



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 17 August 2022

by H Lock BA(Hons) DipTP MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 15 September 2022

Appeal Ref: APP/V0510/D/22/3298660

Highfield House, Upend, Newmarket, CB8 9PH

- 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 Piers Plunket against the decision of East Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application Ref. 21/01774/FUL, dated 7 December 2021, was refused by notice dated 22 April 2022.
 - The development proposed is conversion of existing garage to live in carers accommodation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Procedural Matter

2. Although the proposal is described as 'conversion' of the existing garage, it includes a 'catslide' dormer window to the side roof slope, as shown on the submitted plans. The Council took account of the dormer window in reaching its decision and I have done the same.

Main Issues

3. The main issues are the effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the appeal property and the street scene; and (2) the need for the proposal.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

4. Highfield House is a detached dwelling of distinctive design as a result of its mono-pitched roof forms. The dwelling has been extended but each linked element shares this notable roof form, and a steep and prominent mono-pitched roof is also a feature of the detached double garage. Although the dwelling and its garage stand alone in a rural area, they are prominent features in the street scene as a result of the interesting design.
5. The Council has no objection in principle to the conversion of the garage, and I share this assessment in view of alternative off-street parking on the frontage. The existing unaltered roof slope of the garage is visible in views on approach from the north-west, and the building appears well-related to the design and form of the host house. Policy ENV 1 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (LP) requires proposals to demonstrate that their location, scale, form,

design and materials will create positive, complementary relationships with existing development. This is reinforced by LP Policy ENV 2, which seeks to secure high quality design which has regard to local context, including architectural traditions. The policy seeks to avoid uncoordinated piecemeal development, and to ensure that buildings relate sympathetically to the surrounding area and to each other.

6. In this context, the proposed dormer window would occupy much of the roof slope of the garage, with only limited space retained to the ridge and eaves. As a result of its size, it would appear unduly bulky and dominant on the building, and this would be exacerbated by the use of black boarding as a finish. Whilst I appreciate that a 'catslide' dormer design seeks to complement the roof style at the property, the distinctive and steep mono-pitched form of the garage would be lost, to the detriment of its relationship with the main building. The cohesion of the pair would be compromised.
7. I therefore conclude that the proposal would detract from the character and appearance of the appeal property, contrary to the design aims of the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and LP Policies ENV 1 and ENV 2, as supported by the Council's Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2012.

Need for the Proposal

8. The Council's officer report does not oppose use of the building as an annexe, and I note that the Council unsuccessfully sought amendments for the conversion of the whole of the ground floor. Although not specifically addressed by the Council, the need for the proposal forms a key basis of the appeal. The proposal seeks to provide accommodation for an on-site carer, whilst retaining a secure parking space, and the appeal statement sets out the reasoning behind these needs. I am mindful of the benefits that this on-site but independent presence would bring to the quality of life and living conditions of the occupant of the dwelling; and also, the albeit limited, employment opportunity that it would provide.
9. However, the Courts¹ have generally taken the view that planning is concerned with land use in the public interest, rather than the protection of purely private interests. In this case, the need would result in a significant and permanent change to the garage with long-term visual impacts on the setting. The personal benefits of the proposal must be balanced against its visual impact, and I do not consider that the need would be met in a manner that would be sympathetic and complementary to the scale, form and massing of the garage and the main house.
10. Whilst on the one hand the proposal would accord with the aims of paragraph 130 f) of the Framework, to create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, it would also conflict with paragraph 130 a) and b) of that document: it would not add to the quality of the area, both in the short term and over the lifetime of the development; and it would not be visually attractive as a result of good architecture. In the planning balance, I conclude that the need for the proposal and the personal benefits that would result would not outweigh the identified harm.

¹ Planning Practice Guidance - Paragraph: 008 Reference ID: 21b-008-20140306. Revision date: 06 03 2014

Other Matters

11. The appellant has referred to remedial drainage work to be undertaken at the property, as a result of the siting of the existing garage. However, this is a separate matter that offers limited support to the appeal proposal.

Conclusion

12. For the reasons given above I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

H Lock

INSPECTOR