

Change of Use of dwelling to 2 single Person Apartments

69 Park Road , Worsborough

INTRODUCTION

1.This is effectively the resubmission of an application ref: 2013/1255 for conversion of this dwelling into 2 apartments, which was refused on the 20th November 2013 on the following basis:

“The occupants of the proposed apartments would not be provided with sufficient levels of amenity by virtue of the size and layout of the apartments. As such, the proposed development is contrary to the Designing New Housing Development SPD, Core Strategy Policy CSP29, emerging Development Sites and Places Policy GD1 and the fourth core principle in the National Planning Policy Framework and planning policy statements relating to requiring good design, which require high quality design and good standards of amenity for the future occupants of buildings.”

2.This previous application related to a ground floor apartment capable of accommodating 2 persons and a first and second floor apartment with 2 bedrooms with potential to accommodate 3 persons.

3.This new revised proposal is for two single person apartments.

PROPOSAL

4.The property is an end of terrace with painted brick/natural slate which lies on the A61 Park Road just to the north of its junction with the B6100 West Street.

5.Park Road at this point comprises a mix of residential properties (terraces and semi-detached two to three storey properties and detached bungalows).

6.The property which has a small front garden and rear yard can be accessed to the rear via New Street off West Street.

7.The first apartment would be on the ground floor accessed via a porch door to the rear of the property and would comprise a kitchen/dining/living area with separate bedroom and bathroom. The bedroom would be on the front elevation to Park Road.

8.The second would be split between the first and second floors and would be accessed from a door on the side elevation of the property. The first floor would accommodate a living/dining/living area on the front elevation and a kitchen and bathroom to the rear. The second floor would accommodate a bedroom with window on the side elevation of the property.

9.Alterations to the property would be internal only.

10.The proposal is aimed at overcoming the essential reasons for refusal of the earlier application referred to above. The reduction of the apartments to single person accommodation effectively reduces the internal space requirement as referred to in the South Yorkshire Design Guide. (SYDG). This is examined below in the planning assessment.

PLANNING POLICY

11.The Core Strategy policy CSP29 relating to Design sets out the overarching design principles for the Borough to ensure that development is appropriate to its context and states that high quality development will be expected.

12.Similarly the NPPF sets out broad design standards and states “Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development. Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments (amongst other things) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, respond to local character and history reflect the identity of local surroundings and are visually attractive.”

13.The detailed aspects of this proposal relate to the specific guidelines in the Council’s SPD “Designing New Housing Developments” relating to “internal space standards” in section 4 and section19 relating to “Conversion of buildings to residential accommodation ”. This guidance is as follows:

Section 4

“All developments should achieve the internal spacing standards set out in the South Yorkshire Residential Design Guide –Technical Requirements section 4A.2, (p130-131).”

Section 19

“Conversions of buildings to residential accommodation

Conversion of buildings to dwellings, flats or houses in multiple occupation (HMOs) will be allowed where the following criteria are satisfied:

The building and curtilage are of sufficient size to provide suitable facilities for residents.

In the case of dwellings and HMOs, the garden sizes and external separation distances should reflect the requirements set out in the general criteria and meet internal spacing standards. In all cases, internal spacing standards should meet the requirements set out in the general criteria

There will be no unacceptable noise nuisance for either existing neighbouring residents or occupants of the proposed residential unit(s) Satisfactory provision is made for off-street car parking in accordance with the Council’s standards or, exceptionally the development is considered unlikely to give rise to unacceptable conditions of congestion or safety on the adjoining public

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highway(s) by reason of inadequate off street car parking
The appearance of the building or its curtilage would not be altered to the detriment of the visual amenities of the area.”

14.The South Yorkshire Residential Design Guide (S.Y.R.D.G.) is the Council’s main reference point for this decision. This Guide is not formal SPD adopted by the Council, but technical guidance prepared for South Yorkshire Planning Authorities with the intention of seeking to raise design standards and establish consistency. These are therefore simply guidelines and not absolute criteria, which must be complied with.

15.In section 6 of the NPPF Local Planning authorities are urged to respond to the nationwide shortage of housing by “delivering a wide choice of high quality homes”. This proposal achieves this by helping to provide accommodation for people seeking inexpensive apartments to rent in an accessible urban location. Furthermore, it is accommodation of quality in that it meets the design guidelines specified in the Council’s Core Strategy and supporting SPD “Designing New housing Developments “.

PLANNING ASSESSMENT

16.The previous refusal only expresses concerns about levels of amenity as a result of the “size and layout” of the apartments. It is therefore considered there are no concerns in relation to other factors raised in section 19 of the SPD including garden size, noise nuisance, parking, traffic congestion or highway safety.

17.The table below illustrates the detailed comparison between the scheme and the SYDG standards.

Dimensions all in square metres (sqm.)

	1 Bedroom 1 Person Standard	Studio 1 person Standard¹	Ground floor apartment	1st & 2nd floor apartment
Double Bed	12		13.3	10.78
Living Room	13			
Living/dining	16			
Kitchen/Dining/living combined (open plan)	24		17.3	13.3
Bathroom/WC	3.5	3.5	3	4.86
Storage	3.5	1.5	1.17	0
Overall	46	33	40.84	43.32

18. This table illustrates that in terms of the SYDG standards both apartments meet the internal space standard for a studio flat. The ground floor apartment falls slightly short on storage space by 0.83 sqm. but if the porch is taken into account as providing an element of storage would meet the standard.

19. In terms of the overall space requirement standards, the apartments nearly meet the standard for a 1 bedroom 1 person apartment. The ground floor apartment is only 5.12 sqm. below the standard whilst the first/second floor apartment is 2.68 sqm. short.

20. It should be noted that the rooms all meet the minimum room dimensions described in paragraphs A2.2 to A2.6 of the SYDG.

21. The recent appeal decision relating to a similar proposal (ref : 2013/0759) at Castle Street, Barnsley demonstrates that the distinction between a studio and 1 bedroom apartment is tenuous and there is scope for a flexible interpretation, particularly as the SYDG does not specifically define “studio” apartment. In that case the apartments were of similar configuration and not totally open plan, which is often the description applied to studio apartments. Despite the Council’s concern that the design was “contrived” to meet the standards, the Inspector had no qualms in allowing the appeal.

¹ Does not include porch

22.The same situation applies here. Indeed the proposed apartments are larger ; the apartments at Castle Street were 39.6 sqm. and 38.5 sqm. internal floor area , compared to the current scheme offering 40.84 sqm and 43.32 sqm.

23.The following statement by the Inspector in paragraph 11 of the decision letter is directly relevant to the current proposal ;

“it does seem to me, that, bearing in mind all the circumstances of this case, the proposed adaption of the appeal site to form two small apartments that may be broadly classified as studio dwellings would diversify the dwelling stock without unacceptably compromising the design quality so as to conflict harmfully with the intentions of either the development plan or relevant national policy.”

24.It should be also noted that the inspector did not consider the minor contravention of the bathroom floor space to be a problem and was within the “bounds of acceptability”.

25.The Inspector was recognizing the status of the SYDG as a guideline and not “adopted” by the Council ² as an absolute reference for internal space standards. Indeed, he was exhorting the Council to follow the policy in the NPPF to diversify the housing stock.

CONCLUSION

26.This proposal meets essentially meets the requirements for studio apartments in the SYDG and is very comparable to a similar scheme allowed recently under appeal, which is a material consideration in this application.

27.The scheme is contributing to the provision of a diverse range of housing accommodation and squarely in line with policy recommendations in section 6 of the NPPF.

² See paragraph 7 of the Appeal decision letter

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