

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: 28th February 2022

Appeal Reference: APP/V1505/D/21/3279354
Land at 10 Meadow View, Langdon Hills, Basildon SS16 6TS

- 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 O'Neill against the decision of Basildon Borough Council.
 - The application (reference 21/00453/FULL, dated 17 March 2021) was refused by notice dated 28 June 2021.
 - The development proposed is described in the application form as follows: "Conversion of the existing loft -by reconfiguring the existing roof, and construction of a new dormer extension to the rear of the detached property".
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Preliminary points

2. Notwithstanding the description of the application that was given in the application form, the nature of the proposal can more clearly be expressed as set out in the Council's decision notice and in the appeal form, as a proposal to increase the ridge height of the main roof and to construct a new dormer extension to the rear (to enable a loft conversion).

Main issues

3. The first main issue to be determined in this appeal is the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the host building and its surroundings. The second is the effect of the proposed development on the residential amenities of neighbours (whether unacceptable harm would be caused by overbearing appearance or overshadowing or intrusion on privacy).

Reasons

4. The appeal site is located in an extensive residential area, known as Langdon Hills, which has been laid out to the south of Laindon itself, from which it is largely cut off by a railway line. The residential suburb is laid out with an irregular street pattern, accommodating some landscape features and adjoined by an area of public parkland. Within the development, green spaces and numerous trees create an attractive suburban environment.

5. The houses in the vicinity of the appeal site are typically two-storey detached homes, with pitched roofs and brickwork elevations. The forms that have been created and the use of a range of different bricks, introduce variety and interest into the townscape.
6. Number 10 Meadow View is constructed of buff brickwork and the roof has its eaves facing the road and back garden (whereas some other properties have gables facing the public highway). It has a simple rectangular floor plan, with some articulation at the front but with a rather plain rear elevation. This plot is located between its neighbour at number 12 (which has a main gable towards the road) and the back gardens of the houses at numbers 6 and 8 Meadow View (which do not face the road).
7. It is now proposed to increase the pitch of the main roof (thereby raising the ridge level) and to construct a flat roofed dormer on the new rear roof slope, with two new Velux windows on the front slope. The increased space would be used to provide additional play space or living space at loft level.
8. 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.
9. 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 affected by new development.
10. The new roof pitch would change the appearance of the building in street views but, by itself, it would not be significantly out of character with the generality of properties in the area and the variety of design features. On the other hand, the proposed new "box dormer" structure would be very different from the existing house. In detail, the design would be modern, making use of large glass sheets as well as "terracotta colour cladding", and in other circumstances the design approach could be appropriate. In this case, however, the dormer structure itself would inevitably be in a form that would be very unsympathetic to the existing building and its neighbours and would be out of keeping with its surroundings. It would attach a box-shaped, flat roofed extension, covering most of the new rear roof slope, that would sit very uncomfortably with the traditional style of the host building.
11. The dormer would be very obvious in views from surrounding gardens and would amount to an intrusive and ungainly feature that would harm the appearance of the host building and of the surroundings. Thus, it would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan) that are intended to achieve high standards of design. This proposal must be considered on its own merits and I have formed the opinion that the design objections to the scheme are such that it ought not to be allowed.

12. Although the new dormer would have an effect on the outlook from neighbouring properties, it would not add significantly to overshadowing of nearby homes or gardens. Moreover, the large, glazed area that is incorporated in the design might generate an impression of overlooking but, in reality, the gardens in the area are relatively small and generally are overlooked from the rear windows of their neighbours in any case. On balance, therefore, I have concluded that the proposed development would not have such a detrimental effect on the residential amenities of neighbours that it could not be allowed, if there were no overriding design objections to the scheme.
13. I accept that the proposed extension could be a useful addition to the accommodation at 10 Meadow View but, nevertheless, I am convinced that the harm that would be done to the character and appearance of the existing house and the surrounding area outweigh the benefits of the project. Hence, I have concluded that the scheme before me would conflict with both national and local planning policies (including the Development Plan) and that it ought not to be allowed.
14. 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