

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No:	S6/2009/2749/FP
------------------------	------------------------

NOTATION:

The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt and Landscape Character Area 53 as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The property is accessed from an unmade driveway from School Road, which is flanked either side by a beach hedge.

The current application building comprises of a two storey section which has a pitched tiled roof with gable ends, and is finished in red facing brickwork, apart from the original dwelling which has a painted white render finish at first floor level.

On the west side of this two storey building, there an attached single storey area of accommodation which is made up of a pitched roof and flat roofs. It is in this section of the building where the office use is currently located.

The application building is located towards the southern boundary of the application site. To the north, where the rear garden is located, is a pond with a wooden summerhouse alongside. Beyond the application site and further north is open countryside. To the east and west, outside the residential curtilage of the application site, are two separate parcels of open land in the applicant's ownership.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

The application seeks full planning permission for the 'erection of a two storey residential extension, first floor granny annexe and B1 (office) replacement following demolition of existing ground floor offices.'

This proposed description was emailed to the agent on 5 January 2010 to provide the necessary clarification to that originally given on the application form as 'Construction of offices and house extension'.

The proposal would require the demolition of the existing ground floor offices (approximately 62 sqm) and their replacement with new offices (similar area of approximately 61 sqm) and in addition a separate entrance lobby and staircase to the granny annexe at first floor level above.

The existing kitchen and dining area would be enlarged and made open plan with a new separate utility area at ground floor level.

At first floor level an existing bathroom is lost to provide access to a new bedroom and to a new self contained area referred to 'granny annexe' in the application

description. This area of accommodation comprises of a bedroom, kitchen/dining/siting area and bathroom.

Externally a new rear first floor balcony is proposed to serve the new bedroom, and two new white painted gables are proposed in the new extension, along with facing brickwork to match the existing.

The new roof above the extensions would be in plain tiles to match the existing and would extend the existing main ridgeline and roofslopes with a gable end. Three rear rooflights are proposed in the new rood extension.

PLANNING HISTORY:

Relevant planning history:

E/713-58 – Erection of detached house with private garage – granted 9/07/58

S6/1986/0465/FP – Two storey extension ad covered walkway – granted 21/08/1986

S6/2003/340/LU – Application for Certificate of Lawfulness for an existing use of buildings as offices – granted 28/4/03

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:

National Planning Policy

PPS 1 - Delivering Sustainable Development

PPG 2 - Green Belts

PPG 13 - Transport

East of England Plan 2008

SS1 – Achieving Sustainable Development

T14 – Parking

ENV2 – Landscape Conservation

ENV7 - Quality in the Built Environment

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

SD1 - Sustainable Development

GBSP1 – Definition of Green Belt

RA3: Extensions to dwellings in the Green Belt

R3 - Energy Efficiency

RA10 – Landscape Regions and Character Areas

D1 - Quality of Design

D2 - Character & Context

M14 – Parking Standards for New Development

Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005 sections

Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004

CONSULTATIONS

Highways – no comments received.

PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

North Mymms Parish Council comment that the site 'designated as Green Belt so the proposals should comply with Green Belt Policies as set out in the District Plan'.

REPRESENTATIONS

Period expired 25/02/10.

This application has been advertised and 1 representations have been received in regards to an existing access track which is located on adjoining land in the applicants ownership. Concerns have been raised that this could be used during the construction of the extensions as there is a junction with the A1000 and whether appropriate restrictions could be imposed on to prevent this.

DISCUSSION:

The main issues are:

- 1. Green Belt Policy**
- 2. Design**
- 3. Amenity Issues**
- 4. Other considerations**

1. Green Belt Policy

The main issue in this case is 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.

Government Policy relating to Green Belts is found in PPG2. This explains 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. In a Green Belt location, development is held to be either appropriate in planning terms, or inappropriate. Paragraph 3.4 lists certain categories of built developments that are not inappropriate in the Green Belt. This list includes limited extensions to existing dwellings. However, such extensions will be inappropriate development if they result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

Policy RA3 (Extensions to dwellings in the Green Belt) of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 reflects this advice and requires all of the following criteria to be met:

- (i) The proposal would not individually or when considered with the existing or approved extensions to the original dwelling, result in a disproportionate increase in the size of the dwelling;*

(ii) It would not have an adverse visual impact (in terms of its prominence, size, bulk and design) on the character of the surrounding countryside.

This policy also applies to those outbuildings for which planning permission is required.

Criteria (i) of Policy RA3 and PPG2 require an assessment of the size of the extensions to be made in regards to the 'original' dwelling and so it is necessary to establish the size of the 'original' dwelling. Size relates to the floor area and also to the height and overall mass of the resultant dwelling.

Planning permission was granted on 9th July 1958 for the 'original' dwelling on this site (E/713-58). This application included drawings which showed the size of the approved building at that time.

A later planning application in 1986 (S6/1986/0465/FP) granted a two storey extension which appears to be the extension which currently exists on the site.

It would be reasonable on the evidence that is available to consider that the 'original' dwelling for the purposes of PPG2 and local plan policy RA3 to be the building as shown in the approved drawings submitted with 1958 application (E/713-58).

The 'original' dwelling had a habitable floor area of approximately 152 sqm, with also a garage and open enclosed fuel storage with an additional area of approximately 34 sqm.

The later additions to this are therefore the 1986 approved two storey extension and also a flat roof single storey extension which currently serves as part of the office area, and may have been constructed under permitted development.

In 2003, a Certificate of Lawfulness was issued which confirmed that the office area was established as a lawful use for the areas shown on the current drawings.

In assessing the current proposal, it is necessary to separate the residential areas and the office areas. In regards to the office area, the existing and proposed replacement floor areas are very similar and so no Green Belt issues are raised as part of this application.

It is also worthy to note that the 'original' habitable residential floor area of approximately 152 sqm does not form part of the current office area and so a simple assessment of the new resultant residential habitable floor area can be made for the purposes of Green Belt policy compared to the 'original' areas.

The proposed new resultant floor areas comprises approximately 174 sqm at ground level and approximately 228 sqm at first floor level giving an overall resultant floor area of approximately 402 sqm. This would result in an overall increase in new habitable residential floor areas since the 'original dwelling was built of 250 sqm which is approximately 164 % increase of floor area compared to the 'original' dwelling.

In regards to an assessment of height and overall mass, the proposed extensions would not increase the height of the 'original' dwelling, but would add significantly further to its overall mass. Although the east side of the dwelling would remain in its existing form, the resultant building would increase significantly to the west with the proposed two storey extensions. This increase in mass along with the increase in

habitable floor areas of 164% would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the 'original' dwelling. The proposal is therefore considered to represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The proposal would fail the requirements of Criteria (i) of Policy RA3 and also PPG2.

Turning to Criteria (ii) of Policy RA3, a further assessment is required in terms of the visual impact on the character of the surrounding countryside. The size and scale of the proposal would reduce the openness of the rural landscape as the proposed extension, however, there are limited views into the site and so the resultant harm to the visual amenity from the extensions would be limited and so not contrary to the aims of Criteria (ii) of Policy RA3 and PPG2.

In summary, the proposal would represent inappropriate development.

2. Design

Local Plan Policies D1 & D2 are relevant along with the Supplementary Design Guidance. The proposed extensions are considered to reflect the character of the existing dwelling and are in keeping with the overall character of the area.

It would be appropriate, however, to attach a planning condition to any permission granted to ensure that the external material match that of the existing.

The proposal therefore complies with Policy D1 & D2 are relevant along with the Supplementary Design Guidance and also Policy ENV7 of the East of England Plan 2008.

3. Residential Amenity.

Local plan policy D1 is relevant along with the Supplementary Design Guidance.

There are no near neighbours which could be impacted by the proposed development, as the closest neighbours At No.3 School Road & 10 Roe Mead are located at a substantial distance away from the application site.

The proposal is therefore not considered to have any significant impact on the residential amenity of any adjoining neighbours, as the extension will not unduly result in any loss of sunlight./daylight, loss of privacy, nor will they appear unduly over dominant or over bearing.

The proposal therefore complies with local plan policy D1 along with the Supplementary Design Guidance.

4. Other Considerations

In regards to parking, it is considered that the existing provision is ample to meet the maximum number of three spaces required for a six bedroom property in this location.

The proposal therefore complies with local plan policy M14 and the accompanying Supplementary Planning Guidance – Parking Standards.

Access – Concerns have been raised by a third party about the use of an existing access track on a neighbouring parcel of land in the applicants control which could be used by construction traffic.

As this access track is not part of the application site or residential curtilage of the subject building, its use should only be connection with this adjoining parcel of open land. As this adjoining open land access falls outside the boundaries of the application site, and the application site already includes an existing access from School Road, it would be expected that access to the application site would continue to come from School Road. If any unauthorised use is made of this adjoining land and track, this would be a separate issue and dealt with separately outside the requirements of processing this application.

An informative however, reminding the applicant of the appropriate access to the application site could be attached to any planning permission granted.

CONCLUSION:

The proposal would resultant in extensions which would be of a size, bulk which would represent inappropriate development as defined by Green Belt in PPG2 & Local Plan Policy RA3.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL AND REASON (S)

- 1. The cumulative effect of the proposed development would, when considered in relation to previous extensions to the dwellinghouse, result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original dwelling due to the increase in the resultant floor area, size, bulk and mass. This would significantly reduce the openness of this part of the Green Belt to the harm of the rural character of the area contrary to the requirements of Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (Green Belt). There are no very special circumstances which have been advanced to justify a departure from the Green Belt Policies of restraint.

Refused Plan Numbers: 159-001 Rev A & 10059-002 Rev A – received and dated stamped 14 JAN 2010.

INFORMATIVES: None

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