



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 27 November 2023

by Chris Couper BA (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 19th December 2023

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/23/3319876

18 Grosvenor Road, Hounslow TW3 3ER

- 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 Parminder Padra against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00520/18/P1, dated 11 October 2022, was refused by notice dated 25 November 2022.
 - The development proposed is described as 'change of use of existing 6 persons HMO to 10 persons HMO'.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are:
 - Whether the proposal is appropriately located having regard to the site's accessibility to facilities and public transport;
 - The effect of the proposal on nearby occupiers' living conditions, and whether it would provide appropriate living conditions for the future occupants; and
 - The effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the area.

Reasons

Accessibility

3. Policy SC10 of the Hounslow Local Plan 2015-2030 (2015) ('HLP') sets out that HMOs for six occupiers or more should be located within a convenient 400 metre walking distance of town centre facilities, and should have good access to public transport. At paragraph 5.31 its supporting text explains that this is because, compared to family housing, such accommodation gives rise to additional movements to shops, services and work, and that the occupants are unlikely to each have access to a car.
4. This site is located close to a bus stop and within an area with a good PTAL rating of 4, which accords with the advice at paragraph 3.4 of the Hounslow Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document 2017 ('SPD'). However, according to the Council's 'householder report', it is over 400 metres

from the nearest metropolitan town centre facilities. The appellant does not dispute that.

5. Whilst the property is already occupied as an HMO, the proposal, with four additional residents, would result in a more intensive occupancy, which would generate significantly more comings and goings. The scheme includes the provision of a secured bike shed for the storage of 10 bicycles in the rear garden. However, notwithstanding that sustainable transport option, for the above reasons, in my view, the site is not in a suitably accessible location for the proposed use, and the scheme would thereby conflict with HLP Policy SC10, and with the stance in the SPD.

Living conditions

6. The Council states that the proposed single and double rooms would all meet its space standards and would have adequate natural light, and that the outdoor amenity space would be appropriately sized and accessible for the occupiers. However, it casts doubt regarding whether the proposed communal kitchen/diner area would be sufficient to meet their needs.
7. At around 15sqm the kitchen/diner would be reasonably sized and its rectangular shape would make it well-proportioned and useable. Given their independent lifestyles, it appears to me unlikely that all the occupants would frequently wish to use those communal facilities at the same time. I thus conclude that it would provide a suitable space for the occupants to cook and dine, and that the scheme would ensure appropriate living conditions for them.
8. HLP Policy SC10 sets out that proposals should demonstrate that they would not have a serious harmful cumulative impact on the residential amenity of the area, taking account of cumulative affects as a result of similar development nearby. The SPD explains that this is because there can be problems associated with high concentrations of HMOs, and that HMOs can have impacts on the community as a result of matters such as low level anti-social behaviour, noise and disturbance, and physical appearance through poor management. At paragraph 3.9 it continues that a management statement should be submitted with a planning application setting out how the property will be managed.
9. I have no information before me regarding other HMOs in the vicinity of this site, and I am therefore unable to consider the cumulative impacts with similar development.
10. However, whilst the property is already in use as an HMO, I have found that the proposal would result in a more intensive use as a result of the significant increase in occupants, and greater comings and goings. I observed that this is an end of terrace property in a tightly knit residential area with, what appears to be, a communal passage leading to the side and rear. Noise and activities in one property are therefore likely to have a greater impact on the residential amenities of nearby occupiers than in other less densely developed areas.
11. In that context, and in the absence of detailed evidence, I am concerned that the intensive use of this property by ten residents, would give rise to significant harmful impacts on nearby occupiers, including the adjoining terraced property, as a result of noise and disturbance.

12. Additionally, whilst a small bin store is annotated on the proposed ground floor plan, I have no information before me to indicate how many bins would be required, what size they would need to be, nor whether the proposed store would be sufficient to house them. Thus, I cannot be certain that the scheme would not give rise to harm to adjacent occupiers' living conditions as a result of inadequate refuse and recycling facilities.
13. Whilst the appellant states that a management plan would be required as part of the licencing regime, given the lack of cogent evidence regarding this scheme's impacts, the proposal does not suitably demonstrate that it will not have a serious harmful impact on the residential amenity of the area, as required by HLP Policy SC10 part (g).
14. Finally, HLP Policy SC10 also sets out that properties should have a minimum 'original' floor area greater than 130sqm to be suitable for conversion into non-family HMO accommodation. The SPD explains that this is because there is a pressing need for smaller family houses in the borough. However, whilst I understand that this property is below that threshold, I have no detailed evidence regarding the need for family houses, and given that it is already occupied as an HMO, there would be no loss of such a type of accommodation.
15. Nevertheless, although I am satisfied that the scheme would provide appropriate living conditions for the future occupants, I fail to be persuaded, from the evidence before me, that it would not cause significant harm to nearby occupiers' living conditions. Consequently, on this issue, it would also conflict with HLP Policy SC10, and with the advice in the SPD.

Character and appearance

16. There would be no changes to the external appearance of the building as a result of this scheme. In common with most properties in Grosvenor Road it is set back slightly from the pavement behind a narrow forecourt, where the bins are kept, and which is enclosed by a low brick wall. This prominent location is where the proposed bin store would also be.
17. I have found that in the absence of further details, I cannot be certain that the bin store would be sufficient for the refuse and recycling requirements associated with the increased number of residents, and I am unconvinced that there would be sufficient space in the forecourt without giving it a cluttered or unkempt appearance, thus harming the streetscene. This is not therefore a matter that could be appropriately addressed by means of a planning condition.
18. As HLP Policy EC2 sets out the need for a sustainable transport network, it is of no relevance to this issue. However, for the above reasons, there would be a limited conflict with those parts of HLP Policies SC10 and CC1 which expect development to demonstrate how it responds to local context and character, and to conserve and enhance features that contribute to its character.
19. Whilst this issue alone is not determinative, the potential harm to the character and appearance of the area, adds to the harm that I have found resulting from the other impacts of the proposal.

Other matters

20. In its favour, the scheme would provide additional HMO accommodation, for which there is a recognised need as set out in HLP Policy SC10 and the SPD.

Conclusion

21. Summing up, on the basis of the available evidence I have found that the scheme would provide adequate living conditions for the future occupants, but that it would be inappropriately located having regard to the site's accessibility to services and facilities; that it would harm the living conditions of nearby occupiers; and that it could cause limited harm to the character and appearance of the area. The scheme's modest benefits would not outweigh the sum of the harms that it would cause.
22. The scheme would conflict with the development plan when considered as a whole. Consequently, having regard to all other matters raised, the appeal is dismissed.

Chris Couper

INSPECTOR