



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 1 July 2025

by Eleni Marshall BSc (hons) MSc FRICS FAAV MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 03 July 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/V0510/D/25/3366683

19 Millfield Lane, Wilburton, Cambridgeshire, CB6 3SD

- 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 Anna Furness against the decision of East Cambridgeshire District Council.
 - The application reference is 25/00331/FUL.
 - The development proposed is erection of out building/office in front garden (retrospective).
-

Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issue

2. The main issue is the impact of the proposal upon the street scene and character and appearance of the appeal site and its surroundings.

Reasons

3. The appeal site is a detached residential dwelling accessed off Millfield Lane (noted to be a bridleway) constructed following planning permission having been granted in August 2021 (pursuant to previous outline planning permissions as noted in the planning history). The proposal before me seeks to retain an outbuilding which is in the region of 6 metres in width, 3.6 metres in depth and 2.6 metres in height (at its highest point). The building is sited at the very front of the appeal site, on the site boundary, immediately adjacent to Millfield Lane and the host property's driveway. The proposal projects beyond the side elevation of the host dwelling as well as being situated to the front of the principal elevation of the host dwelling.
4. At the time of my site visit I noted that there are examples of outbuildings (garaging) which are forward of the principal elevation of adjacent dwellings. Whilst these are acknowledged, I do not find them comparable to the proposal that is before me. I note that proposals should be judged with consistency to maintain confidence within the planning system, however, where front of dwelling outbuildings or detached garages have been permitted without unacceptable harm I find they are not comparable to the proposal that is before me for the reasons I have outlined. The existing outbuildings that are associated with neighbouring properties I find to be of appropriate construction and design which results in comparatively high-quality design that is in keeping with their host dwellings and the general street scene. Whilst the buildings are close to their respective site boundaries those dwellings do not immediately adjoin the countryside, to the side of the site, as is the case with the appeal site before me where the views beyond the site from Millfield Lane, on approach to the site, are applicable and notable as having been blocked by the proposal.

5. Whilst the proposal is small scale compared to the size of the host dwelling it is located in a very prominent position which I found to be notable in views when approaching the site along Millfield Lane from the A1123. I find that the proposal is sited in such a way that it prevents views to the open countryside beyond Millfield Lane when looking south which does result in a loss of openness visually and spatially as result of the building being located at the point where the site adjoins the open countryside and adjacent to the access itself. In addition, and most notably, the building is of insufficient quality to be located in front of the dwelling in a prominent location, and I find that its basic, utilitarian appearance results in a negative impact upon the street scene as well as the host dwelling itself. I find the proposal to fail to represent high quality design.
6. The materials are that which would be commonly associated with an outbuilding located to the rear of the site such as a garden building/shed type structure. Overall, the proposal fails to result in a high-quality scheme in its own right as a result of its location but, most notably, the materials and design which I find to be inappropriate in such a location, forward of any other outbuildings within the street scene and in direct contrast to the high-quality design of other outbuildings which are part of the character and appearance of the locality. I can see, from the appellant's statement, the approved hedgerow and boundary treatments to be erected along the front and side of the boundary of the plot, however, even if this was considered to overcome the issue I have found with regard to openness and views through the site to the countryside beyond, this would not overcome the issue I have found with the proposal being of inappropriate design as a result of the materials and utilitarian construction.
7. I acknowledge the reasoning for the outbuilding being located to the front of the host dwelling in relation to separation between working and family life as part of its intended for use as an ancillary home office and that this supports flexible working patterns and evolving professional and lifestyle needs. However, whilst the proposal is modest and would not result in additional traffic or public intrusion this, and the intended use, does not overcome the issues I have identified with the design and location of the proposal as outlined above. I acknowledge that the building has been designed to the minimum size necessary, however, I do not find that this results in the proposal being sympathetic to its location by virtue of its design, materials and positioning within the appeal site. Whilst the proposal would not impact upon parking and turning areas to the front of the dwelling this does not justify the proposal's location, and design, for the reasons set out.
8. It is stated that 21/00353/FUL, for the host dwelling, did not remove permitted development rights. A copy of this decision notice is not included as part of the appeal submission, however, if this is the case then I acknowledge the appellant's assertion that they would be able to erect a 2-metre-high boundary fence along the side boundary under the scope of permitted development. Such fencing would be lower (by in the region of 0.6 metres) than the building at its highest point, however, I place limited weight upon the ability of the appellant to construct a fence of this nature in the context of this appeal. Similarly to my findings with regard to boundary treatments/hedging, discussed above, even if the fallback position of the proposed side boundary fencing had been given weight as to its potential to obstruct views it would not overcome the issues I have identified with the quality and design of the structure in the context of the street scene and the host dwelling.

9. The outbuilding is noted to comply with the Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2012 (SPD)'s emphasis on being the minimum size necessary and whilst it may reflect a typical garden room or ancillary office size, and not result in over-development in the context of the overall plot size, the proposal in its current form would be of a design and size which would be better located, and more commonly accepted to the rear of a property, within the garden and not within the street scene. A mixture of materials including timber is noted to be found on adjacent dwellings and outbuildings within the locality, however, the outbuildings within the locality, I find to have been more appropriately designed to match the host dwelling resulting high quality design. I have considered a condition requiring the outbuilding to be painted to ensure close alignment with the local palette, but I do not find it would overcome the issues I have identified.
10. The proposal is contrary to East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023) (LP) Policy ENV1 which requires proposals to demonstrate that their location, scale, form, design, materials will protect, conserve and where possible enhance the wider landscape setting. The proposal would also be contrary to LP Policy ENV2 which requires all development to be designed to a high quality, enhancing and complimenting local distinctiveness by relating well to existing features and introducing appropriate new designs. Design which fails to have regard to local context including architectural traditions and does not preserve, enhance or enrich the character, appearance and quality of an area will not be acceptable and planning applications will be refused.
11. The proposal would also be contrary to paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 which seeks to ensure that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area as well as being sympathetic to local character including the surrounding built environment. The proposal would also be inconsistent with the SPD which advises, in relation to outbuildings within the curtilage, that proposals should take account of the location in which it is to be set which will affect design, size, location and finishing details and that wherever possible an outbuilding should be constructed within permitted development rights given that such development is unlikely to give rise to significant planning issues as have been identified with the proposal which is the subject of this appeal.

Other Matters

12. The refusal reason states noncompliance with LP Policy ENV11 which the appellant notes as relating to conservation areas which is not applicable to the proposal. I would assume, therefore, that based upon the officer's report that this is a typographical error and that the refusal reason should relate to LP Policy ENV1 only.

Conclusion

13. For the reasons outlined above, and taking into account all other matters raised, I conclude that the appeal should be dismissed.

Eleni Marshall

INSPECTOR