



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 30 January 2024

by Robert Naylor BSc (Hons) MPhil MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 09 February 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/23/3324602

Garages to the rear of 2-6 Lime Tree Road, Hounslow, TW5 0TD

- 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 Jasjinder Gill against the decision of the Council for the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 00695/R/02/P2, dated 20 January 2023, was refused by notice dated 29 March 2023.
 - The development proposed is conversion of garages to offices.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary Matters

2. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published by the Government on 19 December and updated on 20 December 2023. Those parts of the Framework most relevant to this appeal have not been significantly amended. As a result, I consider that there is no requirement for me to seek further submissions and I am satisfied that no party's interests have been prejudiced by my taking this approach. I will refer to the updated paragraph numbers where necessary in this appeal.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the impacts of the proposal on i) the need for office development ii) highway safety; and iii) fire safety.

Reasons

Need for office development

4. The proposal is located to the rear of a small terrace of shops in Jersey Parade off Great West Road (A4) and amongst the rear gardens of the residential properties in Lime Tree Road and Heston Road in Hounslow. The appeal site is tight in nature consisting of vacant lockup garages with restricted access via a narrow accessway from Lime Tree Road. The proposal seeks the conversion of the garages to provide a modest increase in office space of approximately 82m². The surrounding area is utilitarian in nature, and given its tucked away location the site has no visual presence from the public realm.
5. The Council has identified a demand for an additional office floorspace during the plan period to 2030. Policy ED1 of the London Borough of Hounslow Local Plan 2015-2030 (HLP) seeks to direct office development to the borough's four main town centres. Outside of these town centres, small businesses including offices, which contribute to the diversity of the local economy are required to

meet the ever-changing needs of business. Policy E2 of The London Plan (LP), March 2021 supports the provision of a range of business spaces to meet the needs of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and to support firms wishing to start-up or expand. The LP further highlights that development of business uses should ensure that the space is fit for purpose and not compromised in terms of layout, street frontage and servicing amongst other things.

6. I have been presented with little evidence in respect to the need for a modest office space in this location, particularly given it is located outside of the main town centres. Little evidence has been supplied in respect to any marketing of the site or information with regard to trends, market conditions or potential demand for small offices in the area. Nor has an end user been specified. Accordingly, I cannot be sure that this particular location would be of interest to any potential future office use occupiers.
7. Nevertheless, I acknowledge that the benefits of the modest office use proposed, would increase the range of more affordable opportunities for smaller firms and start-up businesses. However, there is little evidence demonstrating that the proposed office floorspace would have a strong likelihood of being occupied given its restricted back land location and lack of public presence. Nor is there sufficient detail to demonstrate the potential employment opportunities that could be supported by the appeal. Thus, it has not been shown that the proposal would offer high quality office space that is fit for purpose in accordance with LP Policy E2.
8. For the above reasons, it has not been demonstrated that there is an adequate need for office accommodation at the appeal site. Therefore, I conclude that the proposal would be contrary to HLP Policy ED1 and LP Policy E2, which collectively seek to support business opportunities by providing suitable business space to meet local demand in terms of type, use and size. However, given the scale of the proposal, and its location outside town centres, I do not find conflict with HLP Policies TC3 and TC4 which relate to managing uses and growth within town centres, and are therefore largely irrelevant to the scheme before me.

Highway safety

9. HLP Policy EC2 highlights that development proposals should demonstrate that adverse impacts on the transport network are avoided. Whilst it is acknowledged that the proposal is of a modest scale, little information has been supplied in regard to parking layout, visibility splays, availability of roadside parking or any swept path analysis. As such, it has not been demonstrated whether adequate visibility splays exist on-site; whether there is an adequate provision for on-site parking; nor evidence in respect to the provision of swept path analysis to ensure safe access and egress or the ability to turn on site for vehicles associated with office users, deliveries, servicing and emergency services, particularly given the restricted nature of the site.
10. As a result, I cannot be certain that either parking provision or access arrangements would be safe and meet the required standards, so as to not have a negative impact on the local highway network and safety. The proposal would therefore conflict with the relevant sections of HLP Policy EC2 which amongst other things, require safe access and seek to ensure developments do not harm highway safety.

Fire safety

11. LP Policy D12a sets out that all development proposals must achieve the highest standards of fire safety, taking into account factors which include suitable outside space for fire appliances, fire risk reduction, fire escape and evacuation and provision for firefighting. Whilst a Fire Statement¹ has been provided, as stated above I have concerns in respect to the access of the site and given the lack of swept path analysis I am unsure whether there is suitable space for fire appliances to safely access and egress from the site.
12. Consequently, I cannot be sure on the basis of the information before me that the proposal would, or could be made to, comply with the provisions of LP Policy D12a. Therefore, the use of a planning condition to secure details in respect of this would not be appropriate in this case.

Conclusion

13. The proposed development conflicts with the development plan when taken as a whole, and there are no material considerations, either individually or in combination, that outweighs the identified harm and associated development plan conflict. The scheme also fails to accord with the requirements of the Framework.
14. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Robert Naylor

INSPECTOR

¹ Fire Statement: Version 1 prepared by Origin Custom Homes Ltd