

UTT/0158/12/FUL – (ASHDON)

(call-in request by Councillor A Ketteridge)

PROPOSAL: Two storey side extension.

LOCATION: 4 Tredgetts, Carters Croft, Ashdon.

APPLICANT: Mr & Mrs Bidwell

AGENT: None

GRID REFERENCE: TL 586-424

EXPIRY DATE: 11 April 2012

CASE OFFICER: Mr C Theobald

1.0 NOTATION

1.1 Outside Development Limits.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

2.1 The site comprises a small two storey two bedroomed end terraced property situated within a small 1990's built exception affordable housing scheme located at the northern end of the village at the rear end of Carters Croft. The frontage of the dwellings within the housing scheme is open plan with frontage parking allocation facing onto an internal circular vehicular access. No.4 Tredgetts is set at an angle to No.3 in an adjacent terraced block, whilst a shared pathway leads down between these two properties to the rear. The application property is part of a rented/shared equity scheme run by Hastoe Wyvern Housing Trust. The application property is one of 10(No.) shared equity units that are split between 5(No.) two bedroom units and 5(No.) three bedroom units, with the application dwelling being a two bed roomed unit under a 70/30% shared equity scheme, with the housing association holding the minority equity. None of the dwellings within the scheme have been extended.

3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 This application relates to the erection of a two storey side extension to No.4 Tredgetts to introduce a third bedroom comprising a dining room and kitchen/breakfast area on the ground floor and an additional third bedroom with en-suite on the first over. The extension would have an angled side profile leading off a continuing frontage line to follow the shape of the side boundary to the rear with the narrowest width dimensions being at the front and would project to the rear beyond the existing rear wall line on the ground floor with rooflight canopy over. The extension would have a total width dimension of 3.2 metres and a total depth (on the ground floor) of 10 metres. The extension would be finished in facing brickwork and concrete tiling to match the existing dwellings within the terraced block and the rest of the dwellings on the housing scheme.

4.0 APPLICANTS CASE

4.1 See attached statement of case to this report, which responds in part to a detailed letter of objection received from the Parish Council in respect of this proposal (see Parish Council's comments set out below and as attached to this report).

5.0 RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

5.1 Planning permission granted in 1989 for the erection of 14 (No.) affordable housing units (Phases 1 and 2) on land off Carters Croft (UTT/0300/89). No restrictions were placed on the original Section 106 Agreement for the scheme preventing the dwellings from being extended and permitted development rights were not withdrawn, although this is to be expected given the nature of the scheme as affordable housing units.

6.0 POLICIES

6.1 National Policies

- National Planning Policy Framework.

6.2 East of England Plan 2006

- Policy ENV7 - Quality in the Built Environment.

6.3 Essex Replacement Structure Plan 2001

- None relevant.

6.4 Uttlesford District Local Plan 2005

- Policy GEN2 (Design)
- Policy H8 (Home Extensions)
- Policy GEN8 (Vehicle Parking Standards)
- Policy H11 (Affordable Housing on Exception Sites)

- SPD's "Home Extensions" and "Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy".

7.0 PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

7.1 Object

- Phase 1 at Tredgetts was 5 (No.) two bedroomed and 5 (No.) 3 bedroomed properties. The concept of the properties was that the two bedroomed properties would provide accommodation for single persons, couples and small families, whilst the three bedroomed properties would provide accommodation for larger families. The proposed conversion of a two bedroomed property at No. 4 Tredgetts to a three bedroomed property means the loss of a two bedroomed property to single persons and small families and to the village housing stock of smaller affordable properties, which is unacceptable;
- The conversion of this property would increase its market value making it less affordable to first time buyers;
- The grant of planning permission would set a precedent with little reason for refusing applications from other residents. This is not only dangerous for Ashdon, but will set a national precedent with the possible loss of a whole section of affordable housing to the rural community.
- The Ashdon affordable housing scheme has been deemed a great success, not only in the village, but within the district, county and nationally with Ashdon being promoted as an example with this type of housing in rural communities. Many local families have benefited from the scheme and it is the Parish Council's intention that it should continue to provide affordable low cost housing for all sections of the village community, this being the adhesive that holds communities like Ashdon together;
- One of the great assets of the scheme has been that it has provided the means by which residents can move from one type of property to another, if and when circumstances change; whether it be from a two bedroomed to a three bedroomed property and vice versa. It has provided accommodation across the board for couples, single persons, families and persons of all ages with local connections. It is the intention of the Parish Council that it should continue to do so;

- Recently, a three bedroomed property became vacant at Church End, another phase of affordable housing in the village. This offered the opportunity for a family to move from a two bedroomed to a three bedroomed property and would have released a low cost affordable two bedroomed property for a first time buyer exactly in accordance with the concept of the affordable housing scheme.
- The proposal is totally contrary to the spirit in which the Parish Council entered into the agreement with the District Council and The Rural Housing Trust. It is noted following conversations with English Villages Housing Association who also have properties in the village that they do not allow any permanent extensions to their properties for the reasons stated above.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

8.1 Hastoe Wyvern Housing Trust

Support:

- Tredgetts was the first scheme developed by the Housing Trust and the houses are in fact the smallest of all of the properties that we have built. It was envisaged that the five two bedroomed houses would provide accommodation for single people and couples and the five three bedroomed houses would be for families. Only one of the three bedroom houses has sold since the scheme was built in 1990. There have been re-sales of all of the two bedroom houses and we have found it increasingly difficult to find local purchasers for them. The last two re-sales (both two bed houses) sold through estate agents to people with very little connection to Ashdon (although they were from the district);
- The applicants, the shared owners of this particular property, have tried to sell twice, once in 2010 and once in 2011. We have been unsuccessful in finding a purchaser for them and although they tried to sell through an estate agent that, too was unsuccessful;
- We have a general policy to refuse consent to extensions, but we look at every case on its own merits and do in certain circumstances agree to an property being extended. As far as we are concerned, consenting to an extension at No.4 Tredgetts does not mean that we would agree to an application to extend other properties on the development.
- We send a questionnaire to the shared owner concerned and need to reassure ourselves that (i) they have outgrown the space in the present house, (ii) they have made every effort to sell and move on and (iii) they have investigated availability of alternative larger accommodation in the area;
- In an ideal world, the shared owners in this case would have been able to buy the three bedroom house that came up for sale in Church Field. However, being unable to sell their own property results in them not being able to be considered for anything else that comes available. The Bidwells are a local couple; Mr Bidwell has been in the village all his life and wishes to stay in Ashdon. Unless they are able to extend the house, their only alternative would be to move away to an area where property is cheaper, presuming they can sell No.4 Tredgetts.
- Whilst we agree with the sentiments of the Parish Council in their letter, we do feel that sometimes we have to look at the individual circumstances and be more flexible in our approach.

8.2 Fisher German

8.3 Our client, GPSS, does not have any apparatus situated within the vicinity or other proposed works and as such has no further comments to make.

9.0 REPRESENTATIONS

9.1. None.

10.0 APPRAISAL

The issues to consider in the determination of the application are:

- A Design and amenity (ULP Policies H8, GEN2 and SPD's "Home Extensions" and "Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy");
- B Parking Standards (ULP Policy GEN8);
- C Other considerations: Principle of permitting the extension of an existing affordable housing unit (ULP Policy H11)

A Design and amenity (ULP Policies H8, GEN2 and SPD's "Home Extensions" and "Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy")

- 10.1 ULP Policy H8 states that an extension shall match the scale, design and external materials of the original dwelling whilst ULP Policy GEN2 additionally states that development will not be permitted unless amongst other things an extension is compatible with the scale, form, layout, appearance and materials of surrounding buildings and that it would not have a material adverse effect on the reasonable occupation and enjoyment of adjoining residential properties.
- 10.2 SPD advice on home extensions which informs ULP Policies H8 and GEN2 states that *"Where your property is small, in a terrace or has symmetrical elevations, you should make sure that the characteristics of that building or group of buildings are not affected. With a side extension, you should always aim to leave the principal elevation of the building undisturbed. You will normally get a better result if you set back the front wall of the extension from the front wall of the dwelling and set the ridge height of the extension lower than the existing...The space that is left around the building is important as this contributes to the overall impact of the extension. Generally, you should leave a distance of 1m between the side wall of the extension and the boundary"*.
- 10.3 As previously explained, the proposed extension would be of a "wrap around" design in order to be accommodated onto the angled side of the site and would extend beyond the rear wall of the original dwellinghouse. The extension would not be stepped back from the frontage of the dwelling, would not have a stepped ridge and would be close up to the side boundary with No.3 for the first 3.5 metres and would thereby result in a development which would fail to be sympathetic with the proportions and balance of the original dwelling and would also result in a cramped appearance. Furthermore, it is considered that the extension would look incongruous as an addition to the well balanced terraced block of which the dwelling forms part and the streetscene generally. As such, it is considered that it would fail to adhere to the design advice set out in the SPD and would be contrary to ULP Policies H8 and GEN2. In terms of the effect on neighbouring amenity, a first floor window exists on the flank elevation of No.3 Tredgetts which faces the application dwelling, which would be line with the proposed first floor window proposed for the two storey extension to No.4, albeit at an oblique angle. However, this appears to be a landing window and it is considered that this, combined with the oblique angle would not result in a material loss of residential amenity to this property by reason of overlooking or loss of privacy.

B Parking Standards (ULP Policy GEN8 and Essex County Council Parking Standards Design and Good Practice - September 2009)

- 10.4 The property currently benefits from two allocated parking spaces in the form of a drive space and a parallel hardstanding space. Current parking standards require 2(No.) spaces for a 2+bedroomed dwelling. The proposal would increase bedroom provision at the site from two bedrooms to three and the current parking provision at the site would therefore be acceptable under current parking standards and would comply with ULP Policy GEN8.

C Other considerations: Principle of permitting the extension of an existing affordable housing unit

- 10.5 This is the first instance where the Council has received a planning application for an extension to one of the houses within the Tredgetts affordable housing scheme and is to the Council's knowledge the first instance of such an example within Uttlesford District. Hastoe Wyvern Housing Trust advises applicants who are considering extending their properties of the following;

"In principle, we refuse any addition or extension which would greatly increase the value of any of our houses as this obviously makes the house more expensive on re-sale. However, we look at each case individually and we take into account of the opportunities available for our shared owners to meet their housing needs in other ways. If we feel that an applicant's income plus their equity stake in the existing house are sufficient to enable them to move to the open market, then we will not approve an application for an extension. In addition, if we feel that an applicant's income/savings are not sufficient to cover the cost of the extension on top of their ongoing expenses then again we will not approve an application for an extension. Major alterations which significantly change the size and value of the house would be difficult to justify...Major alterations which significantly change the size and value of the house would be difficult to justify. The houses are usually built to ensure that minor adaptations can be implemented easily to cope with lack of mobility and wheelchair use...Overcrowding is always a relative term and almost every family would like more space, especially when the children are young...However, we encourage our shared owners to use whatever extra mortgage they can raise towards the purchase of a larger house rather than for an extension. Some of our schemes may have larger houses within them that may become available and this will be another consideration in the decision making process.

- 10.6 It is clear from the above advice that the normal position of Hastoe Wyvern is that it does not permit extensions to its affordable housing units unless there are valid and substantiated reasons to do so. In this particular case, it has considered the applicant's circumstances and has concluded that there are sufficient grounds under which its own criteria would be met and to permit the extension as proposed.
- 10.7 The extension would increase the existing bedroom provision for the dwelling from two to three bedrooms as well as providing an increased reception/utility area on the ground floor. It is considered by Officers that the extension by its size and layout is not minor in nature and would as a result have a significant change in the size of the house. However, the Trust has obviously considered this element of their own extension criteria. Officers are not in a position to comment on how much the proposed extension would raise the value of the property, although clearly this would result in a value uplift notwithstanding that the property would remain in shared equity ownership.
- 10.8 It is understood from the Parish Council that the ratio of 5(No.) two bedroom properties and 5(No.) three bedroom properties for Phase 1 of this affordable housing scheme has not changed since its introduction. The consequence of granting planning permission for this proposal is that the present even ratio of 5:5 would change to 6:4 in favour of three bedroom units on the scheme at the expense of two bedroom units and the Parish Council has submitted a strong and detailed letter of representation to the District Council requesting that the proposed application be refused as a matter of principle where it considers that the ethos of retaining smaller affordable housing units on this scheme should be strictly adhered to given what it considers to be a continuing need for a balanced split between two and three bedroomed units on Phase 2 of Tredgetts.
- 10.9 There are no policies contained within the Uttlesford Local Plan which relate to the extension of built affordable housing schemes, only those which relate to new affordable housing provision within the district. The reasoning, need and personal circumstances put forward by the applicant for the proposed extension and their response to the Parish Council is noted (see applicant's statement of case). However, after careful consideration and the extent to which Officers are able to consider this issue, it is their view that the present balanced mix of 5(No.) two bedroom units and 5(No.) three bedroomed units for

Phase 1 should presently be retained for its originally intended purpose and in this respect agrees with the comments of the Parish Council in this report.

11.0 CONCLUSION

The following is a summary of the main reasons for the recommendation:

- The design of the proposed extension would fail to meet acceptable design standards;
- The principle of allowing the extension of No.4 Tredgetts to improve the current accommodation of the property, including its upgrade from a two to a three bedroomed property at this affordable housing location is considered to be unacceptable in policy terms.

RECOMMENDATION – REFUSAL

1. The proposed extension would fail by its design to meet acceptable design standards as required by supplementary planning guidance adopted by the Council relating to home extensions and would as a result be contrary to ULP Policies H8 and GEN2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

2. Whilst the personal circumstances of the applicant have been noted, insufficient justification has been put forward by the applicant to show that the property as extended would remain affordable for future occupants as a shared equity two bedroomed dwelling on this exception site affordable housing scheme. The proposal would therefore be contrary to ULP Policy H11 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

From: Matthew Bidwell
Sent: 11 April 2012 14:44
To: Clive Theobald
Subject: 4 Tredgetts Application Summary:

Although I have already sent you all of the documentation for our proposed extension at 4 Tredgetts, Ashdon, I thought it may help your final officer report if I re-summarised the reasons why my Wife and I originally approached our housing association(s) and Parish Council to seek their permission to extend our property. I would also like to make my own comments back to the letter sent by the Ashdon Parish Council, that has now asked for our proposed extension to be declined.

Personal Summary:

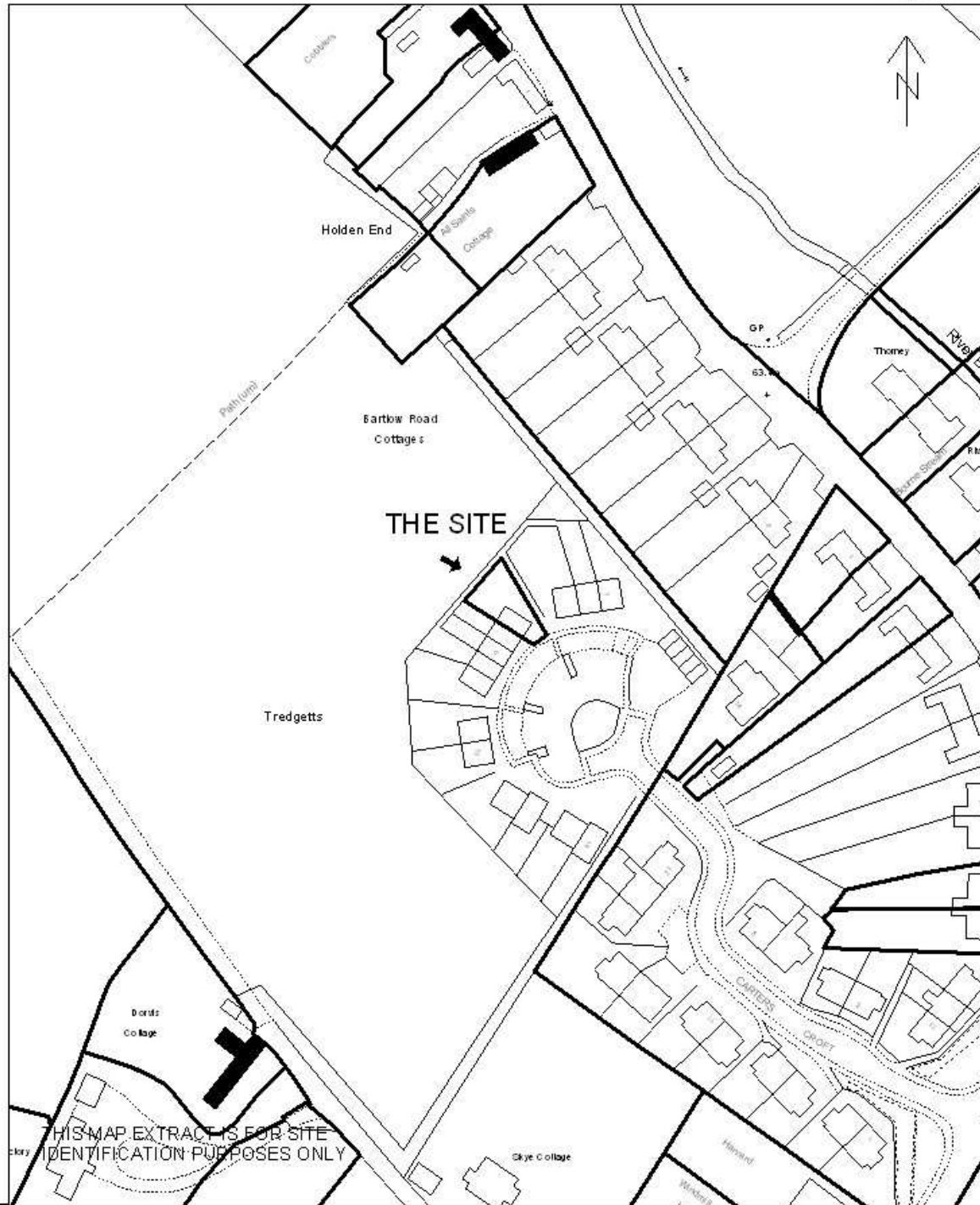
I have lived in Ashdon for the past 34 years, and my 22 month old daughter now represents the 5th generation of Bidwell's that have lived and worked in the village. My father & uncle still operate the local garage that was started by my Great-Great Grandfather, and my great uncle continues to run the local plant nursery, I also have other aunties, uncles and cousins that all currently live in the village. My wife and I were married in the local Baptist Church, have I been a member of the village football club for the past 15 years (which my father has managed for the past 20 years) and support the local pub as a member of its successful pool team. My daughter now attends the Baptist Church run Mothers and Toddlers group, and we wish for her to attend the local school as all my family before her have done.

Parish Council Letter Comments:

- 1) The Parish Council questioned why we did not consider the 3 bedroom house that recently became available at Church Fields, Ashdon? This house only came on the market after we had applied for our application to extend our property, and as Liz Fitzsimmons comments in her letter of response, we would only be able to be considered for this house if we had been able to sell our current property. I would also like to comment that this 3 bedroom house has been sold to a single man. Although the purchaser was born in the village, it indicates that there is no depth of awaiting local applicants that are couples or family's, if there were, surely this family house would have been sold to such an applicant? There is also the question as to why this single applicant did not attempt to purchase our 2 bedroom property? It could well be the size of the property as Liz Fitzsimmons comments upon, which has no room for a dining table for a couple / family to eat around and a 2nd bedroom that can only be considered as a box room or new born baby nursery at the most.
- 2) The Parish Council are quite insistent that these houses were given to the village to ensure that local people were able to continue to live within the village that they grew-up in, and they comment that the development is essential to holding the village community together. 23 years ago the concept of the development worked and it kept local people and their families within the community. In fact it worked so well that all but one of these families continues to live in the five 3 bedroom houses that were originally built. Where the development has been less successful, is the five 2 bedroom houses, where almost all have been sold at some point on the open market to buyers with no connection to the village. As there seems to be no local applicants who are currently waiting to purchase our house, if our request to extend is declined, another 2 bedroom house on the development will again end up on the open market, pushing my local family out - not really the purpose of the houses as detailed by the Parish Council. My application to extend our 2 bedroom house to make it a 3 bedroom house will ensure that a local family continues to live in Ashdon, and continue to benefit the local community for at least another generation. Should we decide to move from this property in the future, the house will be in-line financially with the five 3 bedroom properties already on the development, and as highlighted by our experience and the easy sale of the 3 bedroom house in Church Fields, someone with a local connection to the village will benefit from it becoming available.
- 3) The Parish Council raises concerns that if this application is accepted, it will allow other properties to extend. If the Tredgetts development is viewed, it is clear to see that there are only

two 2 bedroom properties that have the potential to extend, our own property and the opposite end of terrace property. As the English Village Housing Association have confirmed that they do not allow extensions too their properties, then there is little risk that our extension will set a precedent within Ashdon for this type of extension request to take place. The Parish Council also comments that approval will set a national precedent, but extensions to housing association properties across the UK have been granted, so we are not as the Parish Council suggests the first people to apply for an extension of this type. I am also unsure why the Parish council seems so concerned about the national impact of housing association schemes, when they seem happy to lose a lifelong local resident within their own, and to quote from their letter "Ashdon Parish Council has been at the forefront in promoting Village Homes for Village People"

I would like to add that we are not against the Parish Council and understand why they have concerns about our extension, but we hope that they can see that our desire to stay within the village represents the very reasons why the development at Tredgetts was originally given to the village and built. It also represents the very elements that they highlight as being their main priorities in preserving for the village community of Ashdon.



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