



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 May 2024

by P B Jarvis BSc (Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 July 2024

Appeal Ref: APP/F5540/W/23/3329494
29-31 Spring Grove, London W4 3NH

- 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 and Ms Tim and Birna Moor and Helgadottir against the decision of the Council of the London Borough of Hounslow.
 - The application Ref 01046/29-31/P1, dated 27 March 2023, was refused by notice dated 4 August 2023.
 - The proposed development is extension to No. 29 and alterations to no. 31 to create an enlarged single dwelling.
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Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for an extension to No. 29 and alterations to No. 31 to create an enlarged single dwelling in accordance with the terms of application ref: 01046/29-31/P1 dated 27 March 2023 and subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) This permission shall relate to the following approved plans: AGL 18403 (1:1250 site location plan), 21/SG/201 (existing ground floor plan, site plan, block plan), 21/SG/202 (existing first floor plan, section, elevations), 21/SG/203 (proposed ground floor plan, site plan, block plan), and 21/SG/204 (proposed first floor plan, section, elevations).
 - 3) The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the effect on local housing supply.

Reasons

3. The appeal site lies within the Strand on the Green Conservation Area (CA). The short terrace of modest terraced 'cottages' within which the appeal site is located typifies the character of this part of the CA and they contribute positively to its character, the significance of which relates to the variety of traditional housing types within the area which lie close to the River Thames. Whilst the appeal site comprises different sized units within the original built form, this has not affected the front elevation which retains the appearance of the two original cottages.

4. No. 29 is a two storey, four-bedroom house and no. 31 is a ground floor, one bedroom flat. No. 29 extends over and incorporates the first-floor level and loft area above No. 31. The proposal would result in the integration of the ground floor area of No. 31 within the current dwelling at No. 29 to create a larger single, family dwelling.
5. Whilst the current arrangement is somewhat unusual with the ground floor only of No. 31 being a separate self-contained flat, the Appellant suggests that the conversion of the original cottages took place some time ago, in excess of twenty years. The Council has confirmed that whilst lawful development certificates for the self-contained flat have been refused, the change of use was subsequently deemed immune from enforcement action. Therefore, the main issue relates to the 'loss' of this one-bedroom self-contained unit rather than the loss of the original separate single-family dwellings as appears to be suggested by the Council.
6. The relevant policy of the London Borough of Hounslow Local Plan 2015-2030 (2015) (HLP), SC1, does not state, in terms, that the loss of housing units is resisted, but does seek to maximise the supply of housing, thus inferring that to be the case. In any event, Policy H8 of the London Plan (2021) (LP) does, categorically, seek to resist the loss of housing, subject to other relevant policies. The supporting text indicates that these policies are to be considered in the light of current housing need of which there appears to be a need for both small units, as the area is expected to experience a growth in demand for such size units, as well as larger family units. The London Plan Housing SPG (2017) (LPH SPG) also refers to LP policy 3.1 4B-C which seeks to resist the net loss of housing taking into account existing densities, floorspace provision and housing tenure.
7. The Appellant argues that LP Policy H8 is aimed at redevelopment schemes, not conversion of existing units. It is also argued that that HLP does not contain any policies opposing 'amalgamations' and that the Council currently has a healthy supply of housing with a significant amount of new build having taken place in the Council area mostly comprising one, two and three bedroom flats. The Appellant also refers to the Council's Housing Strategy (2019-2024) where it recognises the need for larger family sized homes to attract professionals and skilled workers to the Borough.
8. However, the Council has referred to paragraph 1.2.38 of the LPH SPG, which deals with de-conversions and amalgamations, and which notes that de-conversion of a number of small units into larger dwellings can reduce the capacity to meet the requirements of small households. It goes on to note that where there is local evidence to show that the amalgamation of flats and homes into larger units is leading to the sustained loss of homes in the area, this process should be resisted. However, the Council has not produced any such evidence.
9. Having regard to all the relevant policies and guidance, whilst there is a clear general need to provide and maintain a supply of housing in the Borough, this need should be balanced against a consideration of specific needs in terms of size and type of unit. In this regard, the Appellant points out that the floorspace size of the existing flat is substandard in terms of the local policy guidance. Furthermore, the proposed conversion would accommodate a multi-generational family including an elderly person with mobility difficulties for

whom a downstairs bedroom with access to a bathroom would be provided, thus enhancing the existing dwelling and providing a flexible and adaptable form of accommodation. Overall, in the above circumstances, the loss of the existing small unit of accommodation would be justified.

10. I therefore find that the proposal would not have a harmful effect on local housing supply. There is no conflict with HLP Policy SC1 or LP policy H8, nor with the LPH SPG.
11. I have had regard to the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and overall consider that the proposal would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development as whilst the Framework seeks to boost the supply of housing it also seeks to ensure that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed.
12. The Council also suggests that the larger family home would be out of character with the prevailing pattern of housing types along the street. However, there already exists a 'larger family home' at the appeal site and its increased size would have a neutral impact in this regard. Furthermore, no alterations are proposed to the front elevation of the property and overall, having regard to the duty under Section 72(1) of the LBCA Act 1990, the character and appearance of the CA would be preserved.
13. With regard to conditions, in addition to the standard time limit, the Council has suggested ones to relate to the approved plans and to require the use of matching materials. I agree that both are necessary in the interests of clarity and the visual amenities of the area respectively.

Conclusions

14. I therefore conclude that this appeal should be allowed and planning permission granted.

P B Jarvis

INSPECTOR