



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 16 April 2026

by H Miles BA (hons), MA, MRTPI

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 23rd April 2026

Appeal Ref: 6002840

Narnia, Leafy Lane, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent DA13 0DR

- 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 Peter Billane against the decision of Gravesend Borough Council.
 - The application Ref is 20250722.
 - The development proposed is alteration and extension of existing outbuilding annexe to provide additional living accommodation.
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Decision

1. The appeal is dismissed.

Main Issues

2. The main issues are the effect of the proposed development on the character and appearance of the area, and whether the site would be a suitable location for the proposed development with particular regard to the settlement strategy.

Reasons

Character and Appearance

3. There is an existing outbuilding, although there is disagreement between the parties as to whether it is the building as approved under LPA ref 19990108 which included a condition which restricts its use to the accommodation of a private motor car (or cars) for the occupants of Narnia and for no other purpose. Or whether it is a different building which the appellant states has become lawful due to the passage of time. Based on the evidence in this case, it appears that the existing structure has been in place for a number of years. However, I have very limited evidence relating to the use of the outbuilding during this time, particularly prior to 2018. It is used as a gym and store and the living facilities that are present are minimal with a small kitchen, one living space and one ensuite bedroom so there is a functional connection between the annexe and the more generous facilities in the main family house, although it is not only used for the accommodation of cars. Therefore, either in its present use or as a garage only it would be used in connection with the host dwelling. It is not my role as a S78 Inspector to determine whether it is lawful. Nevertheless, for the reasons above and for the purposes of this appeal I have considered the existing structure as part of the character and appearance of the area which is currently incidental to the use of the dwelling.
4. The appeal scheme proposes a ground floor extension to the outbuilding infilling an open area with an overhanging roof and a change to fenestration to replace

garage doors with windows and a front door. This would facilitate alterations to the internal layout to remove the gym and store and provide a kitchen/living dining room, family bathroom and three bedrooms, one of which would be ensuite. No changes are shown to the garden or parking arrangements. The appellant is seeking permission on the basis that the annexe would be used in conjunction with Narnia. It would be inhabited by a relative and their partner of the occupiers of the main house. There are no proposals to alter the ownership, and the utilities and services would be shared.

5. However, the proposed alterations would create enlarged and improved living accommodation in the outbuilding. This would clearly provide the services required for comfortable independent day to day living with multiple bedrooms and bathrooms and a generous kitchen and reception room. Although the access would be shared, it is not uncommon for multiple dwellings to share a driveway. Whilst a condition could prevent the erection of fences or walls to create separate garden spaces, it would be unreasonable to prevent planting in the domestic garden which could be used to the same effect.
6. There would be a familial link between the occupiers at present, and a condition has been proposed which would require that the outbuilding is occupied by a relative of the main house and that it is not let or sold separately. However, this would not affect the function of the two separate buildings. Additionally, I am not satisfied that matters such as arrangements for the payment of utilities could be secured as part of any planning permission. As such, even taking into account the relationship between the occupiers and the ownership of the building, as a matter of fact and degree a physical and functional connection between Narnia and the outbuilding would not exist and these properties in the arrangement proposed would be used as two independent units by separate households.
7. Consequently, for the reasons set out above I am not satisfied that the permanent development of a physically separate self-contained unit with negligible connections with the host dwelling would be additional accommodation to the main dwellinghouse. The development proposed therefore seeks permission for a separate dwelling and I have considered the appeal on this basis.
8. Narnia is a family house set in generous grounds with multiple outbuildings. There is considerable separation from nearby properties and this results in a pleasant sense of spaciousness in the area.
9. The proposed development would create a new dwelling very near to the existing dwelling at Narnia. The built form mostly already exists. However, permission for a permanent independent dwelling with separate comings and goings, vehicles and domestic paraphernalia in perpetuity would result in a clearly evident intensification of residential units close to one another. The proliferation of houses in such proximity would harmfully erode the spacious character of the site and surroundings.
10. Therefore, the proposed development would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area. As such, it would be contrary to Policy CS19 of Gravesham's Local Plan Core Strategy (2014) (CS) which sets design principles including that new development will conserve and enhance local character.

Location of development

11. Policy CS02 of the CS sets out the spatial strategy for Gravesend and seeks to prioritise development in the urban areas. Outside the rural settlements, development will be supported where it is compatible with national policies for Green Belt and the policies in this plan.
12. There is no dispute between the parties that the appeal scheme is not inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Even so, for the reasons set out above, the proposed development does not comply with Policy CS19 of the CS relating to design principles. Consequently, it does not satisfy the exception where development should be permitted in the rural area.
13. Therefore, the site would not be a suitable location for the proposed development with particular regard to the settlement strategy. As such, it would be contrary to Policy CS20 of the CS, the aims of which are set out above.

Conclusion

14. The proposal conflicts with the development plan and the material considerations do not indicate that the appeal should be decided other than in accordance with it. Therefore, for the reasons given above the appeal should be dismissed.

H Miles

INSPECTOR