

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

APPLICATION No: W6/2014/0214/EM

SITE ADDRESS: 9 Stanborough Mews, Welwyn Garden City

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT: Enlargement to existing hardstanding

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL WITH CONDITIONS

1. SITE AND APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:

The property at the application site forms the left hand side of a pair of semi-detached dwellings located within a road of similar dwelling house types. The streetscene is characterised by modern dwellings, each with off-street parking for multiple vehicles to the front and sides. The properties on Stanborough Mews have a mixture of lawn, hedgerows and planting as part of their frontage.

This application seeks for Estate Management consent for alterations to the existing frontage to create a larger area of hardstanding in which to park cars.

2. NOTATION:

The site lies within the Estate Management Scheme area under the Leasehold Reform Act 1967.

3. RELEVANT HISTORY:

1. W6/2013/2112/EM - Enlargement of vehicle hardstanding to front garden – Refused 26/11/2013

Reason for refusal:

1. The proposed formation of the hardstanding and the removal of 35msq of hedgerow and bushes would not retain an appropriate balance between hard and soft landscaping and would fail to maintain and enhance the amenities and values of the Garden City. The proposal is therefore contrary to the requirements of policies EM3 and EM4 of the Estate Management Scheme.

CONSULTATIONS:

None

4. NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS:

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

10 Stanborough Mews

- A length of hedge to the front has already been removed
- Plans are not to scale
- No elevations have been submitted
- The proposal would not retain at least 50% of the frontage as soft landscaping
- The reduction in the length of hedge along the boundary would be contrary to policy

- There is a large area for parking as existing
- No mention of the inclusion any sustainable drainage systems
- There is a large presence of commercial vehicles at the site, and this could increase with a larger hardstanding and impact visually and on highway safety

11 Stanborough Mews

- The proposal is proportionate and in keeping with the current streetscene in Stanborough Mews
- The proposal would enhance the balance between hard and soft landscaping by increasing the number of flower beds

12 Stanborough Mews

- Vehicles currently use the narrow road as a turning circle
- As existing, all neighbours park cars in front of their garages

5. MAIN ISSUES AND RELEVANT ESTATE MANAGEMENT POLICIES:

The main issues with this application are:

- a) Whether the proposal maintains and enhances the amenities and values of Welwyn Garden City and neighbouring occupiers (EM4)
- b) Other material considerations

6. ANALYSIS:

(a) The character and appearance of much of Welwyn Garden City has a quality that consists of carefully designed layouts with formal and symmetrical patterns where the design and detailing of architecture is in groups and individual buildings. Therefore in order to preserve the unique architectural heritage of the town and its building the Council expects that all applications do not harm the character and appearance of the streetscene.

The need to accommodate the rise in car ownership has resulted in pressure for vehicular hard standings on the frontages of homes and this has over time resulted in a change to the appearance of streets. The removal of excessive areas or prominent landscaping such as trees and hedges rather than the hard standing itself can over time erode character. Accordingly, the council will only allow hard surfacing (paths, paving, concrete, gravelled areas, drives and hard standings) in front gardens for the parking of private motor vehicles which retain or create sufficient soft 'green' landscaping (grass, flower beds, shrubs, trees and hedges) and a sufficient length of hedgerow (if applicable) along the frontage of the property to reduce the visual prominence of parked vehicles. The council will aim to ensure that a significant proportion, around 50% unless individual circumstances indicate that this would not be appropriate, of the frontage is retained as landscaped 'greenery' to retain the appearance and ethos of the Garden City.

The property's frontage covers an area of approximately 70sqm, of which approximately 39sqm is soft landscaping, representing 56%. As a result of the proposal, the area retained as soft landscaping would measure approximately 25.3sqm. This would represent approximately 36% of the property's frontage, retaining less than the 50% recommended by the Estate Management Scheme. In summary the previous application would was refused because it would not have

retained an appropriate balance between hard and soft landscaping. The current application would not remove as much soft landscaping as the previous scheme and would involve the replanting of greenery over existing areas of hard surfacing.

The cul-de-sac of Stanborough Mews was built approximately fifteen years ago and largely the original frontages of the properties along this street are as their original design. Only the properties on the northern side of the highway are covered under the Estate Management Scheme, however generally the properties along both sides of the street do not consist of frontages with 50% soft landscaping. It is commonplace for frontages to consist of soft landscaping making up approximately 30% or less, often with long narrow strips of landscaping dividing the dwellings and parking areas. Therefore it is considered that the original character of the relatively modern street is not typical with the original design of much of Welwyn Garden City with regard to landscaped frontages. Therefore, in this instance, even though the proposed scheme would retain an area of soft landscaping, less than the 50% required by policy, the application site would still have an appropriate balance between hard and soft landscaping when considering the original design of the cul-de-sac. The current proposal therefore satisfies the previous reason for refusal.

Furthermore, the retention of the hedge to the east boundary and the planting of a row of shrubs along the proposed landscaped strip down the middle of frontage would help to reduce the visibility of parked cars in the frontage, limiting their prominence in the streetscene. Consequently, by virtue of the siting, scale and detailed design of the proposed alterations to the hardstanding, it is considered that the proposal would maintain the amenities of the values of the Garden City in accordance with Policy EM4 of the Estate Management Scheme.

b) Representations were received from neighbours. A neighbour made reference to how a length of hedge has already been removed towards the front of the application site, how it is unclear as to when this length of hedge was removed. Estate Management Consent would be required for the removal of a hedge in a property's frontage at this location, however given that this consent has been approved for the proposed hardstanding alterations; it is unlikely at this time that any Enforcement action would be pursued prior to the implementation of this scheme.

The neighbour at No.10 also made reference to how the plans submitted as part of this application were not to an appropriate scale. Amended plans were submitted and approved, which portrayed a true plan of the site layout. Additionally, a neighbour also commented that no elevational drawings were submitted as part of the application. Given the nature of the proposal, plans of the elevations were not necessary. Comment was also made about how the proposal would fail to retain 50% of the frontage as soft landscaping. Given the original design of the street, which involves a large proportion of the frontages to be finished in a hard surface, it is considered that in this instance, a proposed frontage which is formed of below the 50% of soft landscaping is acceptable, provided it maintains sufficient hedges/shrubs.

A neighbour also made reference to how the site already benefits from large area of hardstanding for the parking of vehicles. This point is not a material consideration against this application, as the Estate Management policy makes no reference to the

maximum number of car parking spaces permitted for each dwelling. From the neighbour consultation scheme, comments were also received in relation to the absence of a sustainable drainage system. The drainage of an increased area of hardstanding is a planning issue and not something which is concerned with the requirements of the Estate Management Scheme. Therefore this point can offer no weight against this current proposal.

A neighbouring occupier has also commented about the large presence of commercial vehicles at the site, and the concern that this could increase with a larger hardstanding, resulting in a detrimental impact upon visual amenities and highway safety. Unfortunately this comment can also have no bearing on the final decision for this application, as the maximum number of commercial vehicles associated with a residential property does not form part of the assessment for this application, and as such is not a material consideration.

A comment was received from the occupier at No.12 which noted that all the other residents in the mews parked their cars in front of their garages. This comment is not relevant in the determination of this application. Policy EM4 of the Estate Management Scheme aims to ensure that consent is granted for well designed frontages, which are effective in limiting the impact of parked cars upon the streetscene, regardless of the position of parked cars in relation to a property's garage. The proposal would create a parking space in front of the property's lounge window, and feature a length of hedge to the east and shrubbery to the west, which would contribute to partially obscuring visibility of it from the north and south of Stanborough Mews. Therefore its prominence would be limited in the streetscene. As a result, it is considered that the presence of a parked car at this location would not be to detriment of amenities and values of the mews, or the wider character of the Garden City. The proposal therefore satisfies the comments and objections raised by the neighbouring occupiers.

7. CONCLUSION:

It is considered that the proposal maintains and enhances the amenities and values of the Garden City and is therefore in compliance with the Estate Management Scheme.

8. CONDITIONS:

- EM01.a – 1. This consent shall expire three years after the date hereof (or such other extended date as the Council may agree) unless the works hereby approved shall be completed before that date.
2. All works carried out in pursuance of this consent shall be and remain part of the Premises and shall be subject to the terms and conditions of the conveyance in all respects as if such works had at all times formed part of the Premises.
 3. This consent or copy hereof shall be annexed to the Conveyance.
 4. There shall be no encroachment over the boundary of the plot either above or below ground level, nor any interference with the foundations of the adjoining property without the agreement of the adjoining owner or lessee.

5. This consent now issued is given by the council only in accordance with the requirements of the Management Scheme/Conveyance or Leasehold Covenants.

REASON: To comply with the requirements of the Estate Management Scheme

6. The development/works shall not be started and completed other than in accordance with the approved plans and details: Site Location Plan & Existing Plan & Proposed Plan received and dated 20 May 2014 unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved drawings and any changes must be agreed in advance in writing by the local planning authority.

INFORMATIVES:

None

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