The Planning Inspectorate

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 5 September 2017

by Michael Evans BA MA MPhil DipTP MRTPI

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

Decision date: 11th September 2017

Appeal Ref: APP/A1530/D/17/3176558
114 Braiswick, Colchester CO4 5BG

- 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 Ms O'Sullivan against the decision of Colchester Borough Council.
- The application Ref 170325 was refused by notice dated 5 April 2017.
- The development proposed is a single storey side extension.

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issue

2. The main issue in this appeal is the effect on the character and appearance of the host dwelling.

Reasons

3. At the front the host dwelling has a two storey part projecting towards the street and another to the side, with an angled part in between where the entrance is located. The gable ends of the two storey parts have bay windows at ground floor level. These arrangements give the front of the property, centred on the angled two storey section, an attractively balanced and symmetrical appearance. Despite not being a Listed Building or within a Conservation Area, the host dwelling therefore has some architectural merit.

4. The proposed extension would be significantly wider than the adjoining two storey part between it and the tilted section. It would also be appreciably wider than the street facing two storey gable end. This excessive width would be emphasised by the absence of any set back from the attached front wall. The pitch of the roof above the extension would be noticeably less than those of the main roofs. Rather than representing a suitably minimal difference, together with its width this would give the addition a poorly proportioned and somewhat squat appearance. This would be unduly at odds with the strong vertical emphasis of the host dwelling at the front.

5. The bay window at the front would reflect those found at the existing gable ends. However, it would be set in the same plane as the immediately adjacent ground floor opening while being significantly larger. Although reflecting an original feature, the chimney to the side of the dwelling would result in additional bulk. These matters would further increase the dominance of the addition.

6. Due to the above factors, the extension would appear unacceptably dominant while being poorly related to the existing dwelling. The addition would also disrupt the carefully conceived balance of the host property. The disharmonious presence of the extension would be apparent from the street when looking through the access. While the existing vegetation restricts views from the street to some degree, it is likely that the addition would be a longer lasting feature in the locality. In any event, the suggestion that acceptability should be conferred on the basis of limited visibility seems to me to represent an implicit acknowledgement of the inappropriate nature of the development.

7. The Appellant indicates that there are a variety of designs and styles in the locality with a range of approaches to extensions. However, I have not been provided with the full details of any specific cases and there is nothing to show that the Council's decision making has been unreasonably inconsistent. Moreover, the adverse effect that I have described would occur despite the relatively diverse context.

8. It is accepted that different ways of extending a dwelling can be successful, including not having any set back at the front. Nevertheless, in this instance the approach taken would not be appropriate and for the reasons given it is concluded that the character and appearance of the host dwelling would be harmed.

9. There would be conflict with the intention of Development Policies Policy DP1 that development should respect and enhance the character of the site. The proposal would also fail to reflect the high quality design sought by Core Strategy Policy UR2.

10. It is suggested in Paragraph 60 of the National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) that decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes. However, given the unacceptable dominance of the extension in relation to the host dwelling this is not a case where such a criticism could reasonably be made. Moreover, I am reinforced in my view regarding the adverse impact and unacceptable nature of the development by the importance placed on design in the Framework. It is a core principle that planning should always seek to secure high quality design. It is also indicated that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development and is indivisible from good planning, which would not be achieved in this instance.

11. It is acknowledged that the application did not result in any objections from local residents and that the scheme seeks to address the Council's reasons for refusing a previous application. Nevertheless, these matters do not, in themselves, confer acceptability and I must consider the appeal strictly on its own planning merits. In this case the additional ground floor accommodation to cater for visitors would be obtained at the undue expense of the quality of the built environment.

12. Given the harm that would result and taking account of all other matters raised, it is determined that the appeal fails.

M Evans

INSPECTOR