 2021, was refused by notice dated 26 March 2021.
 - The development proposed is the conversion of two adjoining properties at No.38 and 40 into a single dwelling with associated internal alterations.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for the conversion of two adjoining properties at No.38 and 40 into a single dwelling with associated internal alterations at 38 and 40 Homefield Road, Chiswick, London W4 2LW in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 00622/38-40/P1, dated 22 January 2021, and subject to the conditions set out in the attached schedule.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect of the proposal on the supply and choice of housing in the Borough.

Reasons

3. The appeal properties are located within a residential road with fairly long runs of generally similar semi-detached properties. The scheme would involve the amalgamation of the two semi-detached dwellings to form a single, larger dwelling. There are no external changes proposed and the dispute between the parties is mainly centred on policy interpretations, how they apply to the scheme and the effects of the development on housing provision.

Development plan policies and supporting documents

4. The planning report explains that the development plan consists of the London Borough of Hounslow Local Plan 2015-2030 (adopted September 2015) (the Local Plan), the West London Waste Plan and The London Plan (adopted 2 March 2021). The reason for refusal identifies conflict with Policy H8 of The London Plan, Policy SC1 of the Local Plan and the intent of the Mayor of London Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance (to the London Plan 2016 updated in August 2017) (the London Housing SPG).
5. In terms of The London Plan, Policy H8 is titled loss of existing housing and estate redevelopment. Section A of this policy explains that the loss of existing

housing should be replaced by new housing at existing or higher densities with at least the equivalent level of overall floorspace.

6. The appellant makes the case that the policy is aimed at redevelopment schemes and that an amalgamation is not covered or addressed by the policy. The supporting text refers to the redevelopment and intensification of London's existing housing and the role that it has played in the evolution of London. The supporting text goes on to refer to the benefits of development proposals that involve the demolition and replacement of existing homes and that this should be balanced against any potential harm. This commentary lends some support to the appellant's case that the policy appears to cover redevelopment schemes rather than amalgamation proposals. Although I accept that, within the policy criterion itself, the concern with the loss of housing in Policy H8A is general and not directly referenced in the context of redevelopment.
7. Attention has also been drawn to paragraph 4.2.8 of The London Plan and the section that explains that where the amalgamation of separate flats into larger homes is leading to the sustained loss of homes and is not meeting the identified requirements of large families, boroughs are encouraged to resist this process.
8. In terms of the London Housing SPG, paragraph 1.2.38 explains that in some neighbourhoods, especially in parts of central London, de-conversion of a number of smaller units into larger dwellings can reduce capacity to meet the requirements of small households. The text also explains that where there is local evidence that the amalgamation of separate flats into larger units is leading to the sustained loss of homes, boroughs are encouraged to resist this process in line with then London Plan Policy 3.14. As Policy 3.14 of the then London Plan is said to be broadly similar to Policy H8 of the present London Plan this adds some weight to the case made that Policy H8 is applicable to the appeal scheme.
9. Consequently, drawing all these matters together and on balance, I consider that the requirements of Policy H8 of The London Plan would apply to the appeal development but this is not the only issue to consider in terms of amalgamations and I will also have regard to the tests and approach set out in paragraph 4.2.8 of the London Plan and the London Housing SPG.
10. Examining the Local Plan, Policy SC1 is titled Housing Growth. The policy seeks to maximise the supply of housing in the Borough. However this policy requirement is subject to meeting housing need in a manner that is consistent with sustainable development principles and which, in summary, is built at a rate that will exceed the London Plan housing targets. This is a wider test than simply seeking to maximise housing numbers. Furthermore, Policy SC1 goes on to set out how the intended housing growth will be achieved and this list does not make direct reference to restricting amalgamations.
11. When considering the policy requirements related to the Local Plan and, in particular, meeting the needs for housing locally, attention has been drawn to various documents that support and inform the local housing issues. This includes the London Borough of Hounslow's Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update (October 2018). This explains that amongst a range of findings, some of the main sources of household growth in the future are associated with either the continued occupation of family sized dwellings, or new households who require family sized dwellings and that families with

children are projected to remain a significant group; the largest group by 2034 (43,400) and these will require family sized two or three+ bedroom homes.

12. The London Borough of Hounslow - Building Homes Building Communities – Housing Strategy 2019-2024 (the Housing Strategy) sets out the housing objectives for the area. My attention has been drawn to the information on page 20 of the Housing Strategy. This comments, in summary, that Hounslow's plans for regeneration predict significant employment and housing growth at all levels of skills and income and, in support of a more mixed economy, the Borough's Housing Pledge recognises the need for more executive accommodation and larger family sized properties to attract professionals and skilled workers to the Borough.
13. Taken together this evidence indicates a housing need, amongst others, for more family accommodation which is larger than three bedrooms and this will include some more executive and larger family sized accommodation. (This need is also evidenced by the appellant's experience of seeking more suitable and larger family accommodation in the area without apparent success.)
14. I am also conscious of the policy requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) that seeks to boost the supply of housing and that this includes meeting the needs of groups with housing requirements. Furthermore, the social aspects of sustainable development in the Framework includes ensuring a sufficient number and range of homes are provided to meet the needs of present and future generations.

The effect of the proposal on the supply and choice of housing in the Borough.

15. The scheme would result in the loss of two family sized homes and the provision of a much larger family unit of accommodation. The loss of the medium sized family units, even though some of the bedroom space is height restricted, would pull against the intentions of the policy approaches. However, Homefield Road appears to contain many other units of a broadly similar size to the present dwellings and the scheme would deliver a unit more akin to an executive sized or larger family dwelling which the Housing Strategy, amongst other housing types, seeks to see delivered.
16. The loss of the two units would not materially affect the range and types of accommodation in the immediate locality but the resulting amalgamated unit would help meet an identified need for such larger sized dwellings in the Borough. This would assist with meeting the Framework policy approach in terms of the social aspect of sustainable development to provide a sufficient range of homes. It would also facilitate the economic aspect of sustainable development as the Borough consider that more executive and larger family sized properties would assist with attracting professionals and skilled workers to the Borough. In these respects, the scheme could be considered sustainable development in terms of the Framework.
17. In these circumstances, I am satisfied that the proposal would assist in providing a supply of housing in a way that would help meet an identified housing need in a manner consistent with sustainable development principles. The Council is able to demonstrate a Framework compliant supply and delivery of housing and the scheme would help provide, in a small way, a better balance to the mix of housing across the Borough. The provision of this larger sized dwelling would meet an identified local need, and meeting this need would, I

consider, outweigh the loss of the two smaller family sized homes in the circumstances of this case. As a consequence of all these matters, I conclude that the proposal would meet with the requirements of Policy SC1 of the Local Plan.

18. In terms of The London Plan, the proposed development would result in the net loss of one unit of existing housing. However, there is no clear and convincing evidence that this amalgamation would materially impact on the overall delivery of housing or that amalgamations are a wider issue leading to a sustained loss of homes across the Borough. I have already concluded that the provision of a larger sized dwelling would help in a small way towards meeting the identified requirements of larger families in the Borough. Accordingly, the scheme would meet with the requirements of paragraph 4.2.8 of The London Plan.
19. For the same reasons, I also consider that the scheme would not conflict with the advice in paragraph 1.2.38 of the London Housing SPG which assists in assessing proposals against the then Policy 3.14 of the earlier London Plan. I therefore consider, having regard to this specific advice on amalgamations that there is no material conflict with the intent of the London Housing SPG in the circumstances of this site. This conclusion is of some background relevance when considering Policy H8 of The London Plan.
20. In terms of the wording of Policy H8 of The London Plan, there would be no loss of housing land or housing floorspace. Nevertheless, there would be a reduction in density and the loss of a unit of housing. In these circumstances and notwithstanding my comments above, I consider that there would be a conflict with the policy wording and therefore the requirements of Policy H8 of The London Plan would not be met.
21. Drawing all these matters together, The London Plan is the most recently adopted part of the development plan, however, I consider that the conflict with Policy H8 is tempered by the compliance with the approach set out in paragraph 4.2.8 of the London Plan and its specific approach as to how amalgamations should be considered. The scheme would comply with Policy SC1 of the Local Plan and this is a matter which I consider of particular importance and substantial weight. It is such that I conclude that the scheme would comply with the development plan when considered as a whole. There are no material considerations of such weight that lead me to consider a decision should be made otherwise. Accordingly, I conclude that the scheme would not materially harm the supply of housing and would assist with the choice of housing in the Borough.

Conditions

22. The Council has suggested two conditions if I was minded to allow the appeal. In addition to the statutory time condition, a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans is necessary in the interests of certainty. As no external alterations to the building are proposed I am satisfied no other conditions are necessary.

Conclusion

23. For the reasons given above, I conclude that the appeal should be allowed.

David Wyborn

INSPECTOR

Schedule of 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 plans:

644_A_00_001 P1 Existing Site Plan (Site Location Plan)
644_A_01_010 P1 Demolition Scope Ground Floor Plan
644_A_01_011 P1 Demolition Scope First Floor Plan
644_A_01_012 P1 Demolition Scope Second Floor Plan
644_A_01_013 P1 Demolition Scope Roof Plan
644_A_10_010 P1 Proposed Ground Floor Plan
Un-numbered and untitled Proposed First Floor Plan (listed as
644_A_10_011 P1 in the appeal submission plans)
644_A_10_012 P1 Proposed Second Floor Plan
644_A_10_013 P1 Proposed Roof Plan
644_A_10_100 P1 Existing & Proposed Section A-A
644_A_10_101 P1 Existing & Proposed Section B-B
644_A_10_102 P1 Existing & Proposed Section C-C
644_A_10_200 P1 Existing & Proposed West Elevation (Front)
644_A_10_201 P1 Existing & Proposed North Elevation (Side)
644_A_10_202 P1 Existing & Proposed East Elevation (Rear)
644_A_10_203 P1 Existing & Proposed South Elevation (Side)

End of Schedule