



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 September 2022

by A Price BSc MA MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 11 October 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/K3605/W/22/3300362

66A & 66B Cambridge Road, Walton on Thames KT12 2DR

- 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 Layla Smith against the decision of Elmbridge Borough Council.
 - The application Ref 2021/4244, dated 14 January 2022, was refused by notice dated 5 May 2022.
 - The development proposed is described on the application form as 'to return the properties of 66A & B back to original house by removing the wall in the original hallway to allow access to the stairs from the ground floor. Other minor alterations include removing the kitchen on the upper floor to create a bathroom. No alterations will be required to the exterior of the property'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matters

2. The site address on the application form refers to the postcode TW12 2DR, while that of the appellant (at the same property) refers to KT12 2DR. The Council and the appeal form also refer to KT12 2DR. I have therefore used this postcode in the address above.

Main Issue

3. The main issue is the effect of the proposed development on housing provision within the borough.

Reasons

4. The appeal site comprises a semi-detached property within Cambridge Road, which is predominantly made up of single dwellinghouses, with some modest flatted developments. The ground and first floor of the appeal property are split into two separate flats, each having a separate front door and providing two-bedroom accommodation. Only the ground floor flat has access to any private amenity space. It is proposed to covert the two dwellings back into a single dwelling.
5. Policy DM10 of the Elmbridge Development Management Plan (LP, 2015) seeks to resist proposals which involve the loss of housing unless it can be demonstrated that the development would result in benefits that would outweigh the harm. In considering proposals that result in the net loss of housing units, consideration will be given to the type and quality of the accommodation that would be lost and the contribution it makes to housing mix.

6. I acknowledge that the proposed development would assimilate to an acceptable standard with the surrounding area based on the fact that Cambridge Road is predominantly made up of single dwellinghouses and noting that the property was itself once a single dwelling. Nevertheless, the appeal site is occupied by a pair of established two-bedroom flats which contribute towards housing supply in the Borough.
7. It is contended that the first floor flat is severely substandard due to it not meeting some current planning policy requirements, including internal space standards. I also note that no access to external amenity space is provided. I accept that the proposed development would provide a larger property with a standard of accommodation that would likely accord with the objectives of LP Policy DM10 and the Nationally Described Space Standard. I also accept that there are limitations to extending the first floor flat, should that be desired.
8. Nevertheless, from my site visit, I was able to see that both flats are dual aspect with access to natural light and outlook. They both provide dedicated kitchen, bathroom, living and bedroom space. Notwithstanding the lack of private external amenity space to the first floor flat, or nearby public open space in lieu of that, the overall standard of accommodation for this unit is reasonable. Moreover, I note that there are pressures for additional housing to be delivered in the Borough, and in particular for smaller properties. The proposed development would result in the loss of a dwelling in the Borough with a reasonable standard of accommodation, to the detriment of housing provision.
9. I note the comments made by the appellant in respect of improvements to parking availability and soundproofing as a result of the proposed development. However, I have no substantive evidence before me to indicate that parking availability would be significantly improved. Even if this were the case, this benefit is relatively limited. The enhancement of soundproofing is not, in my view, inherently dependent on the wider development of the property. As such, there are no benefits before me, either individually or cumulatively, which clearly outweigh the harm identified in respect of housing provision.
10. Consequently, I conclude that the proposed development would be detrimental to housing provision in the Borough, and this harm is not outweighed by the relatively limited benefits of the scheme, contrary to the relevant provisions of LP Policy DM10, which in summary seek to ensure a suitable provision of housing in the Borough.

Other Matters

11. The appellant has set out a potential fallback option in the form of works being undertaken under permitted development (PD) rights. However, I have seen no evidence to indicate that the appellant could reasonably implement a similar scheme under their PD rights. This limits the weight I can attach to it as a fallback option. As such, I give this fallback option minimal weight.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above, having considered the development plan as a whole, the approach in the Framework, and all other relevant material considerations, I recommend the appeal is dismissed.

A Price

INSPECTOR