

DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION NUMBER	S6/2004/0773/FP
LOCATION	Sonar Bangla Restaurant, 27 Station Road, Cuffley
PROPOSAL	Erection of front extension to existing restaurant

THE SITE

The site comprises what is presently a sit-down restaurant (which also functions as a take-away) occupying a purpose-built unit at ground floor level located on the northern side of Station Road. This is within the Large Village Centre of Cuffley, as defined by the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Review Revised Deposit Version, June 2002. The unit has a traditional shopfront with canopies and externally illuminated fascia signage above. The total floor area of the existing restaurant and kitchen areas amounts to 123 sq m. The footprint of the existing restaurant comprises a stepped arrangement from the adjacent flats (access door to a stairwell) to the dry cleaners and there is an open paved area in front of the unit. A small raised bed occupies part of the space between the edge of the footpath and this paved area. To the rear of the site is a car parking area which serves the restaurant and surrounding shops together with the of the residential units located adjacent to, and above, this unit.

THE PROPOSAL

This application is seeking planning permission for the erection of a single storey front extension to the existing restaurant unit in the form of a conservatory-like structure, which represents 40 sq m of additional floorsapce. The extension is to have a pitched glazed roof up to a maximum ridge height of 3.4m and brick lower walls up to 0.6m in height. The proposed structure is to 10.4m in width (ie the width of the entire front elevation of the unit) and to a depth of 3.7m with bays, one on either side of centrally positioned entrance doors, to project 5.2m forward of the existing front elevation.

PLANNING HISTORY

S6/1993/755	Internal alterations to repair ceiling Granted
S6/1996/1006	Change of use from A1 (retail) to A3 (food and drink) Granted
S6/1997/562	Illuminated fascia sign and swan neck lights Granted
S6/2003/652	Single storey front extension to existing restaurant Refused (Appeal dismissed 18.12.03)

SUMMARY OF RELEVANT DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991- 2011:
None relevant

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Alterations 2001- 2016 (Deposit Draft Feb 2003):
Design and Quality of Development

Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan Alterations no 1 1998:
BEV 9 – Other specified settlements
GEN Criteria 1 – Design and siting of buildings

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Review Deposit Draft, June 2002:
D1 – Quality of Design
Supplementary Design Guidance

REPRESENTATIONS

Northaw & Cuffley Parish Council

The proposed extension will appear unduly prominent as a result of a substantial expanse of glass roof. The extension would appear intrusive and out of keeping with the street scene and the outlook for the adjoining occupiers.

Northaw & Cuffley Residents Association

This application is a variation of a recent application already refused. The residents association opposes the application on the following grounds:

1. It would be out of character with the existing street scene
2. The extension would be obtrusive to the public using Station Road

Welwyn Hatfield Access Group

Recommend that the application, where appropriate, be considered subject to the standards and criteria outlined in the current District Plan (Policy D3d, Policy D5) and that planning approval is conditional on compliance with detailed access requirements. Request also that the application, where appropriate be considered subject to the criteria outlined in Part M of the Building Regulations and BS8300 Code of Practice – Design of Buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people.

Hertfordshire Highways

Does not wish to restrict the grant of permission.

Other Third Parties

Letters of objection have been received from the owners/occupiers of No 120 Tolmers Road and No 23B Station Road. Comments made are summarised below:

- Extension will be totally out of keeping with the existing street scene and will be extremely intrusive to occupier of flat above.
- Strongly object to the proposed development and feel with the plague of rats now being suffered it would be better if something could be done about health risks

- Ever since the restaurant was built customers have been illegally parking to the rear of the flats despite large signs erected stating that this is private property.
- The restaurant is supposed to close at 11pm. Yet despite this customers can clearly be seen at times well past this. Staff are still working after midnight.
- Extending the restaurant would bring in more people, more waste food left around and more noise.

DISCUSSION

The main issues relate to the acceptability of the proposed front extension in terms of its impact on the existing restaurant unit, the street scene and the locality of the application site; the acceptability of the extension in terms of the residential amenity of occupiers of neighbouring retail units and residential properties.

This proposal is for a large structure to be erected across the width of the front of the existing unit. It is to have a similar size of footprint to that previously proposed. The difference between this and the previous refused application is a reduction in the overall height by 0.8m and the type of structure changing from the solid structure with a brick end wall to a conservatory-type structure.

Taking into account the comments made by the Inspector in the previous Appeal, it is considered that the present proposal would also be unacceptable. Indeed, the Inspector's comments appear to indicate that fundamentally there would be an objection to a structure of this size and in this location.

The footprint of the existing development comprises a stepped arrangement from the flats to the restaurant to the dry cleaners. The proposal would destroy this design detail and would have the impact of creating one large frontage to the restaurant and dry cleaners with a large step back to the flats. Although, as the Inspector noted with the previous application, the impact from the opposite side of Station Road would be negligible, the impact from the east would again be visually intrusive. The structure would represent a particularly alien form of development that would fail to enhance the existing building or the street scene. Despite the change in the design of the structure, its size and bulk and substantial expanse of glazing would mean it would be detrimental to the visual amenity of this location. The structure, particularly the two bays proposed on the front elevation, would project up to the back of the footway, removing what is presently an open forecourt area. This loss of spaciousness would significantly detract from the appearance of the area contrary to the aims of Gen Criteria and Policy BEV9, together with the emerging Supplementary Design Guidance.

CONCLUSION

The proposal is for a conservatory-style extension to the front of an existing restaurant unit. It is a large and bulky structure and does not reflect the existing building form. The extension would be such an obviously different style and materials, that its incompatibility would appear incongruous affecting the character and appearance of the existing building and representing a particularly alien form of development. In addition, the erection of such a large structure in this location would destroy the stepped arrangement of the footprint of the existing buildings, which is considered a design detail worthy of preservation (as indicated by the Planning Inspector).

Despite now proposing the structure to be conservatory, the size, bulk and substantial expanse of glazing would mean that it would be detrimental to the visual amenity of this location. In addition, the depth of the structure, particularly the two bays proposed on the front elevation, would project up to the back of the footway, removing what is presently an open forecourt area. This loss of spaciousness would significantly detract from the appearance of the area contrary to the aims of Gen Criteria and Policy BEV9, together with the emerging Supplementary Design Guidance.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning application S6/2004/773/FP be REFUSED for the following reasons:

REASONS FOR REFUSAL

1. The proposed extension would appear unduly prominent as a result of its siting, size, bulk and substantial expanse of glazing. The extension would represent an unacceptable feature that would appear visually intrusive upon the street scene and outlook for adjoining residential occupiers. Furthermore, the structure would remove what is presently an open forecourt area and the loss of this spaciousness would significantly detract from the appearance of the area. The proposal is contrary therefore to the aims of Gen Criteria and Policy BEV9 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Alterations No 1, 1998, together with Policy D1 and Supplementary Design Guidance of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Review Deposit Draft, June 2002.

DRAWING NUMBERS

Site location plan

S/30/04/1

S/30/04/2

S/30/04/3