

**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT  
DELEGATED REPORT**

<b>APPLICATION No:</b>	<b>N6/2013/1732/FP</b>
<b>APPLICATION Site:</b>	<b>2 Hornbeam Lane, Essendon</b>

**NOTATION:**

The application site is to the south of Essendon, on a track which leads south from the B158. It is within the Green Belt in accordance with Policy GBSP1 as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

**DESCRIPTION OF SITE:**

2 Hornbeam Lane is a detached, two storey residential dwelling on the western side of Hornbeam Lane. The dwelling is red brick, with tile hanging at first floor level. To the southern side, there is a single storey, pitched roof garage attached to the dwelling and to the rear there is a conservatory and store room. There is a porch on the northern elevation of the dwelling, but the main front door to the property appears to be on the front (eastern) elevation of the property.

The dwelling sits within a row of three similar dwellings. The surrounding area is rural in character.

**DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:**

This application seeks planning permission for the erection of a single storey rear extension following demolition of the existing conservatory and store room.

**PLANNING HISTORY:**

S6/1993/0519/FP - First floor side extension  
A(G) 12/09/1993

S6/1983/0011/ - Single storey front and side extension  
A(G) 05/04/1983

S6/1979/0762/ - Ground and first floor side extensions  
A(G) 24/01/1980

## **SUMMARY OF POLICIES:**

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:

SD1: Sustainable Development

GBSP1: Definition of Green Belt

R3: Energy Efficiency

D1: Quality of Design

D2: Character and Context

RA3: Extensions to dwellings in the Green Belt

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking

Standards, January 2004

National Planning Policy Framework

## **CONSULTATIONS:**

None

## **TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL COMMENTS:**

Essendon Parish Council – Well proportioned and well designed extension

## **REPRESENTATIONS:**

The application was advertised by neighbour notification letters and a site notice. One letter of representation was received. The comments are summarised below:

- Well proportioned and well designed extension

## **DISCUSSION:**

The main issues are:

1. Impact on the Green Belt
2. The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing property and the surrounding area
3. Impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties
4. Parking provision
5. Other material considerations

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

The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence. In the Green Belt, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

The main issues to consider are:

1. Whether the proposal is inappropriate development for the purposes of the NPPF.
2. The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and on the character and appearance of the surrounding area
3. If the proposal is inappropriate development, whether the harm (by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm) is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development.

### **Whether the proposal is inappropriate development for the purposes of the NPPF**

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

Annex 1 of the NPPF provides guidance on its implementation. Paragraph 215 notes that in the period following 12 months since the publication of the NPPF “*due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with this framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)*”. Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan relates to the extension of dwellings in the Green Belt. It states the following:

*Permission for extensions to existing dwellings within the Green Belt will be allowed only where all the following criteria are met:*

*(i) The proposal would not individually or when considered with 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, appearance and pattern of development of the surrounding countryside.*

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

This policy is considered to be consistent with the policies contained in the NPPF relating to Green Belts and therefore weight should be given to it in the determination of this planning application.

(i) The planning history for the application site indicates that the dwelling has already been extended beyond its original size. In 1979 planning permission was granted for a ground and first floor side extension. However it is not clear to what extent this permission was implemented (if at all) because the plans show that the proposal

involved the creation of a new gable end to the front and rear and the existing dwelling does not have these features.

In 1983, planning permission was granted for a single storey front and side extension. However the available plans are not sufficiently clear to show the extension.

In 1993, planning permission was granted to extend at first floor level and this permission seems to have been implemented. It is not clear when the conservatory was constructed as there is no planning history relating to it.

Taking into account the planning history and plans dating back to 1974, for the purpose of this application, it is presumed that the original dwellinghouse did not include the garage to the side. On this basis, it is considered that the ground floor of the dwellinghouse had a floor space of roughly 80 square metres and the first floor had a floor space of roughly 48 square metres, giving a total of 128 square metres.

The following calculations have been made:

<b><u>Increase in floor space to the original dwelling as a result of the proposed extension</u></b>	
Floor space of original dwelling	128 sq.m
Floor space of existing dwelling (ie. including previous extensions)	203 sq.m
<b><u>Percentage increase above original dwelling</u></b>	<b><u>58%</u></b>
Floor space of dwelling as a result of proposed extensions	215 sq.m
<b><u>Percentage increase above original dwelling</u></b>	<b><u>68%</u></b>

The existing dwelling is approximately 58% larger than its original size and the proposal would result in a dwelling that is 68% larger than the original size. An increase in size beyond that of the original dwelling of 68% is considered to be disproportionate. However, on the basis that the proposal involves the replacement of part of previous extensions to the dwellinghouse, the impact of the increase in size must be further considered.

(ii) With regards to the visual impact of the proposed extension on the character, appearance and pattern of development of the surrounding countryside, the surrounding area is very rural in character. The host dwelling sit in a row of 3 similar detached dwellings and is otherwise surrounded by woodland and open countryside. The proposed extension relates to the rear of the host dwelling and would not be visible in the streetscene along Hornbeam Lane or any other public views of the host dwelling. The existing conservatory and store room (to be replaced as part of this application) sit within a gap created by the shape of the original building and the proposed extension would also sit within this gap. It would extend beyond the original rear building line by approximately 3 metres, which is slightly more than the existing conservatory, and it would have width of approximately 6 metres, which is significantly wider than the existing conservatory. It would have a lantern feature on the flat roof and extensive glazing on its rear elevation. Due to its design and the extent to which it would increase the existing footprint of the host dwelling, it is

considered that the proposed extension would appear as a dominant addition to the original dwellinghouse that would fail to respect and relate well to the host dwelling and its surroundings.

### **The effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and on the character and appearance of the surrounding area**

The openness of the Green Belt is considered to be one of its most important attributes and it needs to be safeguarded. As noted above, the proposed extension would be located to the rear of the host dwelling where it would not be publically visible. However it would extend beyond the original rear building line by approximately 3 metres, with a width of approximately 6 metres. This would make the overall building significantly bulkier at ground floor level.

There is already a conservatory that extends beyond the original building line at the host dwelling but it is more modest in size and appearance than the proposed extension. On this basis, there would be increased impact on the openness of the Green Belt as a result of the proposal.

### **If the proposal is inappropriate development, whether the harm (by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm) is clearly outweighed by other considerations, so as to amount to the very special circumstances necessary to justify the development**

Due to the reasons outlined above, the proposed extension to the host dwelling is considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The NPPF notes that in the Green Belt, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. No very special circumstances have been demonstrated by the applicant and the application should therefore be refused on this basis.

## **2. The impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing property and the surrounding area**

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. The NPPF notes that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Planning decisions should aim to ensure that developments add to the overall quality of the area; respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation. They should also be visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 requires the standard of design in all new development to be of a high quality and Policy D2 requires all new development to respect and relate to the character and context of the area in which it is proposed. It notes that development proposals should as a minimum maintain, and where possible, should enhance or improve the character of the existing area. The Welwyn Hatfield District Plan Supplementary Design Guidance (SDG) supplements the policies contained in the District Plan.

The host dwelling has an attractive appearance. Although it has been extended in the past the overall building is made up of smaller elements that work well together to create a building that appears well proportioned, carefully designed and sensitively extended. Although only single storey in height, the scale of the proposed extension is not considered to be appropriate to the host dwelling. The roof height of the extension would be above the level of the tile hanging detail on the main dwellinghouse meaning the extension would appear out of scale with the host dwelling and it would not appear subservient to the host dwelling. The lantern feature on the flat roof is considered to be overly large in size and the expanse of glazing on the rear elevation would be at odds with the more delicate fenestration on the rest of the host dwelling. It is recognised that when extending a historic building it is sometimes appropriate to use a contrasting design, however in this case, the proposed extension is considered to be too large in scale and too boxy in design in relation to the host dwelling. On this basis, it is not considered that the proposal complies with the guidance set out in the NPPF or Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan.

### **3. Impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties**

No representations were received from neighbouring occupiers. The main property which might be affected by the proposal is the neighbour to the south, number 3.

#### **3 Hornbeam Lane**

These two properties are joined by single storey elements and there is mature vegetation along the shared boundary. Overall, it is not considered that this neighbouring property would be affected in terms of loss of light or outlook, overbearing impact or overlooking. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in this respect.

### **4. Parking Provision**

The proposal would not create any additional bedrooms in the host dwelling and there is therefore no need for any additional parking provision. Neither does the proposal involve the loss of any parking spaces. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in this respect.

### **5. Other Material Planning Considerations**

**Sustainable Development:** The applicant has completed a sustainability checklist which highlights that the scheme generally responds positively to the topic areas that are required to be considered in accordance with policies SD1 and R3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Supplementary Design Guidance, 2005.

**Protected Species:** The presence of protected species is a material consideration, in accordance with, Natural Environment & Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 (section 40), Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 as well as Circular 06/05. In the UK the requirements of the EU Habitats Directive is implemented by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010 (the Conservation Regulations 2010).

Where a European Protected Species ('EPS') might be affected by a development, it is necessary to have regard to Regulation 9(5) of the Conservation Regulations 2010, which states: *"a competent authority, in exercising any of their functions, must have regard to the requirements of the Habitats Directive so far as they may be affected by the exercise of those functions."* The Conservation Regulations 2010, (Regulation 41) contains the main offences for EPS animals, however the existing site and development is such that there is not a reasonable likelihood of EPS being present on site nor would a EPS offence be likely to occur. It is therefore not necessary to consider the Conservation Regulations 2010 and amended 2012 Regulations further.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt where there is a presumption against inappropriate development. The percentage increase in floor space over and above the size of the original building as a result of the proposed extensions would be disproportionate and the resultant dwelling would be significantly bulkier at ground floor level due to the increase in the footprint of the building. As a result, the dwelling would have a detrimental impact on the openness of the Green Belt and also the character, appearance and pattern of development in the surrounding area. As such, the proposed development represents inappropriate development and no very special circumstances are apparent in this case to set aside Green Belt policies of restraint. The proposal is contrary to Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework.

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

1. The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt where there is a presumption against inappropriate development. The proposed extensions would result in a disproportionate increase in the size of the original dwelling and would have an adverse visual impact on the openness of the Green Belt and also the character, appearance and pattern of development in the surrounding area. Furthermore, the proposed extension would represent a bulky addition to the host dwelling that does not respect and relate well to the host 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 proposals are contrary to the advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and would conflict with Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

## **SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR REFUSAL**

The decision has been made taking into account, where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework and material planning considerations do not justify a decision contrary to the development plan (see Officer's report which can be viewed on the Councils website or inspected at these offices). With regards to the applicant overcoming the reasons for refusal, consideration needs to be given to a reduction in the percentage increase

in size and revisions to the detailed design and height of the proposed rear extension.

**REFUSED DRAWING NUMBERS:**

BC303-1 & BC303-2 received and dated 21 August 2013.

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