

**WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL**  
**DELEGATED REPORT**

<b>APPLICATION No:</b>	<b>S6/2009/1571/FP</b>
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**NOTATION:**

The site lies wholly within the Metropolitan Green Belt, Landscape Character Area 53 as defined by the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Proposals Map.

**DESCRIPTION OF SITE:**

The application site is located on the north east side of the Firs Wood Close and consists of a two storey mid-terrace dwelling with a small rear garden. The dwelling fronts onto a courtyard. Beyond the site boundary to the rear is a large open area of grass with extensive views to open countryside. The application dwelling features a large rear dormer providing additional accommodation within the roof space. A number of neighbouring dwellings feature existing rear extensions and conservatories.

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:**

This application seeks full planning permission for the erection of a conservatory measuring approximately 4.25m x 4m x 2.9m in height.

**PLANNING HISTORY:**

None relevant

**SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:**

National Planning Policy:  
PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development  
PPG2 Green Belts

East of England Plan:  
SS1 Achieving Sustainable Development  
ENV2 Landscape Conservation  
ENV7 Quality in the Built Environment

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:  
SD1 Sustainable Development  
R3 Energy Efficiency  
GBSP1 Definition of the Green Belt  
RA3 Extensions to Dwellings in the Green Belt  
RA10 Landscape Regions and Character Areas  
D1 Quality of Design  
D2 Character and Context  
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:**

Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council – No objection

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

The application was advertised by site notice and neighbour notification letters. No letters of representation were received.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The main issues are:

1. Impact on the Green Belt and Landscape Regions and Character Area
2. Landscape Regions and Character Areas
3. Quality of Design and Character and Context
4. Sustainable Development

### **1. Impact on the Green Belt:**

The general policies controlling development in the countryside apply with equal force in Green Belts but there is, in addition, a general presumption against inappropriate development within them. Such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances. Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and it is for the applicant to show why permission should be granted. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development will not exist unless the harm by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. The limited extension, alteration or replacement of existing dwellings is not inappropriate provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

In addition, Policy RA3 requires that permission for extensions to existing dwellings within the Green Belt will be allowed if it would not have an adverse visual impact in terms of its prominence, size, bulk and design on the character, appearance and pattern of development of the surrounding countryside.

The application dwelling has previously been extended by way of a flat roof dormer to the rear which it is understood was constructed under permitted development rights. The dormer encompasses almost the entire height and width of the plane of the roof with no set back from the ridge and only minimal setback from the eaves and flank boundaries of the application dwelling.

The application dwelling was original a modest two storey house. The existing dormer extension has resulted in a three storey building and a significant increase in habitable accommodation. In visual terms, the design of the dormer is unsympathetic and has resulted in a bulky addition that is both extremely prominent and out of character with the appearance and pattern of development. The proposed conservatory would significantly add to the prominence of the building when viewed from the rear by virtue of the addition of even greater bulk. The cumulative effect of the existing dormer and the proposed conservatory would result in a disproportionate increase in the size of the original dwelling. As such, the proposals represent inappropriate development and as no very special circumstances have been advanced of sufficient weight to set aside Green Belt policies of restraint, the proposal is

contrary to the advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 and would conflict with Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

A number of neighbouring dwellings feature existing extensions and conservatories. These do not benefit from planning permission and are understood to have been constructed in accordance with permitted development rights and therefore these developments were outside of planning control. In any case, each proposal must be considered on its own merits in the light of the extant development plan and all other material planning considerations. The scale of adjacent buildings does not mitigate the material harm identified above.

## **2. Landscape Regions and Character Areas:**

Policy RA10 requires developments to contribute to the landscape character and region. The application site is located within Landscape Character Area 49 where there is a strategy to 'Safeguard and Manage' the condition and character of the area. The proposal would not have any direct impact upon the local landscape quality of the area and although it would not contribute it would not be contrary to this policy.

## **3. Quality of Design and Character and Context:**

National Planning Policy Guidance PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development requires planning authorities to plan for high quality design which is appropriate in its context. Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 respectively require high quality design in all new development and for proposals to respect and relate to the character and context of their location. The residential design guidance emphasises that extensions should complement and reflect the design and character of the dwelling and be subordinate in scale. Additionally, extensions should respect existing spacing and not appear cramped on the site and the locality in general, not cause loss of light, materials should match and any overlooking towards living areas of adjacent dwellings should be minimised.

The design of the proposed conservatory would not have an adverse visual impact upon the character and appearance of the existing dwelling. No windows are proposed below a height of 2m within the west facing flank elevation. One window would be located within the east facing flank elevation, however, this window would be fixed and obscure glazed. The proposals would not have a significant impact on the residential amenity currently enjoyed by occupiers of neighbouring dwellings. No neighbour letters were received and Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council did not object. The proposals are considered to be in accordance with PPS1, Policy SS1 and ENV7 of the East of England Plan 2008, Policy D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan and Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005 (Statement of Council Policy).

## **4. Sustainable Development:**

The applicant has submitted a completed sustainability checklist in accordance with Policies R3 of the District Plan and SD1 of the Supplementary Design Guidance. The conservatory would be south facing and would feature double glazed sealed units and insulated cavity walls.

## **CONCLUSION**

The proposal fails to comply with PPG2 Green Belts and Policy RA3 and D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

**RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL AND REASON (S)**

**SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE REFUSAL OF PERMISSION:**

1. The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt where there is a presumption against inappropriate development. The proposed conservatory would add considerably to the bulk of the existing building resulting in a prominent addition. The cumulative impact of the existing dormer and the proposed conservatory would result in a disproportionate increase that is not subordinate to the scale of the original dwelling and out of character with the appearance and pattern of development. As such, the proposals would have an adverse effect on the open characteristics of the Green Belt and represent inappropriate development and as no very special circumstances have been advanced of sufficient weight to set aside Green Belt policies of restraint, the proposal is contrary to the advice contained in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 and would conflict with Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

**INFORMATIVES**

None

**DRAWING NUMBERS**

1:1250 Site Location Plan & EN6 4BY/Firw-321 & EN6 4BY/Firw-325 (proposed elevations) & EN6 4BY/Firw-320 & EN6 4BY/Firw-325 (existing elevations) received and dated 4<sup>th</sup> September 2009

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