

Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 21 January 2022

by R C Shrimplin MA(Cantab) DipArch RIBA FRTPI FCI Arb MCIL
an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd February 2022

Appeal Reference: APP/V1505/D/21/3287554
Land at 411 Outwood Common Road, Billericay CM11 1ET

- 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 Mrs A Partridge against the decision of Basildon Borough Council.
 - The application (reference 21/01236/FULL, dated 10 August 2021) was refused by notice dated 7 October 2021.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as a “proposed garage conversion into self contained granny annex”.
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main issues

2. The first main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area. The second is the effect of the proposed development on the residential amenities of neighbours (whether unacceptable harm would be caused by disturbance or visual intrusion).

Reasons

3. The appeal site is located on the north-eastern edge of Billericay. The area is an established residential suburb that is characterised by a mix of housing types. Two-storey houses as well as bungalows and chalet bungalows are to be seen along Outwood Common Road, predominantly detached homes. There is a variety of architectural styles, with a preponderance of traditional construction materials and conventional pitched roofs.
4. Number 411 Outwood Common Road is located close to the junction with Whiteways, a short cul-de-sac. It is a modest detached bungalow, with some accommodation on the first floor, situated between two taller buildings. Its front elevation has some “Tudoresque” features, including timber framing and rustic boarding, with less striking design features at the rear.
5. The property has the benefit of a modest back garden but there is a large garage building at the end of the plot, inset from the north and west boundaries by small gaps between the building and the garden fences. The

south elevation of the garage faces the vehicle turning area in Whiteways and is dominated by a large red painted garage door. The east elevation, facing the back garden of the bungalow, is of brickwork with domestic scale windows and the outbuilding has a flat roof that reduces its overall height. At the time of the site visit, the outbuilding was in use for domestic storage purposes but there is space for car parking at the front of the plot, off Outwood Common Road.

6. It is now proposed that the outbuilding be converted to create a "granny annex".
7. The 'National Planning Policy Framework' emphasises the aim of "achieving well designed places" in the broadest sense, making it plain that new development should be sympathetic to its surroundings (notably at Section 12). It is aimed at achieving good design standards generally, which includes protecting residential amenities and providing good standards of accommodation.
8. An emphasis on the importance of good design is also to be found in the Development Plan, notably at Policy BAS BE12 of the 'Basildon District Local Plan Saved Policies' (dated September 2007), which includes the provision that development should be refused planning permission if it would harm the surrounding area and also seeks to prevent harm to the living conditions of neighbours to new development.
9. In this case, the existing building would be converted to create the proposed new living accommodation. The project would result in some alterations to the fenestration facing the shared garden but the existing garage door feature would, essentially, be retained. The overall scale and shape of the building would be maintained and its external appearance would be little changed. Hence the project would have only a limited impact on the appearance of the building or on the existing outlook from nearby properties and it would not add to overshadowing or to visual intrusion in relation to neighbouring properties or to the streetscene.
10. Nevertheless, the character of the property would very clearly be changed. The new "annex" would incorporate a combined lounge and kitchen, a bedroom and a shower-room (labelled "bathroom"), as well as an entrance lobby. It would be reached from the garden either through the existing dwelling or by means of a side gate connecting directly with Whiteways. The new "annex" would thus be self sufficient with all the accommodation needed for independent living, sharing only the garden with the existing dwelling and effectively independent from it.
11. The submission made on behalf of the appellant explains how it is envisaged that the converted outbuilding would be used and it is clear that the conversion would introduce a much more intensive use of the site as a whole. In practice, two households would be created on the plot. This would be out of character with the surrounding area, which is currently a relatively lower density suburban location. Moreover, it would also give rise to a greater degree of noise and disturbance for the residents of adjoining properties, as a consequence of the greater intensity of use of the site.

12. In short, the proposed conversion would erode the suburban character of the area and would have a harmful effect on the residential amenities of neighbours, by generating an undue level of noise and disturbance.
13. Evidently, the appeal site lies within an established urban area, which is “sustainable” in planning terms, and the proposed development would provide a useful unit of residential accommodation. Nevertheless, I am convinced that the harm that would be done to the character of the surrounding area and to the amenities of nearby residents outweighs the benefits of the project.
14. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including, specifically, Policy BAS BE12 of the ‘Basildon District Local Plan Saved Policies’). The proposed development ought not to be allowed, therefore, and although I have considered all the matters that have been raised in the representations, I have found nothing to cause me to alter my decision.

Roger C Shrimplin

INSPECTOR