

WELWYN HATFIELD COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT CONTROL
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No:	S6/2010/1706/FP
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NOTATION:

The site lies wholly within the Metropolitan Green Belt and landscape area 53 as defined in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Proposals Map.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The application site is located on the north side of Firs Wood Close, a cul-de-sac road accessed from Coopers Lane Road and consists of a detached two storey dwelling with detached double garage and front and rear gardens. The application dwelling is set within a spacious plot and benefits from a paddock to the north east. The wider character of the area is semi-rural featuring areas of woodland and fields and paddocks.

The application dwelling is one of four individually designed detached houses, constructed in the 1990's and situated to the north of Firs Wood Close. The application site previously formed part of a far larger site known as Hook Kennels which was comprehensively redeveloped for a change of use from a racing association headquarters to residential use following permission granted by application S6/1987/171/FP.

The site is irregular in shape measuring up to 90m in depth x 50m in width. The application dwelling is set back approximately 15m from the highway. The dwelling is finished in reclaimed mixed facing brick and a plain clay tiled hipped roof. The site is accessed via a carriage driveway with parking for between 8-10 vehicles. The site boundaries are defined by mature planting including trees, hedges and shrubs.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

This application seeks full planning permission erection of a single storey rear extension. The rear extension would measure approximately 3.8m in depth x 8m in width and would also incorporate an existing conservatory base measuring approximately 3.5m in depth x 4.7m in width. The extension would feature a large area of glazing to the rear elevation and to the roof.

PLANNING HISTORY:

S6/1987/0171/FP – Change of use of existing racing assn hq to residential comprising conversion & extensions to form 38 dwellings & car park & 5 detached houses & garages (Granted 31/10/1987)

S6/1993/0837/FP – Erection of one detached dwelling house (revision of S6/1987/0171/FP) (Granted 14/04/1994)

The application dwelling retains permitted development rights and there is no information available to suggest that the principle of an extension in this location would be inappropriate.

SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:

National Planning Policy:

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development

PPG2 Green Belts

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

D1 Quality of Design

D2 Character and Context

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005

CONSULTATIONS

None

TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS

Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council – No response (consulted 16/08/10)

REPRESENTATIONS

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

DISCUSSION:

The main issues are:

1. Impact on the Green Belt
2. Quality of Design and Character and Context
3. Impact on Neighbour Amenity
4. Other Material Considerations

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 an 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 only where the proposal 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 main issues are therefore:

1. Whether or not the proposed extensions would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
2. The effect of the extensions on the openness of the Green Belt and its visual amenity.

Whether or not the proposed extensions would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt: Neither PPG2 or Policy RA3 provide specific guidance on assessing the size of a property and there are a number of ways in which an extended property can be compared to an original dwelling in order to assess whether or not an addition is disproportionate. The net total additional floorspace added to the original dwelling is one commonly used indicator, however, each and all other factors, including the proposed additional cubic content, the increase in footprint and any increase in height are also relevant and capable of being taken into account.

The existing utility room is not shown on the approved drawings for the original dwelling (planning application S6/1993/0837/FP) and is therefore not considered 'original'. In terms of floorspace calculations, the storage room within the roofspace and the porch to the front of the dwelling are not included as they do not form part of the habitable accommodation.

The total floorspace of the original dwelling measures approximately 290sqm. The existing extension (utility room) measures approximately 11sqm taking the total existing floorspace to approximately 301sqm. The proposed extensions would increase floorspace by approximately a further 45sqm taking the total cumulative floorspace to 346sqm. This equates approximately to a 20 percent increase over the original dwelling which is considered to be proportionate in accordance with PPG2 and Policy RA3.

The effect of the extensions on the openness of the Green Belt and its visual amenity: PPG2 identifies in paragraph 1.4 that the fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to keep land permanently open; openness being the most important attribute of the Green Belt. Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan requires extensions not to have an adverse visual impact on the character, appearance and pattern of development in the surrounding countryside.

Views of the extension would be limited by virtue of its location to the rear of the application dwelling. Notwithstanding this, there is potential for distance views from the open fields and wooded area to the rear of the application site. From these areas the extended dwelling would be seen in the context of a group of four large detached houses of individual design set within spacious plots. Given the context and the limited views of the extension it is considered that the development would not have a detrimental effect on the visual amenity of this part of the Green Belt sufficient to warrant refusal of planning permission.

2. 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.

By virtue of its location to the rear of the application dwelling, the proposed extension would not be visible within the street scene and would have no discernable impact on the character of the area. The proposed extension would be subordinate in scale and would have an acceptable design for an addition to the rear of the property. The proposed development is therefore acceptable in accordance with PPS1 and Policy D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan and Supplementary Design Guidance, 2005 (Statement of Council Policy).

3. Impact on Neighbour Amenity:

The proposed rear extensions and porch would not impact upon light amenity by virtue of approximately 8m separation distance from the site boundary. In terms of privacy, windows within the extension would overlook the rear garden of the application dwelling which is well screened by mature planting approximately 2m in height. No letters of representation have been received from neighbours or Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council. The proposed development would not result in unacceptable harm to the amenity currently enjoyed by occupiers of neighbouring dwellings in accordance Policy D1 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Supplementary Design Guidance 2005 (Statement of Council Policy).

4. Other Material Considerations:

Sustainable Development and Energy Efficiency: The applicant has submitted details of how the proposal would contribute towards sustainability in accordance with policies SD1 and R3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Supplementary Design Guidance, 2005. The applicant has indicated within the submitted sustainability checklist that the extensions would not impact upon neighbour amenity; a glass roof is proposed to make the most of solar gain and natural light; insulation would exceed current building control regulations; it is proposed to use recycled facing bricks; existing trees and hedges would not be affected by the development.

CONCLUSION:

The proposals comply with the relevant national policies and guidance, policies within the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the requirements of the Supplementary Design Guidance (Statement of Council Policy).

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS

CONDITIONS:

1. C.2.1 – Time Limit
2. C.13.1 – The development/works shall not be started and completed other than in accordance with the approved plans and details 005 received and dated 26 August 2010

POST-DEVELOPMENT

3. C.5.2 – Matching Materials

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION:

The proposal has been considered against National Planning Policy PPS1, PPG2 and development plan policies (i.e. Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 GBSP1, SD1, R3, RA3, D1, D2 and Supplementary Design Guidance), 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 (see Officer’s report which can be inspected at these offices).

INFORMATIVES

None

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