

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 15 February 2022

by L J O'Brien BA (Hons) MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 22 June 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/21/3272470
49A Old Cote Drive, HOUNSLOW, TW5 0RW

- 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 Michael O'Driscoll against the decision of London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00830/49A/P1, dated 26 October 2020, was refused by notice dated 1 February 2021.
 - The development proposed is conversion of existing dwelling into two self-contained flats.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - the effect of the proposal on the housing mix in the area; and
 - the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area; including whether or not the development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

Reasons

3. The appeal property is a detached three-bedroom dwelling situated towards the end of a residential drive. Though the drive is characterised by semi-detached pairs of fairly uniform two-storey semi-detached houses, in the immediate vicinity of the appeal property there is a greater degree of diversity in design terms.
4. The proposal is for the conversion of the existing dwelling into two self-contained flats.

Housing mix

5. At present the site comprises a three-bedroom dwelling. The proposal would convert the property into one two bedroom unit at ground floor level with a one bedroom unit above.
6. Policy SC3 of the London Borough of Hounslow Local Plan 2015 – 2030 (LP) sets out the Council's aspirations with respect to meeting the need for a mix of housing size and type within the borough. The policy states that the Council will

seek a mix of new housing to meet objectively assessed and evidenced local need, based on the latest and/or most specific available evidence.

7. The London Borough of Hounslow Strategic Housing Market Assessment Update, October 2018 (SHMA) sets out the Council's most recent evidence on the borough's objectively assessed need. The SHMA, at figure 35, sets out the required size and tenure mix for Hounslow. The SHMA states that Hounslow requires 2,000 one bedroom, 4,800 two bedroom and 11,000 three bedroom homes out of a total 20,500 market homes. It is clear from this evidence that the greatest need within the borough is for three bedroom dwellings and I have not been provided with compelling evidence which would lead me to believe that this is not the case.
8. The proposal would result in the loss of a three bedroom dwelling for which there is a clear and evidenced need within the borough. As such the proposal would cause harm to the housing mix in the area and would conflict with Policy SC3 of the LP in this regard.

Character and appearance

9. The appeal property is located within the Heston Village Conservation Area (CA) which is characterised, according to the Council Officer's Report, by medium sized detached family homes. The appeal property is tucked at the end of Old Cote Drive which mainly comprises semi-detached, and some detached, two-storey dwellings. The proposal would not alter the appeal property to any great extent in terms of its appearance. However, the character would be somewhat affected by the conversion of a single dwelling into two flats.
10. The activities associated with two flats, as opposed to one family dwelling, would represent a marginal increase in the intensity of the use of the building. However, the appeal property is in close proximity to other dwellings with a similar number of bedspaces to that which is proposed in this instance and the plot is of an adequate size to accommodate associated parking and other domestic paraphernalia without causing disruption to neighbouring properties. Given the relatively small increase in the number of bedspaces within this context I do not consider that the conversion would be such so as to cause undue harm to the character and appearance of the area in this regard.
11. As such, the proposal would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. Accordingly, the proposal would comply with Policy CC4 of the LP which seeks to protect the borough's heritage assets.

Other Matters

12. I recognise that the proposal would provide some, limited, benefits for example by providing an additional unit of accommodation. I also acknowledge the economic benefits of engaging local professionals, trades and suppliers and the ongoing benefit of the occupiers of the additional dwelling utilising local facilities. These benefits are, however, limited by the small scale of the proposal and must be considered in that context.
13. There is some dispute between the parties as to whether or not the 'original' dwelling would exceed the 130 square metres required by LP Policy SC6 for the conversion of a house to flats. The evidence before me in respect of the size of the appeal property is limited. However, even if I were to find that the threshold of 130 square metres had indeed been met this would not be

sufficient to overcome the harm I have found in respect to the effect of the proposal on the mix of housing stock in the area.

14. I note that the proposal would comply with other elements of local and national planning policy; such as by ensuring that a family (two bedroom) unit would be provided at ground floor level and by meeting the size requirements in respect of the accommodation which would be provided.
15. I have given careful regard to all of the above considerations. However, none are sufficient to dissuade me from the conclusion I have reached that the proposal would cause harm to the housing mix in the area.

Conclusion

16. The proposal would not accord with the development plan when it is considered as a whole and I have not identified any material considerations which indicate that the appeal should be allowed. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

L J O'Brien

INSPECTOR