

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No: S6/2014/1977/FP

SITE ADDRESS: Northaw Place, 2 Coopers Lane, Northaw

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT: Erection of detached garage following demolition of 2 existing outbuildings

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS

1. SITE AND APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:

The application site comprises a detached property that was originally the lodge house to Northaw Place, a Grade II* mansion that dates from the late 17th Century. The property is located on the western side of Coopers Lane and is very well screened from the roadside by mature landscaping. The wider setting of Northaw Place has since been re-developed into houses and the vehicular access to the lodge has been re-routed. The Lodge now has its grounds, detached garage and driveway from the gated entrance along Coopers Lane.

The proposal is for a detached garage. The garage will be 4 metres in height, 5 metres in width and 5.5 metres in depth.

2. SITE DESIGNATION:

The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt, Area of Archaeological Significance and Landscape Character Area as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

S6/2014/1353/FP- Erection of detached garage, refused 20/08/2014.

S6/2014/0753/LUP - Certificate of lawfulness for the erection of a detached outbuilding, refused 30/05/2014

S6/2014/0442/LUP - Certificate of lawfulness for the proposed conversion of garage to habitable accommodation, approved 30/04/2014

S6/2007/0546/FP - Erection of two storey rear extension, creation of lightwell on first floor, creation of double doors to existing conservatory and internal alterations, approved 29/05/2007

S6/2006/1564/FP – Two storey rear extension and demolition of garage, refused 15/01/2007

S6/2001/909/FP & S6/2001/910/LB – Approval issued for the erection of a part two storey, part single storey extension not, approved 28/09/2001

S6/2000/788/FP & S6/2000/789/LB – Single storey side extension to link house and garage to provide an annexe for a dependant relative, approved 30/10/2000

S6/909/97/LB & S6/910/97/FP – Two storey side and first floor rear extension not implemented

S6/1998/859/FP – Approval issued for a conservatory although not implemented

4. CONSULTATIONS:

No objections have been received from Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council Landscaping and Ecology or Conservation Officer.

5. NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS:

No representations have been received from the public.

6. TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIONS

No representations have been received from the Town/Parish Council.

7. MAIN PLANNING ISSUES AND RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES:

The main planning issues with this application are:

- a) Principle of development and the impact of the proposal on the openness of the Green Belt, character and appearance of the existing property and the surrounding area (NPPF paragraphs 79 – 89, Policies GBSP1, RA3, RA10, D1, D2 and D8 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Supplementary Design Guidance)
- b) The impact on the setting of a listed building and a curtilage listed building (Section 12 of the NPPF)
- c) Impact on the residential amenity of nearby and neighbouring properties (Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005)

8. ANALYSIS:

- a) The main issue is whether the proposal would amount to inappropriate development within the Green Belt and whether there would be any other harm to it and, if so, whether there are other considerations which clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm, which together represent the very special circumstances necessary to justify the proposal (NPPF paragraphs 87-90, Local Plan Policies GBSP1, R3, D1, D2 and SDG).

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Green Belt policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), accepts extensions or alterations as long as they do not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building.

Appropriateness

Permission for extensions to existing dwellings within the Green Belt will be allowed only where the proposal would not individually or when considered with existing extensions to the original building, result in a disproportionate increase in the size of the building. For the purpose of this application, a comparison must be made with the original building as it existed in 1948.

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 in size. The 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.

This application has been submitted following a refusal from a previous planning application S6/2014/1353/FP for the "erection of detached garage", which was refused 20 August /2014. This application has been amended to show existing building to be demolished to allow for a new detached garage.

The floor space of the original property was approximately 198m². Additions to the property have resulted in a considerable increase in the overall floorspace of the dwelling so that it is now in excess of 300m². Currently the property has a floor area that has been increased by over 65% when compared to that of the original building.

This application seeks permission to erect a detached garage with a floor area of approximately 27.5m². Although the proposed garage would be considered a disproportionate increase, it could be considered as a replacement building as two existing outbuildings would be demolished as part of this application and as such there would be no further increase. The garage floorspace that would be demolished would equate to 27.9m²

Although the proposed garage would increase both the footprint and volume of the dwelling, would not dominate the original dwelling or significantly alter its appearance or character.

Therefore the proposed extensions are considered to be appropriate development within the Green Belt.

Impact on the openness of the Green Belt

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 garage 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 due to the limited increase in the footprint of the proposal and the two existing outbuildings demolished.. Therefore it is considered that the siting and design of the proposals would prevent it from appearing overly prominent or having a significant effect upon the openness of the Green Belt. The impact is therefore considered to be limited.

Purposes of including land in the Green Belt

It is necessary to consider whether the proposal would comply with the five purposes of including land in the Green Belt. The proposal is not considered to lead to unrestricted sprawl of a large built-up area due to its location within the existing curtilage of the house. Due to the nature and positioning of the proposal it would not contribute towards neighbouring towns merging into one another and would only marginally threaten the countryside from encroachment. It would not impact upon the preservation of the setting and special character of historic towns or assist in urban regeneration, due to its limited nature and rural setting which is not adjacent to a historic town. Limited weight should therefore be attached to the impact the development would have on the purposes of including land within the Green Belt.

Impact on character and appearance and the visual amenity of the Green Belt

The National Planning Policy Framework emphasises that high quality design is a core principle of planning and attaches great importance (para.56) to design. Policies D1 and D2 of the adopted Welwyn Hatfield District Plan seek to provide a good standard of design in all new development and require that all new development respects and relates to the character and context of the area in which it is to be sited. These policies are expanded upon in the council's Supplementary Design Guidance which requires that residential extensions (including outbuildings) should be complementary in design and subordinate in size and scale to the existing dwelling.

The impact of a development is assessed giving regard to the bulk, scale and design of the proposal and how it harmonises with the existing building and area. Part (ii) of Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan also requires proposals for outbuildings in the Green Belt not to have an adverse visual impact (in terms of prominence, size, bulk and design) on the character, appearance and pattern of development of the surrounding countryside.

Given the positioning of the proposed garage, which would be screened from Coopers Lane by established vegetation, views from the public domain would be restricted. Having regard to this, as the proposal is subservient to the host dwelling in form and materials to be used for construction would be sympathetic to the host dwelling, it is considered that the development would not disrupt the design and character of the host dwelling or the character of the wider surrounding area.

Additionally, it is noted that there are several established trees within the vicinity of the proposed location of the garage that are of significant amenity value and could be detrimentally impacted upon during the construction of the proposal. However, on discussion with WHBC Landscape and Ecology Officers, it is considered that, in the event that permission were to be granted, any harm to this vegetation during construction could be adequately managed through the imposition of a relevant condition. On this basis, no objection is raised in this regard and the proposal is in accordance with policy D8.

Furthermore, given the nature and scale of the works, the proposal is not considered to result in a discernible change to the site with regard to its setting within the Northaw Common Parkland Landscape Character Area and thus accords with policy RA10 in this regard.

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal would not disrupt the character and context of the area, nor cause significant harm to the visual amenities of the Green Belt. In this respect, the development accords with policies RA3 (ii), RA10, D1, D2 and D8 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan and Supplementary Design Guidance, Statement of Council Policy, 2005. Harm to the visual amenity of the Green Belt is therefore afforded limited weight.

The property is set within a gated residential development and is not visible within the streetscene. The design of the garage would use matching materials and would complement the existing dwelling. Therefore it is considered there would be no harm to the character of the dwelling or surrounding area and would not be detrimental to the visual amenity of the Green Belt and is therefore acceptable in design.

Very special circumstances

The applicant has not sought to demonstrate very special circumstances which are required to outweigh any harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness and any other identified harm and, having regard to the above, none are evident to the local planning authority upon consideration of the application.

b) The impact on the setting of a listed building and a curtilage listed building

The specific historic environment policies within the NPPF are contained within paragraphs 126-141. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF states that in determining planning applications, Local Planning Authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets. Paragraph 132 of the Framework outlines that, when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, 'great weight' should be given to the asset's conservation. Furthermore, though not fully consistent with the NPPF in the above regard, Policy D1 requires proposals to feature high quality design.

The detached garage would be located in excess of 100m away from the Grade II* listed mansion at Northaw Place. Having regard to this, and to the overall build and scale of the proposed development, it is considered that the proposal would preserve the historic and architectural interest of this building.

The application property was formerly the lodge house for the listed Northaw Place and is a curtilage listed structure. As discussed above, the proposal would remain subordinate to the host dwelling, would be constructed of sympathetic materials and is of an appropriate design. On this basis, it is considered that the proposal would preserve the special historic interest of the former lodge house.

Having regard to the above, it is considered that the proposal would preserve the historic and architectural significance of nearby listed and curtilage listed buildings. As a result, the proposal is not contrary to Section 12 of the NPPF and saved policy D1.

c) Impact on the residential amenity of nearby and neighbouring properties (Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005)

As mentioned above, the construction of an outbuilding is treated similarly to an extension of a dwelling. Policy D1 and the supplementary design guidance paragraph 5.2 (Section 5 Residential Extensions) states in part iii) the extension should not cause loss of light or be unduly dominant from adjoining properties, as a result of either the length of projection, the height or the proximity of the extension. In addition paragraph 5.7 states that new extensions should be designed, orientated and positioned in such a way to minimise overlooking between dwellings. Guidance in paragraph 17 of the NPPF is to always seek to secure high quality design and good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupiers of land and buildings.

The nearest neighbouring property is located approximately 40m away to the north east of the proposed location of the garage. On this basis, and having regard to the build and form of the proposal, it is considered that neighbouring amenity would be preserved in terms of overlooking, overbearing and loss of light. Accordingly, the development would not be in contradiction with saved policy D1, the Supplementary Design Guidance or the relevant paragraphs of the NPPF.

9. CONCLUSION:

No harm has been identified, particularly to the Green Belt. The proposal is considered to be appropriate development and would have no impact of the openness of the Green Belt and this, along with no further harm being identified would outweigh any other consideration. The proposal therefore complies with Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the National Planning Policy Framework

10. CONDITIONS:

1. C.2.1 Time limit for commencement of development
2. C.13.1 Development in accordance with approved plans/details: PL399-2 Rev B received 3 November 2014
3. C.5.2 – Matching materials
4. Prior to the first occupation of the proposed garage permitted under this permission the “two outbuildings to be removed” as identified on approved plans and details PL399-2 Rev B received 3 November 2014 together with any other building or extensions erected on the land since the grant of this planning permission under Class A, B & E, of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification) are to be completely demolished and the resultant debris permanently removed from the application site.

REASON: To ensure the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt is adequately safeguarded in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

5. Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting

that Order with or without modification), no development within Class A, B & E, of Part 1 of Schedule 2 and shall take place unless permission is granted on an application made to the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To enable the local planning authority to fully consider the effects of development normally permitted by that order in the interests of the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

6. The permission hereby granted shall not be implemented in the event that any other building or extensions are erected on the land under Class A, B & E, of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (or any Order revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification) prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted.

REASON: To ensure the openness and visual amenity of the Green Belt is adequately safeguarded in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

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 viewed on the Councils website or inspected at these offices).

INFORMATIVES: N/A

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