

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No: S6/2014/0008/FP

SITE ADDRESS: 127 THE RIDGEWAY, CUFFLEY

**DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT: PROPOSED ERECTION OF REAR
EXTENSION AT GROUND AND FIRST FLOOR LEVELS**

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL

1. SITE AND APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:

The application site consists of a detached two storey dwelling which is set back from the highway with a driveway providing access to a covered car porch and a large gravel hard standing. To the rear of the property there is an open air swimming pool with two outbuildings.

The property is individually designed following planning permission granted in 1972, although the current site is now smaller due to part of the garden being severed, this now forms part of a new dwelling and residential curtilage of No.125 The Ridgeway.

The property has already been extended with a first floor front and side extension. The first floor side extension is approximately 2.2m wide over an existing ground floor area which has a flat roof and extends the full depth of the dwelling, with also a rear conservatory that measures approximately 7.0 metres by 3.3 metres.

The proposal is for a single storey rear extension and for a first floor rear extension which incorporates windows, doors and a Juliet balcony. The single storey rear extension will extend in depth by approximately 3.6 metres. The height will be 3.3 metres and 7.4 metres wide. The extension will incorporate doors within the rear elevation and rooflights in the rear. The first floor extension will extend the first floor level to the rear by approximately 1.8 metres and be 14.2 metres wide. A window will also be inserted at first floor level in the side elevation which will have obscured glazing.

2. SITE DESIGNATION:

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

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

S6/2007/1723/FP - Erection of first floor front & side extension & a rear conservatory, approved 9 January 2008

S6/2007/0519/FP - Erection of a single storey and two storey side extension and rear conservatory, and rear balcony railings, refused 13 July 2007

S6/1999/1172/FP - Erection of detached dwelling following demolition of existing ancillary residential annexe, refused 7 February 2000

S6/1996/0695/FP - Change of use of triple garage to self contained dwelling (Retrospective application), withdrawn 12 November 1996.

S6/1993/0600/FP - Erection of detached triple garage, approved 28 October 1993
S6/1977/0481/FP - Double garage and garden store, approved 6 October 1977
S6/1972/5111/ - Detached house and garage, approved 1972

4. CONSULTATIONS:

No objections have been received

5. NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS:

An objection has been received from No.129 The Ridgeway, and to summarise they comment that:

- The proposed extension will prevent them from being able to have television signal to their property
- The proposed extension will be “huge” by the side of their chalet bungalow
- The openness of the countryside will be taken away

6. TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIONS

Northaw and Cuffley PC have no objection, but query re green belt.

7. MAIN PLANNING ISSUES AND RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES:

The main planning issues with this application are:

a) Whether the proposal is appropriate development in the Green Belt and the effect of the proposed extensions on the openness of the Green Belt, its character and visual amenity (NPPF (paragraphs 79-90), Policies GBSP2, D1, D2, RA3 of Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005)

b) The impact of the proposal on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties (Policy D2 of Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005)

8. ANALYSIS:

(a) Whether the proposal is appropriate development within the Green Belt its impact on the Green Belt, visual amenity and character and appearance of the locality (NPPF (paragraphs 79-90), Policies GBSP2, D1, D2, RA3 of Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005)

127 The Ridgeway has been subject to a previous planning application in 2007. The original dwelling had a floor area of 233 square metres. Following previous extensions including a first floor front and side extension and a rear conservatory, and a previous extension carried out under permitted development the floorspace has been increased to 342 square metres, which represented an increase of 48%.

The new proposed floor space will be 51.9 square metres and taken with the previous extensions there will be an overall increase of 160.9 square metres, which would be an approximate 59.15% increase to the original floorspace. Although this is a significant percentage increase, it is not conclusive as the NPPF test is primarily an objective one based on size.

This proposal comprises a single storey rear extension and extension at first floor level which is a large increase in size of the dwelling and would be seen as a sizable increase in volume and built development on this site.

In comparison to the original dwelling, the greater size of the building resulting from an increase in floor area, together with the increased in bulk at first floor level and the increased scale and height of the roof, would result in a building that overall would appear substantially greater in size and bulk. The proposal is therefore regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt which is by definition, substantially harmful to the Green Belt contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework, March 2012 and Policy RA3(i).

In terms of 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. It is necessary to consider whether the proposal would comply with the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

These are:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

The dwelling is clearly visible from the front boundary and the highway. The rear of the dwelling is separated by a boundary fence one side and a hedge on the other side of the boundary. Notwithstanding this, the NPPF does not qualify what is said about extension of existing dwellings by any reference to whether or not such extensions would be readily visible or cause any harm to the appearance of the Green Belt. The effect on openness of the Green Belt is a matter of physical presence rather than visual qualities. The extension would inevitably reduce the openness of the Green Belt by reason of additional bulk to the rear of the dwelling. The impact of the proposed extension on the openness of the site would result in a degree of intrusion in the countryside and a limited amount of harm to one of the purposes of the Green Belt of assisting in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.

Policies D1 and D2 of the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan are also relevant to these proposals. Collectively, these policies seek to encourage development of a high design standard, which should respect and relate to the character and context of the area in which it is to be sited.

The character of the streetscene will be affected by the extensions to the rear of the dwelling. No.125 The Ridgeway is set back from the highway which makes No.127 more prominent within the streetscene, therefore by extending the rear of the dwelling at first floor level it would create a subordinate mass to the side elevation

and roof which will be clearly visible from the highway and affect the character of the streetscene.

The proposal will include formation of a dual pitched roof to the rear which will be incongruous and be out of character within the surrounding area. It is considered that the design would not relate well to the host dwelling and would conflict with Policies GBSP2, D1 and D2 of the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 insofar as these seek to ensure that development is designed to a high quality, respects local character and context and is compatible with the character of Cuffley. The proposal also fails to comply with the National Planning Policy Framework in terms of design.

The development site is also located within a Landscape Character Area and it is necessary to consider any potential landscape impacts. Policy RA10 states that proposals for development in rural areas will be expected to contribute, as appropriate, to the conservation, maintenance and enhancement of the local landscape character of the area in which they are located. This area is characterised largely by open farmland and woodland, wherein the objectives for this area are to improve and conserve.

It is concluded that these proposals would also harm the semi-rural character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policy RA10 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Local Plan (DLP) which expects developments in rural areas to, amongst other things, contribute to the local landscape character.

Special Circumstances

Paragraph 87 of The Framework sets out the general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt. It states that such development should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Very special circumstances to justify inappropriate development 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.

No very special circumstances have been advanced by the applicant. In addition, there are no circumstances which on the opinion of the Local Planning Authority could amount to very special circumstances required to outweigh the harm caused by reason of inappropriateness.

The proposal is therefore contrary to the advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and would conflict with Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

b) The impact of the proposal on the residential amenity of neighbouring properties (Policy D2 of Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005)

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.

The only neighbour close to the proposed extension are the residential occupiers at No.129. The current proposal will have less impact than the previous submission as the depth of the side extension has been considerably reduced. Whilst the proposed front extension will be visible from this adjoining neighbour at No.129, there is a good separation distance between the buildings and therefore result in no significant loss of sunlight/daylight to justify a refusal on these grounds.

It is noted that one side window is proposed and this is to be obscure glazed to protect the privacy of the occupiers of No.129, and therefore complies with the amenity requirements of Policy D1 and the accompanying Supplementary Design Guidance 2005 in regards to privacy.

9. CONCLUSION:

The size of the proposed extension in comparison with the original dwelling, as a matter of fact and degree, would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling. The proposal is therefore regarded as inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Substantial weight must be given to the harm to the Green Belt by reason of the inappropriateness of the proposed development.

Taking account of the aim of the NPPF to protect Green Belts from development, it is considered that the significant increase in the size of the building would detract from the openness of the Green Belt and thereby conflict with one of its essential characteristics. The proposed reduction in, and harm to, openness provides significant weight against the proposal.

No very special circumstances have been advanced by the applicant. In addition, there are no circumstances which in the opinion of the Local Planning Authority could amount to very special circumstances required to outweigh the identified harm to the Green Belt.

RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL AND REASON (S)

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 and design 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.

Note: 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).

REFUSED DRAWING NUMBERS: 1:1250 Site Location Plan & 071-001 & 071-002 & 071-003 & 071-005 & 071-006 & 071-007 & & 2062-3/C received and dated 03 January 2014.

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