

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No:	S6/2010/0298/FP
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NOTATION:

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

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The application site accommodates a detached house on a spacious plot. The area to the south of the plot is not clearly part of number 45's residential curtilage and the different front boundaries give the impression of two separate plots. The application dwelling is set back from the front boundary by approximately 22m. The property is within a row of houses that front open land, which is screened by mature hedges and vegetation. The surrounding area is well landscaped and rural in character. Although there are some examples of built development close and on the front boundaries of nearby plots, the surroundings are predominantly characterised by soft landscaping and relatively low enclosures.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

The proposed development would involve the erection of a brick wall, with piers, stone copings and stone spheres. The proposed wall would have a height of approximately 1.2m and the piers would have a height of 1.8m to the top of the stone spheres. The proposed gates would have a maximum height of approximately 2.1m and be hung from pillars with a similar height.

PLANNING HISTORY:

S6/2003/1687/FP – Erection of single storey side extension and demolition of existing utility room – Approved.

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:

National Policy
PPS1: Delivering sustainable development
PPG2: Green Belts
PPG13: Transport

East of England Plan 2008
SS1: Achieving Sustainable Development
T14: Parking

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991 – 2011:
None.

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:
SD1: Sustainable Development
GBSP1: Definition of Green Belt
R3: Energy Efficiency

RA3: Extension to Dwelling in the Green Belt
R5: Waste Management
M14: Parking standards for new developments
D1: Quality of design
D2: Character and context
D5: Design for movement
D7: Safety by Design
D8: Landscaping
D9: Access and Design for people with disabilities
Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005
Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards, January 2004

CONSULTATIONS

PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

No comment received.

REPRESENTATIONS

None. Period expired 11 May 2010 .

DISCUSSION:

The main issues are:

- 1. The proposed development's impact upon the character and appearance of the locality**
- 2. The proposed development's impact upon the openness of the Metropolitan Green Belt and compliance with Green Belt Policy**
- 3. The proposal's impact upon the residential amenity of the adjoining occupiers**
- 4. Highway safety**
- 5. Other Material Planning Considerations**

1. The application dwelling is within an area that is characterised predominantly by hedges and vegetation demarcating the frontages to plots. The application site and surrounding area is rural in character and the open spacious appearance of the Green Belt has been maintained.

Although there are some examples of built enclosures, these are generally limited to a much lower level, or form an access area rather than the whole boundary. When assessing the surrounding built front boundaries they appear to mostly have been built a long time ago and predate the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

It has been acknowledged that when viewed in isolation the proposed boundary treatment appears balanced and in proportion. However, the proposed development would introduce a tall and dominant structure to the front boundary, which would be particularly urban in character. This boundary treatment would not appear in keeping with the existing and surrounding front boundaries and would be excessively prominent when viewed from the surrounding areas. The proposed railings, gates, pillars and ornate design are all not features that characterise the locality. The proposed boundary would appear incongruous due to the proposed height and design and would not harmonise with natural features of the street scene, which are considered to be desirable.

In summary, although there is not an objection to the quality of the proposal's design, it is not considered to be appropriate for the site's location. The proposed development would have an adverse impact upon the character and context of the locality and is considered to be unacceptable. The proposed development has therefore failed to meet the requirements of Policy D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

2. The application site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt. PPG2 sets out Government policy on Metropolitan Green Belts. Paragraph 3.1 states that: -

"The general policies controlling development in the countryside apply with equal force in the Green Belt but there is, in addition, a general presumption against inappropriate development within them. Such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances"

Paragraph 3.6 also states: -

"Provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building, the extension or alteration of dwellings is not inappropriate in Green Belts."

The proposed development would form additional development within a prominent position on the application plot. The existing boundary wall appears to have been erected some time ago and does not have a planning history. The proposal would have a harsh appearance and not be in keeping with the well landscaped surroundings, which maintain the open character and appearance of the area.

The proposal would involve an extension of the existing boundary treatment and alterations which would have a more prominent design. The proposed boundary treatment and gates would appear far more urban in character than the existing frontage. An additional wall is not appropriate and would be much more noticeable than the existing. This urbanising affect of the proposed development would be worsened by the height of the proposed gates and ornate design. The proposed development would therefore have an adverse impact upon the openness of the Metropolitan Green Belt.

The application would require additional hardstanding to create an access to the new crossover. Although hardstanding can often be laid without the need of planning permission, this area is only necessary as a result of the proposed vehicular access. It has also been noted that the proposed hardstanding would involve resurfacing rather than a built structure. However, the proposed hardstanding would add to the urbanisation of the plot and would increase the appearance of built development on the plot. The proposed access would allow views of the proposed hardstanding and the cumulatively the additions on the plot would appear prominent not in keeping with the rural character and appearance of the surroundings.

PPG2 in paragraph 3.2 allows the applicant to advance other considerations which may be accepted as very special circumstances. No very special circumstances have been put forward by the applicant and there do not appear to be any reasons to override the policy's requirements.

3. The proposed boundary treatment would be sited a sufficient distance from the neighbouring properties to ensure that they would not suffer an adverse loss of residential amenity. The application therefore meet the requirements of Policy D1.

4. The application has been assessed by Hertfordshire Highways. It was recognised that there is an existing crossover onto the plot which would be utilised. The accesses are considered to have adequate visibility splays and the proposed layout will allow vehicles to enter and leave in a forward gear. The application would include the closure of the existing access to the centre of the plot and the site would retain two working vehicular access points. Hertfordshire Highways have suggested an informative to ensure the works adjoining the highway are carried out to their specifications. The proposed development would therefore not have an unacceptable impact upon the adjacent highway and would meet the requirements of PPG13.

The application has been submitted with a sustainability checklist. The checklist notes that the development would not involve the removal of existing vegetation and would allow surface water to drain into the existing permeable areas of the plot. Considering the development would comprise a boundary treatment, these provisions are considered to be a reasonable effort to meet the requirements of Policies SD1 and R3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

CONCLUSION:

The application would have an unacceptable impact upon the character and appearance of the locality and would fail to maintain the openness and character of the Metropolitan Green Belt. The application has therefore failed to meet the requirements of PPG2 and Policy D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL AND REASONS

The proposed boundary development would appear overly prominent and dominant by reason of the proposed height, design, siting and overall incongruous appearance. The proposal would fail to maintain the openness of the Green Belt and would have an urbanising impact upon the plot and surrounding area. The proposal would therefore fail to appropriately reflect the existing character and appearance of the surrounding street scene and have a detrimental impact upon the visual amenity of the locality. The application has therefore failed to meet the requirements of PPS1, PPG2 and Policy D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

INFORMATIVES: None.

DRAWING NUMBERS:

Site Location Plan 1:1250 & C25/22/02 A C10/22/03 & C10/22/04 A received and dated 23 March 2010.

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