



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 11 May 2011

by Elizabeth Lawrence BTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Decision date: 8 June 2011

Appeal Ref: APP/Q1445/A/11/2147608

348 Ditchling Road, Brighton, East Sussex, BN1 6JG.

- 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 Alan Pook against the decision of Brighton & Hove City Council.
 - The application Ref BH2010/02996, dated 20 September 2010, was refused by notice dated 25 January 2011.
 - The development proposed is conversion of loft space into 1 x studio flat.
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Decision

1. I dismiss the appeal.

Main issue

2. The main issue is whether the proposed development would provide satisfactory living conditions for the occupants of the studio flat.

Reasons

3. The site is situated in an accessible location where, in accordance with the advice given in Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) – *Delivering sustainable development* and PPS3 - *Housing*, full and effective use of sites is encouraged. That is, provided that the development provides reasonable living conditions and respects the area in which it is located.
 4. The kitchen, lounge and bedroom areas would be contained within a single room in the loft area, which would also provide the only access to the flat. The spaces for each use would be cramped, with little circulation space between the kitchen and sleeping areas. The situation would be exacerbated by the limited amount and awkward shape of the floor-space with a head height of at least 2 metres. In addition, the flat would have a single east-facing aspect and the absence of windows in the western roof-slope would add to the strong sense of enclosure within the room.
 5. Although there are advantages in having the bathroom on the floor below, access to it would be via the narrow staircase and landing which is devoid of its own natural light. As such it would add to the cramped environment within the flat. The Appellant has indicated that cycles could be parked and refuse could be stored within the front garden area. However, as stated by the Council, the
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- recycling boxes would need to be stored within the flat, reducing still further the amount of usable space.
6. The main parties have cited schemes for small flats that have been both dismissed and allowed at appeal, although few details regarding the size and configuration of the accommodation concerned have been submitted. Notwithstanding this, the appropriateness or otherwise of any scheme is based upon the individual merits of the scheme proposed, having regard to the prevailing planning policies and all other material considerations. In this instance the limited floor area combined with the restricted head heights would result in a cramped and unsatisfactory form of accommodation for any occupiers.
 7. The shortage of affordable housing for single persons and couples within the area is fully recognised and is reflected in the letters of support for the proposal. However, this is not a good reason for allowing sub-standard forms of accommodation and in this instance the harm that would result from the scheme would outweigh the benefits of providing a single studio flat.
 8. I conclude that the living conditions in the proposed studio flat would be unsatisfactory due to the cramped environment it would provide. As such the scheme would be contrary to policy QD27 of the Brighton & Hove Local Plan 2005 which states that planning permission will not be granted for developments that would cause loss of amenity to proposed occupiers. It would also conflict with the advice in PPS1 and PPS3 which is that the Government's key housing policy goal is to ensure that everyone has the opportunity of living in a decent home and that high quality design should be ensured through good and inclusive design and the effective use of resources.

Elizabeth Lawrence

INSPECTOR