



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 13 January 2025

by **Andrew Dale BA (Hons) MA MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 3rd February 2025

Appeal Ref. APP/C1570/D/24/3351489

Northfield House, Roman Way, Littlebury, Saffron Walden CB11 4TN

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Tara Wyer against the decision of Uttlesford District Council.
- The application ref. is UTT/24/1608/HHF.
- The development proposed is a proposed annexe.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed and planning permission is granted for a proposed annexe at Northfield House, Roman Way, Littlebury, Saffron Walden CB11 4TN in accordance with the terms of the application, ref. UTT/24/1608/HHF, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than 3 years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans as amended on 11 August 2024 and numbered/titled: TW 0524.01 A (Existing Site Plan Block/Roof Plan); TW 0524.02 A (Proposed Plan Front Elevation); and TW 0524.03 A (Proposed Elevations Location).
 - 3) The annexe hereby permitted shall not be occupied or used at any time other than for purposes ancillary to the residential use of the single dwelling house at Northfield House, Roman Way, Littlebury, Saffron Walden CB11 4TN.

Preliminary matters

2. A revised National Planning Policy Framework (Framework) was published on 12 December 2024. The new 2024 version does not however differ from the previous version insofar as it relates to the main issue in this appeal. The cases of the main parties will not therefore be prejudiced by my reference to the new version. I have proceeded on this basis.
3. It was confirmed at the site visit that the appeal property is known as Northfield House, as it appears on the application form, and not Northfields House as set out on the Council's decision notice and the appeal from.

Main issue

4. The main issue is the effect of the proposed annexe building upon the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surroundings, with particular reference to its scale, form and siting.

Reasons

5. Littlebury is a quiet rural settlement with a diverse mix of dwellings in terms of age, design, form and siting. Northfield House is a sizeable 2-storey detached house, with an attached double garage, located on a fairly wide plot off a private drive cul-de-sac (Roman Way) within settlement limits. A single-storey, one-bedroom annexe was proposed in the application, to be built on the eastern side of the plot adjacent to the double garage and joined onto it by a porch canopy, so that the appellant could provide suitable ground floor accommodation for her elderly parents.
6. Even though the annexe would provide the facilities required for independent day-to-day living, it would not necessarily become a separate planning unit from the main dwelling. As a matter of fact and degree, the accommodation would plainly be capable of being occupied as an annexe, taking into account the following: the first intended occupiers would be close family members who are likely to share various living activities with the family in the main dwelling; the whole site of Northfield House would remain owned by the appellant with no suggestion of there being any subdivision of the plot or separate titles, bills or postal addresses or any letting to tenants; the residential accommodation would be closely related to the main house with the principal windows to the habitable rooms directly overlooking the front and rear garden areas of the main dwelling; the access, parking and garden areas are clearly capable of being shared; and the floor space of the annexe would be far smaller than the floor space of the main dwelling.
7. The Council was satisfied about the principle of the development and that the building would be used as ancillary accommodation and not as an independent dwelling. No obvious conflict with the limited guidance on residential annexes for dependent relatives in the Council's Home Extensions Supplementary Planning Document was identified in the Delegated Officer Report (DOR).
8. As the annexe would be sited about 2.4m behind the advanced 2-storey gable end at the front of the host dwelling, it would not be visible from the main road (B1383). In views eastwards down Roman Way, it would not emerge until passing in front of Northfield House. At this point, Roman Way is a gated section of private road serving Northfield House and Cam House. The main viewing point would be from the land on the southern side of Roman Way which is also happens to be part of the garden of Northfield House. Set in from the common boundary with Cam House, it would not appear inappropriate when taking in its surroundings, with ample space being retained to the front, rear and west of the dwelling. Thus, having regard to the site's secluded setting and the proposed siting, I consider that the annexe would be neither intrusive nor prominent in the public realm.
9. The eastern portion of the plot does not make a significant contribution to the spaciousness of the site and its surroundings. It already contains 2 sheds in use for purposes incidental to the occupation of the main house, a concrete pathway and hardstanding, an oil tank and a soft planted area. The substantial part of this land,

where the annexe would be sited, is lower than the pathway alongside the double garage. Whilst the proposed building would be a notable structure in its own right, these levels would allow the eaves of the annexe to match those of the adjacent double garage, whilst its roof ridge would be no higher than the eaves of the main house. It would present a strong degree of visual subordination as it would not challenge the dominance of the main dwelling in terms of its overall built form, width, height and massing, as is most evident from the front elevation drawing. The annexe would have traits that reasonable observers might associate with a well-designed ancillary outbuilding such as the single-storey built form, steeply pitched slate roof, simple rectangular plan form and gabled front end reflecting the characterful, advanced 2-storey gable end of Northfield House.

10. I have not been referred to any development plan policy or guidance which contains any definition, numerical or otherwise, as to how the scale of an annexe is to be assessed in this context. It should be remembered that any assessment should take into account that it is an annexe with all the necessary facilities for day-to-day living that is being proposed, not an ordinary house extension. With the internal floor space being well below 50 sq. m, the annexe would not be a significantly sized building with a considerable footprint. As an annexe, it would not provide an extravagant amount of accommodation: a living room/kitchen and a bedroom with en suite all on one floor. That the annexe would be deeper than the host property is essentially a product of its alignment and narrow plan form. The additional depth would be in single-storey form and would not be particularly apparent from any public or private vantage points.
11. I consider that the proposed annexe building would be sufficiently complementary to the parent building and site in terms of its scale, form and siting. Rather than having a dominating impact on the surroundings, it would make a visually positive contribution to its context and location and be respectful of the character and appearance of the dwelling and locality.
12. I find on the main issue that the proposed annexe building would not be harmful to the character and appearance of the host dwelling and the surroundings, with particular reference to its scale, form and siting. It would display the design quality and the respect for the original building and the settlement's character that are required by Policies S1, GEN2 and H8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan adopted in January 2005. These policies are broadly consistent with the Framework's objectives for achieving well-designed places. I am also alert to the possibility that the Council may have meant to refer to Policy S3 - Other Development Limits which would appear to take in the boundaries of settlements, like Littlebury, that are not identified as the main urban areas to which Policy S1 applies. Either way, the aims of Policies S1 and S3, insofar as this appeal case is concerned, are similar.

Conditions

13. I have reviewed the 4 conditions suggested by the local planning authority in its questionnaire. I shall impose conditions setting the standard time period in which the development is to commence and requiring that the development is carried out in accordance with the relevant approved drawings to provide certainty.
14. The Council suggests and the appellant welcomes the inclusion of a condition to control the future use of the proposed annexe. I find that it is necessary and

reasonable for a condition restricting the annexe to ancillary usage. This will reflect the purposes stated by the appellant. The use of the annexe for other purposes might raise wholly different considerations in planning terms.

15. A condition to secure the use of matching materials is not necessary and may not entirely reflect the development proposed. The use of render, the predominant material on the walls of the house, is confirmed on the plans and the application form. Finishing the roof of the annexe in slate (as proposed) would be unlikely to provide a good match for the red roof tiles on the main house. However, this would be a high quality roofing material and would not be inappropriate on an outbuilding in the garden. Moreover, the Council did not object to the use of slates in the DOR.

Conclusion

16. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised and the lack of objections from local residents, Ward Members and the Parish Council, I conclude that this appeal should be allowed.

Andrew Dale

INSPECTOR