

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No:	S6/2007/1418/FP
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NOTATION:

The site lies within the Green Belt as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The application property originally consisted of a single storey bungalow set back from the highway by around 13m with vehicular access from Bell Lane. The current property is part way through a redevelopment following planning permission granted by application S6/2006/1582/FP. At the time of the site visit, the original roof had been completely removed and the new replacement timbers were being put in place.

The submitted drawings as existing approximately reflect the current state of the walls at the time of the site visit, with all the existing windows having been removed.

The property has a wide frontage of approximately 72 sqm onto Bell Lane which tapers down to approximately 30m on the rear boundary.

The property prior to the start of building works appeared to be in its original form when built in the 1960's and only a couple of small wooden garden sheds and another small detached prefabricated concrete outbuilding appears to have been added.

A 2m high close boarded fence forms the common boundary with a public house which adjoins the application site to the north. To the rear and south of the application site is a parcel of open grazing land.

There are a number of trees located on the application site, but they are located away from the existing dwelling and towards the perimeter of the application site.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

The application seeks full planning permission for extensions and this overlaps with that originally already granted by application S6/2006/1582/FP which was for the following:

The remodelling the existing roof configuration to create first floor habitable accommodation. This requires increasing the pitch of the existing roof and increasing the ridge line height by approximately 2m. A gable ended roof is proposed over the existing garage, and dormers are proposed on the front and rear elevations. The existing garage is to be converted in to a kitchen. An existing bedroom and bathroom at the rear of the building is to be demolished.

At first floor level 3 bedrooms are proposed, a bathroom and an en-suite shower room. At ground floor level the existing internal layout is amended which includes the conversion of the existing garage in to a kitchen.

In addition, this planning application also seeks permission for a projecting ground floor bay which is approximately 2.3 wide and 0.9m deep and front porch with a pitched roof. Changes are also proposed to the arrangement of the window fenestration to the rear and to one side elevation.

PLANNING HISTORY:

386/62 – New Bungalow – approved 30/08/62

S6/2006/1582/FP - Reconfiguration of Existing Roof to Provide First Floor Accommodation, Including Raising of Ridge And Rear and Front Dormers and Demolition of Rear Single Storey Accommodation – Granted 18/01/07

S6/2007/511/FP - Reconfiguration of Existing Roof to Provide First Floor Accommodation, Including Raising of Ridge and Rear and Front Dormers, and Demolition of Rear Single Storey Accommodation – no decision

S6/2007/1417/FP - Amendment To Application S6/2006/1582/FP, which Includes The Addition Of a chimney, enlarged dormers and other changes to window and door details – no decision

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:

National Policy

- PPS1 – Delivering Sustainable Development
- PPG2 – Green Belts
- PPS 3 – Housing
- PPG13 - Transport

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991 – 2011:

None

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:

- SD1 - Sustainable Development
- D1 - Quality of Design
- D2 - Character and Context

- RA1 - Development in the Green Belt
- RA3 - Extensions to dwellings in the Green Belt
- RA10 – Landscape Character Areas and Regions
- M14 - Parking Standards for New Development

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004

CONSULTATIONS

None

TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

None

REPRESENTATIONS

This application has been advertised and 0 representations have been received.
Period expired 29/10/07.

DISCUSSION:

The main issues are:

- 1) Green Belt Policy
- 2) Design
- 3) The Impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties
- 4) Parking and Highway Matters

1. Green Belt Policy

The principle of extending this property has already been accepted by the previously approved application (S6/2006/1582/FP). Following the reinstatement of part of the original dwelling to comply with the requirements of this original permission, it is now possible to consider this application which is proposing amendments to the allowed extensions rather than what could have been would have been a replacement dwelling.

As before, the main issues still relate to firstly whether the proposal represents an appropriate form of development having regard to the general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt and, if not, whether there are any very special circumstances that justify it.

Policy RA3 of the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 sets out the Council's policy with regard to extensions to dwellings in the Green Belt and states that they may be appropriate development provided that they would not result in disproportionate additions to the original house and would not have an adverse impact on the surrounding countryside. This policy is consistent with Government Policy relating to Green Belts found in PPG2.

PPG2 sets out Government policy on Metropolitan Green Belts. Paragraph 1.4 states that: -

"The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the most important attribute of Green Belts is their openness."

This Government policy highlights that the most important attribute of Green Belts is their openness and that one of the purposes of including land in Green Belts is to safeguard the countryside from encroachment.

It has already been established that the 'original' dwelling as referred to in Policy RA3 is the existing building one prior to the building works that have started, in the absence of any other evidence.

The previous proposal equated to an increase of 36% over and above the original dwelling which is not considered excessive or disproportionate in floorspace terms, and the current proposal would increase this by around another 4sqm which would be a small percentage increase due to the ground floor bay projection and front porch. This additional floorspace would keep the percentage would not appear disproportionate when compared to the floorspace of the original dwelling. The changes to the window and door fenestration would also not result in any floorspace increase.

Turning to the overall visual impact of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, this is particularly important, as floorspace assessments in isolation may not suffice, as irrespective of the floorspace increase Policy RA3 also looks at the overall resultant size and its visual impact on the countryside. The approved changes (application S6/2006/1582/FP) are considered towards the limit of what would still comply with RA3, and the addition of a further pitched roof porch and ground floor projecting bay would be particularly noticeable, and more so than the slightly larger dormers and chimney proposed in application S6/2007/1418/FP. These additional changes would further impact on the visual openness of the Green Belt to an extent that, when taken into account those already permitted, the cumulative increase would be disproportional to the original dwelling.

The overall design of the dwelling, therefore, would have an adverse visual impact on the countryside and would represent an inappropriate form extension and so fails to comply with Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield Plan 2005 and the requirements of PPG2.

No very special circumstances have been advanced by the applicant and none are considered to exist that would justify setting aside the requirements of Green Belt Policy.

2. Design

The porch and projecting bay are relevant as the other changes to the existing building were covered in the previous application.

The design of these additions would not be out if keeping with the resultant dwelling. The changes to the windows and door arrangement is also considered to be acceptable.

In regards to the quality of the design, it is considered that the proposals would be in keeping with the character of the area and would comply with the design requirements of Policies D1 & D2 and the accompanying Supplementary Design Guidance.

3. The Impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties

Due to the isolated location of the application property, it is considered that the proposal will have no undue impact on the amenity of adjoining neighbours in terms of privacy or that it would appear overly dominant. The proposal therefore complies with the amenity requirements of Policy D1 and the accompanying Supplementary Design Guidance.

4. Parking and Highway Matters

The existing access to Bell Lane is to remain unchanged, and although the existing garage is to be converted into habitable accommodation, there are at least 3 parking spaces to the front of the dwelling which is sufficient for the proposed 4 bedrooms. The proposal therefore complies with Policy M14 of the Welwyn Hatfield Plan 2005 and the accompanying Supplementary Design Guidance – Parking Standards.

CONCLUSION:

The existing property is considered for the purposes of Green Belt Policy to represent the ‘original’ dwelling. The cumulative increase in the sizes of the original dwelling that would result if the porch and projecting bay are added to that already approved would have an adverse visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt. This is taking into account that the earlier permission was close to the limit of what would be acceptable in terms of the limitations imposed by Green Belt Policy.

The proposal, therefore, fails to comply with the Green Belt requirements stated in Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield Plan 2005 and those in PPG2.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL AND REASONS

- 1. The proposal which is for additional extensions to those already approved by application S6/2006/1582/FP would, when considered cumulatively, result in a disproportionate increase in the size of the original dwelling due to its resultant appearance and from the increase in bulk and mass. This would diminish the openness of the Green Belt to the detriment of the rural character of the area contrary to the requirements of Policies RA1& RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (Green Belts). There are no very special circumstances which have been advanced to justify a departure from the Green Belt Policies of restraint.

INFORMATIVES:

None

DRAWING NUMBERS:

1239-05a (1:1250 Site Location Plan and 1:500 Block Plan) & 1239-09 & 1239-10 & 1239-11 & 1239-12 received and date stamped 20/09/07

Signature of author..... Date.....

