

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL  
PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE – 27 SEPTEMBER 2007  
REPORT OF THE CHIEF PLANNING AND ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER

S6/2007/1132/FP

ERECTION OF 7 FLATS, BIN AND CYCLE STORES, CAR PARKING, ACCESS AND AMENITY SPACE FOLLOWING DEMOLITION OF EXISTING DWELLING AT 200 ST ALBANS ROAD WEST, HATFIELD.

APPLICANT: LIONCREST HOMES LIMITED

Hatfield Central

**1 Site Description**

- 1.1 The application site is located on the north side of St Albans Road in Hatfield. The site currently comprises a two storey detached dwelling with painted render walls under a plain tile roof. The plot is approximately rectangular apart from the front boundary which is splayed and runs parallel to the road. The width of the site is approximately 14m to the front tapering to approximately 13m at the rear boundary.
- 1.2 The application site is sandwiched between the open car park area to the Galleria to the northwest and a new block of flats to the south east which has been recently completed. To the rear of the site is a garage court which serves the adjoining properties in De Havilland Close. Opposite the site and across the road are semi-detached dwellings.
- 1.3 The site is screened from the adjoining flats by a 2m high boarded close fence. A 2m high brick wall on the common boundary with the Galleria screens the site from the adjoining car park.

**2 The Proposal**

- 2.1 The proposal is to demolish the current dwelling and to replace it with 2.5 storey building with a pitched roof. Flat roofed dormers are proposed at second floor level to the front and rear. The new building is to accommodate 7 flats with 3 on the ground and first floors and 1 flat on the second floor. There are 4 one bed flats proposed and 3 two bedroom flats all of which are served by a central staircase.
- 2.2 The building is set back from the highway by 15m at its closest point and a new centrally located vehicular access is proposed from St Albans Road West. There are 6 parking places proposed to the front (including a disabled parking space) and also a bin store located close to the front boundary. A cycle store for 7 bicycles is proposed to the rear of the site which is accessed by a pathway which runs along the side boundary from the front parking area.
- 2.3 The width of the building would be approximately 11.8m wide and 19.4m deep. The open rear amenity space is approximately between 8-12m deep and 13m

wide. The maximum height of the building is approximately 18.5m to the main ridge line. Three Juliet style balconies are proposed at the front and rear of the building to serve first floor lounges of each proposed flat and also a further two to the ground floor flats.

- 2.4 The proposed external materials consist of facing brick work, plain tiles and UPVC windows with lead finishes to the dormers and brick. A 1.8m close boarded fence is proposed to the boundaries.

### **3 Planning History**

- 3.1 No recent planning history.

### **4 Planning Policy**

- 4.1 National Planning Policy

PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS3 – Housing

PPG13 – Transport

- 4.2 Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1991-2001:

Policy 29 – Car Parking

- 4.3 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

- SD1 – Sustainable Development
- GBSP2 – Towns and Specified Settlements
- M6 – Cycle Routes and Facilities
- M8 – Powered Two-Wheelers
- M14 – Parking Standards for New Development
- D1 – Quality of Design
- D2 – Character and Context
- D5 – Design for movement
- D8 – Landscaping
- D9 – Access and Design for people with Disabilities
- H2 – Location of Windfall Residential Development
- H6 – Densities
- H8 – Dwelling Type and Tenure
- R3 – Energy Efficiency
- R19 – Noise and Vibration Pollution

- 4.4 Supplementary Design Guidance, Statement of Council Policy February 2005.

- 4.5 Supplementary Planning Guidance – Parking Standards – January 2004

### **5 Representations Received**

- 5.1 The application has been advertised by means of a site notice and by neighbour notification letters. No representations have been received apart from Welwyn Hatfield Access Group who requested that the proposal is considered subject to

the standards and criteria outlined in the District Plan in regards to detailed access requirements.

## **6 Consultations**

- 6.1 **Town Council** - have objected for the following reason: 'The Committee objected to the application considering the proposals an overdevelopment of the site. A site that is currently a single dwelling house to a site for eight 1 and 2 bedroom flats was considered a substantial overdevelopment of the site by the Committee'.
- 6.2 **Highways Authority** does not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to planning conditions agreeing the construction of the new access onto St Albans Road West, the closing up of the existing access and other requirements including visibility lines.

## **7 Discussion**

- 7.1 This application is being brought to committee for determination as the application has been objected to by Hatfield Town Council.
- 7.2 The main issues to be considered in the determination of this application are:
- 1) The principle of replacement residential accommodation.
  - 2) Design and the impact on the character of the surrounding area
  - 3) The impact on the amenity of adjoining residents
  - 4) Highway and Parking Issues
  - 5) Other Matters

### **1) The principle of replacement residential accommodation.**

- 7.3 Central Government Policy PPS3 (Housing) and that reflected in Local Plan Policy H2 (Location of Windfall Residential Development) is considered relevant. The application site is not an allocated housing site, but can be considered to be a potential windfall site as it is located on previously developed land and is in a designated town as identified by Policy GBSP2.
- 7.4 Subject to the design and amenity requirements of the Local Plan, there is no objection therefore in principle for the redevelopment of the site for residential use in this location which is in a well established residential area of Hatfield.

### **2) Design and the impact on the character of the surrounding area**

- 7.5 Policy D1 and D2 are relevant design policies in regards to establishing the quality of the proposed design and its potential impact on the established character and context of the surrounding area. The immediate context of the site in regards to the setting of the current detached dwelling within the streetscene is particularly relevant to this application, as to one side of the application site is the large open space of the Galleria car park which is screened by a 2m high brick wall. The other side of the application site is a new development of flats, which leaves the current detached dwelling house in an isolated position when compared to other detached and semi-detached properties in this part of St Albans Road West.

- 7.6 This isolation has resulted from the redevelopment of the adjoining residential sites. These originally comprised of 3 detached dwellings (S6/2004/1219/FP) which were demolished to make way for 22 two bedroom flats following planning permission in November 2004. This site, No.200, was not part of this redevelopment however the implementation of this 2004 permission has now significantly altered the immediate context of the application site. The current proposal to develop the site for flats would, therefore, not be out of keeping with the type of accommodation that already exists along this side of St Albans Road West.
- 7.7 In regards to the design impact of the proposal on the surrounding properties, it is considered that the setting of the semi-detached dwellings opposite and the adjoining flats will not be harmed as the height and scale of the development when viewed from the front would be in proportion and no higher than the existing flats. In design terms the proposal would be in keeping with the established character of the streetscene through the proposed use of good quality external materials such as facing brick and the use of traditional pitched roofs and dormers.
- 7.8 The aspect and context of the application site when viewed from the car park of the Galleria Car Park is very different from that of St Albans Road West. The scale of the proposed development, when viewed in the wider setting of the other buildings which surround this adjoining car park, including the Galleria building itself would be acceptable. It is accepted that the long flank wall of the proposed flats is substantial, being almost 19.5m long, however, the design has tried to give some relief through the stepping of the plan and use of materials. This would therefore not have a harmful impact on the character of the area, which is in this location characterised by larger buildings and facades. To the rear of the application site is a garage court and the appearance of the proposed building from this direction would be of a similar scale to that which already exists with the new flats next door.
- 7.9 In summary, the proposal would in design terms comply with the requirements Policy D2 of the Local Plan as it would respect and relate to the character and context of the area.

## **2) Design and the impact on the character of the surrounding area.**

- 7.10 Turning to design Policies D1, D5 & D8 along with the accompanying Supplementary Design Guidance, these set the required standards of the design quality proposed, which includes the proposed layout of the flats, parking and landscaping.
- 7.11 The design of the flats allows access through one central staircase, with the main front entrance door to the block located to the front. The flats have been designed so that their main outlook is to the rear and front of the building, with the secondary windows serving staircases, bathrooms and kitchens limited to the flank walls, with the exception of study windows to flats 2 and 5.
- 7.12 Concerns were raised during the consideration of the application about the poor layout and functional use of the proposed top floor 2 flats in the original submission. This has now been significantly improved following discussion with the agent by converting these top floor flats into a single 2 bedroom unit shown in the revised drawings received and now currently under consideration.

- 7.13 In regards to the other flats, it is noted that there is limited daylight to the ground floor side windows due to the wall of the Galleria car park, however, these are not to main habitable rooms such as bedrooms and so is considered acceptable. The first floor window to the proposed study in flat 5 would look towards the Galleria car park, however, as this is not proposed as a bedroom window the aspect of this window is not considered to be an issue. To conclude, the layout and function of the remaining flats is also considered acceptable.
- 7.14 The layout of the application in terms of parking, paths and the location of the bin store has also been revised following the reduction of 1 flat. This has allowed for a clear pathway access for cycles to the rear of the site to access the cycle store and the bin store is more appropriately located and more accessible.
- 7.15 In summary, the design requirements of the above policies are complied with subject to the following conditions to any planning permission granted. No details of the proposed landscaping have been submitted and so it would be reasonable to request that these are submitted for approval. Although the plan and location of the cycle and refuse store are shown, it would be reasonable to request detailed drawings showing the elevations. The application form indicates the use of a 1.8m high close boarded fence for the boundary screening. The existing boundary treatment is likely to suffice for the side boundaries and so it is only the front and rear boundary which need further consideration. As there is no indication on the submitted drawing the type of boundary treatment in these locations it would be reasonable to impose a condition for these details. Finally, a condition requiring the submission and approval of external materials would also be reasonable to ensure the use of good quality of materials.

### **3) The impact on the amenity of adjoining residents**

- 7.16 Policy D1 and the accompanying Supplementary Design Guidance is relevant. The location of the proposal is approximately 35m away from the frontages of the semi-detached dwellings opposite and so no concerns exist in regards to issues of overlooking or dominance to these neighbouring properties. To the rear and northwest side of the application site are car parks, and so there are no residential concerns relating to amenity in these areas.
- 7.17 The proposed building has been set back from the side boundary with the adjoining flats by 1 metre and the plan has stepped the building to the rear. This is sufficient to ensure that the ground and first floor side windows to this neighbouring property which appear to serve bathrooms will still receive sufficient daylight. The rear facing habitable windows to the neighbouring flats will also be respected by the proposed building as their aspect will not be unduly harmed through loss of daylight/sunlight as the rear wall of the new flat will only project approximately 2m beyond that of this neighbouring development. This limited projection will also ensure that the proposal will not appear over dominant or over bearing from the rear aspect of the adjoining flats.
- 7.18 Side windows are proposed which will look in the direction of the Galleria car park, however, no amenity issues are raised apart from ensuring that bathroom windows are obscure glazed. Side windows facing the flank wall of the neighbouring flats also include kitchen windows. As the view is limited from these windows and the kitchens benefit from an open plan layout with the lounge, for the sake of good neighbourliness, it would be reasonable to impose a condition ensure that these particular kitchen windows are obscure glazed, but to restrict opening heights in this location would be too restrictive.

7.19 In summary, the proposal would not have any undue impact on the residential amenity of adjoining neighbours subject to conditions requiring obscure glazing for some of the flank wall windows and so the proposal complies with Policy D1 and the accompanying Supplementary Design Guidance.

#### **4) Highway and Parking**

7.20 The Highways Authority have raised no objection about the proposal subject to planning conditions which include the closing off of the existing entrance and the approval to their specification of the new entrance details.

7.21 The revised parking layout and reduction of flats to 7 means that in this location that 4 one bed flats and 3 two bed flats would require 6 parking spaces. This calculation has been based on the fact that 2 of the rooms shown on the plans are studies not bedrooms. As previously discussed above, the aspect from these rooms is poor and so taking into the size of the room shown it would be reasonable to assume that their future use would indeed be as studies. The proposal therefore complies fully with the parking requirements of Policy M14 and the standards in the accompanying Supplementary Planning Guidance – Parking Standards.

#### **5) Other Matters**

7.22 Policy D1 and the Supplementary Design Guidance does not give specific dimensions but requires private amenity space to be appropriate for the location and function. Although the rear garden is not generous, it is considered that the reduction of the number of flats to 7 means that the level of provision is compatible with that provided at the flat development next door.

7.23 Policy H6 in regards to densities relates to National Policy PPG3 which has now been superseded by PPS3. The minimum density required by PPS3 is 30 units per hectare. The current proposal complies with this as it is around 100 units per hectare which is comparable to the density of the adjoining flats granted permission in 2004 and so the proposal complies with PPS3. Although this is higher than that indicated by Policy H6, the character and context of the development as previously discussed is in keeping and therefore the proposal is acceptable.

### **8 Conclusion**

8.1 The context of the proposed site is particularly relevant for this scheme as it utilises a plot which can adequately accommodate a substantial building compared to the plot size without harming either the character of the area or streetscene. The design of the building has also carefully considered the amenity of adjoining residential properties and so no harmful impact will result to the amenity of the neighbouring occupiers. The design of the building will complement that of the surrounding area and the parking provision is fully compliant with the Councils standards. The proposal therefore complies with the above planning policies.

### **9 Recommendation**

9.1 It is recommended that application S6/2007/1027/FP be approved subject to the following conditions:

1. C.2. 1 – Time Limit for Commencement of Development
2. No development shall take place until full details on a suitably scaled plan of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Subsequently, these works shall be carried out as approved. The landscaping details to be submitted shall include:-
  - a) proposed external finished ground levels
  - b) means of enclosure and boundary treatments (Note: front boundary treatment must comply with visibility sightlines required in conditions below).
  - c) hard surfacing, other hard landscape features and materials
  - d) planting plans, including specifications of species, sizes, planting centres, number and percentage mix, and details of seeding or turfing

REASON: The landscaping of this site is required in order to protect and enhance the existing visual character of the area and to reduce the visual and environmental impacts of the development hereby permitted in accordance with Policy D8 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

3. C.4.2 – Implementation of Landscaping Planting.
4. C.5.1 – Sample of Materials to be submitted and agreed
5. Before first occupation of the approved development, the proposed new access onto St Albans Road West shall be completed and constructed to the specification of the Highway Authority and Local Planning Authority's satisfaction.

REASON: To ensure that the access is constructed to the current Highway Authority's specification as required by the Local Planning Authority and to comply with Policy D5 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

6. The existing access to the site shall be permanently stopped up to vehicular traffic and the highway reinstated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority before the development is brought into use.

REASON: In the interest of road safety and to comply with Policy D5 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

7. Concurrent with the construction of the access, visibility splays of 2.4m x 33m shall be provided and permanently maintained to the east of the access within which there shall be no obstruction to visibility between 600mm and 2 m above the carriageway level.

REASON: To provide adequate visibility for drivers entering or leaving the site and to comply with Policy D5 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

8. C.8.12 – No occupation until spaces laid out
9. C.8.18 – Visibility Splay
10. C.8.13 – Unbound Material/Surface Dressing
11. All areas for parking and storage and delivery of materials associated with the construction of this development shall be provided within the site on land which is not public highway and the use of such areas must not interfere with the use of the public highway.

REASON: In the interest of highway safety and free and safe flow of traffic in accordance with Policy 29 of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan 1991-2001.

12. C.8.5 – Wheel Washing Equipment
13. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any order revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification), before any demolition, clearance, building or other works commence on site, details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority, specifying the parts of the site to be used for the stationing of site huts, storage of materials, and plant and parking of employees cars during the construction period, and any proposal for fencing of a site compound. Thereafter the compound and fencing shall be retained until building and clearance work has been completed.

REASON: To ensure satisfactory provision in relation to adjoining property and circulation within the site to protect the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers in accordance with Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

14. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby granted, details which shall include appropriately scaled drawings of the location and design of the refuse bin and covered cycle store areas shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority. These stores shall be provided prior to the first occupation of the units to which they relate.

REASON: To protect the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers in accordance with Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and in order to ensure that there is adequate provision for secure cycle accommodation within the application site, encouraging alternative modes of transport in accordance with policies M6 and M8 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

15. No development shall take place until details of the proposed floor levels within the building, have been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: To protect the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers in accordance with Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005



16. The kitchen windows of flats 3 & 6 and windows to bathrooms of all flats (including the rooflight to the bathroom of flat 7 on the southeast facing roofslope) of the proposed building shall be glazed with obscured glass and shall be retained in that form thereafter.

REASON: To protect the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers in accordance with Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

## INFORMATIVES

To ensure that work undertaken on the highway is constructed to the current Highway Authority's specification, to an appropriate standard and by a contractor who is authorised to work in the public highway. All works to be undertaken on the adjoining highway shall be constructed to the satisfaction of the Highway Authority and in accordance with Hertfordshire County Council publication "Roads in Hertfordshire - A Guide for New Developments". Before proceeding with the proposed development, the applicant should contact the Mid West Hertfordshire Area Office (01727 816025) to obtain their permission and requirements

## SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION:

The proposal has been considered against National Planning Policy PPS1, PPS3 & PPG13 and development plan policy 29 of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991 – 2011 and development plan policies SD1, GBSP2, M6, M8, M14, D1, D2, D5, D8, D9, H2, H6, H8, R3, & R19 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005), in addition to the Human Rights Act 1998, which indicate that the proposal should be approved. Material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the Development Plan.

Chris Conway, Chief Planning and Environmental Health Officer  
Date 11/09/07

Background papers to be listed : None

