

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No: S6/2013/2381/FP

SITE ADDRESS: 12 Ramsey Close

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT: Erection of single storey front, and side extension and two storey rear extension following demolition of existing garage

RECOMMENDATION: Approval with conditions

1. SITE AND APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:

The application site is on the north side of a small cul-de-sac known as Ramsey Close, which is located on the periphery of the developed area of Brookmans Park and is accessed from Shepherds Way. The site comprises a detached two storey dwelling with front and rear gardens and a detached single garage. The dwelling is finished in red facing brick under a gable roof and is one of a group of four detached dwellings which appear to have been built at the same time to a similar design. The adjacent dwelling to the east, No.13 Ramsey Close, has been extended previously with a two storey side extension following planning permission granted in 2003. A two storey block of flats lies approximately 40m to the west of the application site, separated by an area of predominantly open amenity space. To the rear of the site are open fields. This application proposes the erection of single storey front, and side extension and two storey rear extension following demolition of existing garage

2. SITE DESIGNATION:

The site lies within the Green Belt and a Landscape Character Area 51 as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

S6/2013/1343/FP – Demolition of existing garage and erection of two storey side, single storey front extension and orangery/conservatory (Refused 18/09/2013)

Reason for refusal of planning application S6/2013/1343/FP:

- 1. The proposal represents a disproportionate addition to the original dwelling house and is therefore inappropriate development within the Green Belt. In addition, the scale of the proposal would have a detrimental impact on the openness, character and visual amenities of the Green Belt and surrounding area. The Local Planning Authority do not consider that very special circumstances exist which outweigh the harm, by reason of inappropriateness and other identified harm in the form of impacts on openness, character of the area and visual amenity. The proposal is therefore contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, Policies D1, D2 and RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, and the Supplementary Design Guidance, Statement of Council Policy, 2005.*

4. CONSULTATIONS:

No objections have been received in principle from Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust and Hertfordshire Ecology.

5. NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS:

Two representations have been received from the public which may be summarised as:

- We recommend that these proposals comply with Green Belt policies on extensions
- A maximum of three car parking spaces should be provided in accordance with the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

6. TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIONS

North Mymms Parish Council has commented with the following: *“North Mymms Parish Council considers that the proposed extensions may be overdevelopment in the Green Belt. It should be ensured that the proposal would comply with Green Belt planning policy guidelines on extensions otherwise it would have an impact on the openness due to the increase in volume.”*

7. MAIN PLANNING ISSUES AND RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES:

The main planning issues with this application are:

- a) Principle of development and the impact upon the openness of the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the area (NPPF paragraphs 87-90, Local Plan Policies GBSP1, R3, D1, D2 and SDG),
- b) Impact on the residential amenity of adjoining properties (Local Plan Policy D1)
- c) Parking standards and impact on the highway (M14 and SPG)

8. ANALYSIS:

- a) Principle of development and the impact upon the openness of the Green Belt and the character and appearance of the area:

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. As with previous Green Belt policy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. “Very special circumstances” will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.

The NPPF accepts that within the Green Belt the extension or alteration of a building is not inappropriate provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building. This advice is reflected in Local Plan Policy RA3(i).

The NPPF does not qualify what is said about inappropriate development in the Green Belt by any reference to whether or not such extensions would be readily visible or cause any harm to the appearance of the Green Belt. Also, whilst Policy RA3 of the Local Plan deals with visual impact it does so in a separate criterion from that which addresses whether or not a proposal would result in a disproportionate

increase in the size of a dwelling. Appearance and visual impact are matters to be weighed in the balance once a conclusion has been reached on whether or not a proposal would be inappropriate development.

Policy RA3(ii) states 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:

- (i) Whether or not the proposed extensions would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt
- (ii) Whether the proposal would comply with the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt and the effect of the extensions on the openness of the Green Belt, its character and visual amenity
- (iii) Whether there are any very special circumstances to clearly outweigh the harm by reason of inappropriateness and any other harm

(i) Whether or not the proposed extensions would amount to inappropriate development in the Green Belt:

The Local Plan makes clear that the judgement as to whether a proposal would result in a disproportionate increase in the size of the original dwelling must take into account any existing or approved extensions but it gives no detailed guidance as to what scale of increase will be considered “disproportionate”.

Neither the NPPF 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 building in order to assess whether or not an addition is disproportionate. The net total additional floor area added to the original building 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 dwelling has not been extended upon previously and therefore the existing dwelling is the original dwelling which has a total floor area (including the garage) of approximately 146.5sqm. The proposed extended dwelling would have a floor area measuring 206sqm which is equivalent to a 41% increase over and above the original dwelling. In terms of footprint, the dwelling would increase from approximately 83.3sqm to 124.7sqm equivalent to a 49.7% increase over and above the original dwelling. Although this is a significant percentage increase, it is not conclusive as the NPPF test is primarily an objective one based on size.

When compared to the previously refused planning application S6/2013/1343/FP, the first floor side extension above the garage has been replaced with a much smaller rear extension. Although the proposed rear extension would be two storeys in height, it would measure just 2.9m in depth. The proposal was amended during the application process from a gable to a hipped roof to further reduce the bulk and massing of the extension. The existing detached garage, which is built up against the flank site boundary, would be demolished and replaced with a single garage

adjoining the main dwelling. The replacement garage would be the same width and the same height as the existing garage and would maintain the same building line. A slightly larger utility room is proposed to the rear of the garage to square off the north east corner of the property but this would have minimal impact on the apparent size of the building. A single storey front extension would bring the ground floor of the dwelling forward approximately 2m in line with the front of the garage.

In summary, this amended scheme would result in a cumulative increase floor area and footprint which would be less than half that of the original dwelling and the height of the dwelling would not increase. The resultant extensions would appear as a limited extension to the dwelling and in terms of its scale and form would not appear disproportionate above the size of the original building. Accordingly, the proposals are appropriate development within the Green Belt in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012 and Policy RA3(i).

(ii) Whether the proposal would comply with the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt and the effect of the extensions on the openness of the Green Belt, its character and visual amenity:

In terms of the effect of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt and its visual amenity, the NPPF identifies in paragraph 79 that 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. The second criterion of 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.

Ramsey Close is a small cul-de-sac which comprising just four detached dwellings situated close to the junction with Shepherds Way to the south. A two storey block of flats lies approximately 40m to the west of the application site separated by an area of predominantly open public amenity space. The four detached dwellings appear to have been built at the same time to a similar design. Spacing around the four properties is generous with each property benefiting from a single garage to the side and a garden to the front and rear.

With regard to the purposes of including land within the Green Belt which are set out within paragraph 80 of the NPPF, it is relevant that the application site consists of an existing residential plot within a cul-de-sac of other similar properties. As such, the proposal would not result in encroachment of development into the countryside and would comply with the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

To the rear of the site are a number of trees and hedges which limit views of the application dwelling from the fields to the north, however, the application dwelling is still clearly visible from the Ramsey Close and Shepherds Way to the south. The extensions would result in additional built form which inevitably would lead to an increase in the impact of the dwelling on the openness of the Green Belt. Notwithstanding this, the substantial openness around the application dwelling would be maintained, in particular the views obtainable between the buildings and to the open countryside beyond. The two storey extension would be sited to the rear of the dwelling and set in a minimum of 3.5m front the flank site boundaries, as such it

which would not be unduly prominent from the site frontage. The limited scale of the front extension would have only a minimal impact on openness as it would be single storey and seen against the back drop of the existing dwelling. The replacement garage would not appear any larger than the existing garage, being the same width and the same height. In addition, the relocation of the garage would create approximately 1m separation distance from the site boundary which would have a small but beneficial impact in terms of openness. Overall it is considered that the siting and design of the proposal would prevent it from appearing overly prominent or having a significant effect upon the openness of the Green Belt.

Turning to visual amenity, character and pattern of development, the impact of a proposal is assessed giving regard to the bulk, scale and design of the development and how it harmonises with the existing building and the wider area. In addition to Policy RA3, Policies D1 and D2 respectively require high quality design in all new development and for proposals to respect and relate to the character and context of their location. These policies are expanded upon in the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance (SDG) which requires that residential extensions should be complementary in design and be subordinate in size and scale to the existing dwelling.

The bulk and massing proposed is considered to be subordinate in size and scale to the existing dwelling and in accordance with the SPG. The majority of the increase in bulk and massing would be to the rear of the dwelling which would not be unduly prominent from the site frontage. When compared to the previously refused planning application, the proposed extensions would be incorporated much more successfully into the existing structure and would be more compact in appearance and appropriately styled to reflect the character of the original dwelling. Subject to a planning condition requiring materials to match the existing building, the design and architectural detailing proposed would not have an adverse visual impact on the character, appearance and pattern of development.

Accordingly, this amended scheme has overcome the reason for refusal of planning application S6/2013/1343/FP and complies with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework Local Plan Policy Policies GBSP1, D1, D2 and RA3 and the Supplementary Design Guidance (Statement of Council Policy 2005)

b) The impact of the proposal on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties

The impact of the proposed development on the residential amenity of neighbouring occupiers is considered in terms of the impact on access to day/sun/sky light, privacy and overbearing impact. Giving consideration to the scale of the proposal and its setting, it is considered that the proposed extension would not have an unreasonable impact on light amenity or the level of privacy afforded to the neighbouring residencies and would not appear visually overbearing in accordance with the NPPF, Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Supplementary Design Guidance 2005 (Statement of Council Policy).

c) Parking standards and impact on the highway

The submitted drawings show that the extended dwelling would provide a total of four bedrooms. The Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) identifies the site as within Zone 4 where residential dwellings with four or more bedrooms require a maximum of three car parking spaces. In this case a replacement garage is proposed which could be made available for parking in addition to one off street parking space in front of the garage. Given that there is ample on street parking within Ramsey Close and that the SPG identifies a maximum parking requirement, the provision of two spaces is considered acceptable in this case.

Access arrangements would remain unchanged and no works within the public highway are required. It is considered that the development would not have an unreasonable impact on the safety and operation of the adjoining highway in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework; Policy M14 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Supplementary Planning Guidance.

9. CONCLUSION:

The proposal would not result in encroachment of development into the countryside and would comply with the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt. It is considered that the siting and design of the extension would prevent it from appearing overly prominent or having a significant effect upon the openness of the Green Belt. Subject to a planning condition requiring matching materials, the design and architectural detailing proposed would not have an adverse visual impact on the character, appearance and pattern of development. Accordingly, this amended scheme has overcome the reason for refusal of planning application S6/2013/1343/FP and complies with the objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework Local Plan Policy Polices GBSP1, D1, D2 and RA3 and the Supplementary Design Guidance (Statement of Council Policy 2005)

10. CONDITIONS:

1. C.2.1 Time limit for commencement of development
2. C.13.1 Development in accordance with approved plans/details 01 & 02 & 201A & 202A & 203A received and dated 11 November 2013 & 204B & 205B & 206B received and dated 02 December 2013
3. C.5.2 – Matching materials

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PERMISSION:

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 inspected at these offices).

INFORMATIVES:

None

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