

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No: 6/2015/2061/HOUSE

SITE ADDRESS: 97 The Ridgeway, Northaw, EN6 4BG

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT: Erection of two storey rear extension and first floor side extensions and alterations to roof

RECOMMENDATION: APPROVE WITH CONDITIONS

1. SITE AND APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:

The application site comprises a detached, chalet-style three bedroom dwelling and its gardens located in the Green Belt on the south side of The Ridgeway, Northaw. The site is about 16m wide at the front and 80m deep. The land slopes down very slightly to the rear allowing views across the green belt towards London.

The house is set back 10m from the road frontage behind a low wall and 2m high hedge. There is one vehicle access to the site and the front garden provides a paved parking area for two or more cars. The vehicle access is from a service road that runs parallel with The Ridgeway, a busy through road.

The house has been extended in the past at ground floor level and fills the width of the plot. On the west side there is a double garage and behind that a reception room and a passage through to the garden. The passage is adjacent to the boundary with No 99, which is treated with a 2.3m high wall. On the east side of the house are utility and breakfast rooms abutting the boundary with No 95. These extensions have flat roofs.

At first floor the house has two dormer extensions on the west side of the roof, which serve bedrooms. There is also a dormer on the east side, which serves a bathroom. All these dormers have pitched roofs.

The house is in a row of similar chalet-style houses along the south side of The Ridgeway. Most of the houses are built on a similar building line 10 to 15m back from the road. On the opposite side of The Ridgeway is the Northaw Great Wood SSSI.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL:

Full planning permission is sought for the following extensions to the house:

- Rear extension 3m deep: at ground floor across the width of the house (14m) and extending the original roof (8m wide at eaves height) back by 3m with a bedroom in the roof space.
- Removal of the dormer on the east side and replacement with a flat-roofed, 12m long dormer, set 0.7m down from the main ridge.
- Removal of one of the dormers on the west side and replacement with a projecting roof extension over part of the existing ground floor extension to the west side of the house. This would project 5.5m from a point 0.2m below the ridge of the main roof, have pitches to front and rear and present a flat

end gable to the boundary with No 99. It has been reduced in width from 6.5m to 5.5m so that it would project 1.8m beyond the edge of the original roof and be set in 2.2m from the boundary with No 99.

- Creation of a second vehicle access from the service road that runs in front of the site to create a carriageway drive.

The increase in floor-space would be 36sqm at ground floor and 48sqm at first floor (although some of the latter would have low headroom).

2. SITE DESIGNATION:

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

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

S6/2011/1351/PD – Tree planting.

S6/2007/1789/FP – Single storey rear extension. Approved 16.1.2008

S6/ 2000/0569/FP – First Floor side dormer. Approved 5.6.2000.

S6/1985/0548 – Car port. Approved

S6/1984/ 0506 – Dormer windows. Approved 1.10.84.

S6/1984/0323 – Single storey side extension. Approved 10.9.1984.

S6/1984/0263 – Dormer window. Approved 6.7.1984.

S6/1983/0791 – single storey side extension. Approved 23.1.84.

4. SUMMARY OF DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES:

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:

SD1 Sustainable Development

GBSP1 – Definition of Green Belt

GBSP2 – Towns and Specified Settlements

D1 - Quality of design

D2 - Character and context

RA4 – Replacement dwellings in the Green Belt

M14 – Parking Standards for New Development

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Design Guidance, February 2005

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, Supplementary Planning Guidance, Parking Standards (January 2004) and Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes (2014).

4. CONSULTATIONS:

None.

5. NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS:

This application was advertised by means of neighbour notification letters on 22nd October 2015. A site notice was displayed for 21 days expiring on 24th November 2015.

One representation was received from No 95 The Ridgeway objecting on the following grounds:

- The depth of the rear extension would mean the rear wall would be out of line with neighbouring houses (especially to the east No 95) at two floors.
- Due to their size, bulk depth and design and close proximity, the extensions would result in overshadowing, loss of light, overbearing impact, overlooking and loss of privacy,
- Permanent overshadowing of rear of property where there is a conservatory
- Bulk of 12m long dormer would be overbearing and claustrophobic
- Dormer would overlook the property and encroach on privacy
- Four windows in the dormer would be intimidating and oppressive and prevent relaxation
- Insufficient information about the roof-lights, the windows in the east dormer, the cubic content of the roof, the position of outside guttering.
- Disruption during building works and damage to patio.
- Requires a Party Wall Agreement
- Noise and safety during construction
- Disproportionate increase in size of original dwelling inappropriate in the Green Belt.
- Detrimental impact on skyline, openness and countryside views in the Green Belt.

The issue of Party Wall Agreements, health and safety and damage to patio fall under the remit of other legislation and cannot be considered as a planning matter. However, informatives regarding these matters can be added to any decision notice. The remaining issues are considered in the main body of the report.

6. TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIONS

The Northaw and Cuffley Parish Council comments as follows:

- the rear of the proposed extension would project beyond the rear walls of both neighbouring properties
- rear window and balcony give rise to overlooking
- the overall amount of floorspace gives rise to concerns of overdevelopment

7. MAIN PLANNING ISSUES AND RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES:

The main planning issues with this application are:

- a) Whether the proposal is appropriate development within the Green Belt or very special circumstances exist which outweigh the harm (Local Plan Policies GBSP2 and RA3, NPPF paragraphs 86-89)**
- b) Impact on the residential amenity and living conditions in neighbouring dwellings.**
- c) Other Material Planning Considerations**
 - (i) parking and access
 - (ii) biodiversity
 - (iii) trees and landscape

8. ANALYSIS:

a) Whether the proposal is appropriate development within the Green Belt or very special circumstances exist which outweigh the harm

The application site is within the Green Belt and the key policies for this proposal are contained in NPPF 2012 Paragraphs 86-89 and Saved Policies SD1, H2 and GBSP2 RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005. These Policies direct new residential development towards existing towns and settlements outside the Green Belt. They make clear that new residential development is inappropriate in the Green Belt and therefore harmful to it and would only be considered in very special circumstances.

Exceptions to this are set out in paragraph 89 of the NPPF and are limited to extensions that are not disproportionately larger than the original building and preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

The issue of the size and scale of acceptable extensions is also determined by Saved Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005. This states that:

- (i) the proposal would not individually or when considered with existing or approved extensions to the original dwelling, result in a disproportionate increase in size of the dwelling;
- (ii) 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.

These criteria are expanded upon in turn below.

Size

Neither the NPPF 2012 nor the WHDP 2005 provides guidance on the quantitative definition of whether a proposal is disproportionate. Recent Appeal inspectors have stated that proportionality can be considered in relation to the size and the character of the original building.

The size of a development is indicated by its footprint and floor area. The proposal would involve an increase in footprint of the house. The original footprint was around 103sqm with a floor space of 103sqm at ground floor. The floor-space at first floor (in the roof) is around 70sqm with some headroom being low and approximately 15sqm being enhanced by dormer extensions. The total original floor-space is around 173sqm. Previous extensions total 90sqm at ground floor (including the attached double garage) and approximately 15sqm of dormer extensions. These represent an increase in floor-space of 60% over the original house.

The proposed extensions would increase the ground floor area by 34sqm, and the first floor by 50sqm; a total of 84sqm. This would bring the total increase in floor-space over the original to 174sqm; a 100% increase over the original.

The replacement dwelling would contain five bedrooms including a guest room and could accommodate more people than the existing three bedroom house. In real terms it would be occupied as one dwelling and the amount of everyday paraphernalia would be commensurate with a larger number of people albeit living as one household. On the front of the site this would amount to the parking of cars, which occurs at present. Outbuildings and garden furniture etc would be within the rear garden.

The increase in floor-space by 100% over the original house would be quantitatively larger. However proportionality also includes a qualitative judgement taking into account the impact on the character of the building. disproportionate and be inappropriate in the Green Belt and thus result in harm to the Green Belt. It would, therefore, be contrary to the Policy in NPPF 2012 and to Saved Policies GBSP2 and RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

Character of the building and the area

Local Plan Policies D1 (Quality of Design) and D2 (Character and Context) aim to ensure a high quality of design and that new development respects and relates to the character and context of the area in which it is proposed. These policies are expanded upon in the Council's Supplementary Design Guidance (SDG) which requires the impact of a development to be assessed with regard to its bulk, scale and design and how it harmonises with the existing buildings and surrounding area.

The application site is located within a row of ribbon development along the south side of The Ridgeway and the dwellings are predominantly chalet style but have been extended in various ways over the years at ground floor and with dormers and roof extensions. The proposed rear extensions respect the design of the existing dwelling, replicating the angle of the pitch of the existing roof. The roof extension and dormer would be subservient to the existing roof. Provided the materials of the roof extensions and dormer match those of the existing roof the extensions would not result in the property being more prominent or visually obtrusive in the street. The gable end of the west roof extension would be set in from the side boundaries of the site by 2.2m and this would be sufficient to retain the pattern of development and detached character of the row of houses and prevent a terracing effect in the street-scene. The proposed extensions to the roof would be within the parameters of the existing building and not add disproportionately to the width or depth of the building. Whilst the overall increase in size resulting from cumulative extensions would be significant the proposal would not result in the enlargements being disproportionate as compared to the original building.

Visual impact on Openness

The term 'larger', whilst not having a precise formula, allows for judgement of the merits of each case in its own context. The material impact in this case would more clearly be determined by whether the proposal would significantly affect the visual openness and rural character of the green belt more than the existing house. A key consideration in the impact on visual openness in the Green Belt is the height of any development and its width, especially above ground floor level.

The rear extension to the roof ridge would not be easily seen from the west along the street as much of the side boundary with No 99 is planted with conifer trees, which prevent views of the rear part of the roof. From the east the rear extension to the roof would not easily be seen because of the position of the house at No 95 near to the boundary so that its roof precludes views of the rear part of No 97 from along the street. Consequently, the proposed rear extension would not be prominent in the street nor affect the openness of the green belt.

The proposed dormer in the east elevation would be lower than the existing pitched roof dormer. It would be set back from the front edge of the roof by 3.5m and down further from the main ridge by 1.6m than the existing dormer (which is the same height as the main ridge) and would not project any further to the side than the existing dormer. It would be 12m long (compared to the existing 3.3m). However, when viewed from the street in front of the house its bulk would appear less than the existing dormer and when viewed from along the road to the east its length would be partially concealed by the roof-scape of the adjacent house at No 95. Careful selection of materials for the external surfaces of the dormer would be a key in minimising the visual impact of this dormer. Tiles to match the existing roof would be required on the external faces and this can be secured by condition.

The proposed roof extension on the west elevation would project sideways beyond the eaves of the original roof by 1.8m. It would be 0.5m higher than the other dormer on this elevation and would contain one front and one rear windows. The ridge of this extension would be set down from the main ridge by 0.5m. It would present a flat end gable to the west elevation with the visual gap from the side boundary with No 99 being reduced from 4m to 2.2m. The width of this roof extension has been reduced by a metre as a result of Officer negotiations to preserve an adequate space to the side in keeping with the pattern of development in the vicinity. In addition it is set back 5m from the front edge of the main roof. A substantial space between the roofs of No's 97 and 99 would remain. When viewed from the west along The Ridgeway the proposed roof extension would be screened by the conifers on the front of the site boundary with No 99. However, these trees are not covered by TPOs and could be lost through disease or removed. If this were the case it is considered that the space between the roofs of No's 97 and 99 would be sufficient to preserve the visual space between the buildings and to preserve the openness of the Green Belt in this location.

Summary on Green Belt Issues

By definition, the increase in floor-space over the original house would be significant. However, the proposed extensions would not significantly affect the character of the original dwelling or the visual openness of the green belt. The overall design would be subservient to the main house and would not adversely impact on the character and appearance of the house and the locality. The property would not become materially more prominent than the existing house when viewed from publically accessible points along The Ridgeway and the resulting building would not appear cramped upon its site. The proposed extensions are, therefore, considered acceptable with regard to the Green Belt Policies of the NPPF (2012) and Policies GBSP2, RA3, D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

b) Impact on neighbouring dwellings' residential amenity and living conditions.

Policies D1 and the Supplementary Design Guidance (2005) (SDG) aim to preserve neighbouring amenity. The SDG sets out the Council's guidelines with regard to residential development for the provision of adequate amenity for future occupants and the protection of neighbouring residential amenity. Guidance in Paragraph 17 of the NPPF seeks high quality design and good standards of amenity for all existing and future occupiers of land and buildings.

No 97 the Ridgeway is a detached house with single-storey side extensions up to the boundary with No 95 and a 2.3m high boundary wall to the side passage on the boundary with No 99. The rear elevations and gardens of the properties in this row face south.

Sun and day light

To the east side of the site the existing single storey side extension at the application property forms the boundary wall on the east side. The property at No 95 is set in by over 1m from the side boundary. There is a conservatory on the rear of 95 set in 1m from the boundary which projects about 3m beyond the rear wall of the No 97. The proposed 3m deep rear extension would be set in from the boundary by 0.2m and project between 0.5m and 1m beyond the ground floor rear wall of No 95 (conservatory and rear addition). The eaves height would be the same as the existing side extension (2.5m) and the roof would be flat for the first 2.5m in from the boundary. The pitched part of the roof of the rear extension would start 2.5m in from the boundary and would rise at the same angle as the main roof (45 degrees) up to the ridge (7m high) at a point 7m from the boundary. The highest point of the roof would be over 8m from the flank wall of the conservatory. The dormer on the east side of the roof would be set within the roof plane and, provided it were covered in tiles to match the existing roof, would not increase the appearance of bulk of the roof. Given the orientation of the existing buildings and its design and scale the proposed rear extension is unlikely to result in an overbearing impact on or a loss of sunlight and daylight to No 95.

The main house at No 99 has been extended so that the flat roofed side extensions abut the boundary and are as deep as the existing lounge at No 97 (which was a previous side extension projecting 2.5m beyond the rear wall of the original house). The proposed rear extension would project 0.5m beyond the rear elevation of No 95, be single storey and be set in from the boundary by 1.1m. As such the proposed rear extension would not result in an overbearing impact on the property at No 99 and be unlikely to result in loss of sun or daylight to principal windows in its rear elevation.

The proposed western roof extension would replace one of the dormer windows and would project towards the boundary with No 99. The side elevation of No 99 facing this boundary is set some metres off the boundary and is screened from the road by a wall creating an enclosed courtyard. The proposed roof extension would present an end gable set 2.2m in from the boundary. The proposed roof extension has been reduced in width and height from the original proposal and is now of a design and scale that would not result in an overbearing impact or a significant loss of sun and daylight to the side elevation of No 99.

Overlooking and loss of privacy

The existing bedroom dormers in the west roof plane face directly onto the side elevation and the courtyard of No 99. The proposed roof extension would replace one of these windows and create windows facing front and rear. This would represent an improvement in terms of privacy and overlooking for No 99.

The proposed windows in the rear elevation of the rear extension would be larger than the existing ones and include a Juliet balcony set within the rear elevation in the

roof shape at first floor. However, these would face directly down the garden of the application site and would not create a significant increase in overlooking of neighbouring gardens.

The proposed dormer on the eastern roof plane would introduce two additional windows to this elevation. However, these would be small and serve a bathroom and WC. In order to prevent overlooking of the conservatory roof and patio at No 95 a condition shall be imposed on any planning permission requiring obscure glazing and fixed lights up to 1.8m above the internal floor level.

The two roof-lights in the eastern roof plane would be above the landing area and have sill heights above 1.8m above the internal floor level. Thus they would not give rise to an increase in overlooking of No 95.

c)Other Material Planning Considerations

(i) Parking and Access

The Council's Local Plan Policy M14 and the Parking Standard Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) use maximum standards which are not consistent with the NPPF and are, therefore, not afforded significant weight. In light of the above the Council has produced an Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes that states that parking provision will be assessed on a case by case basis and the existing maximum standards within the SPG should be taken as guidance only.

The existing house has an attached double garage which would be retained. In the front garden there is a hard-standing that accommodates three cars. The increase in the number of bedrooms at the property from three to four/five would increase the demand for parking on the site from 2.25 spaces to 3 spaces. The creation of another vehicle access point to enable a carriage drive would not reduce the capacity of the drive to accommodate the required parking. The existing garage and parking capacity would be retained and are considered adequate to accommodate the on-site demand generated by the proposed extensions in accordance with the above policies.

9. CONCLUSION:

It is considered that the proposal would result in a disproportionate increase of the original dwelling-house but, due to its siting scale and design, would not have a detrimental impact on the character and openness of the surrounding Green Belt nor result in a cramped appearance on the site. It is considered that it would not have a detrimental impact on the residential amenity of neighbouring dwellings. The access and parking arrangements would be adequate in accordance with the adopted parking standards.

10.CONDITIONS:

1. - Time limit for commencement of development
2. C.30.1 - The development/works shall not be started and completed other than in accordance with the approved plans and details:

1088:04 & 10833:03 & 10833:01 received and dated 5.10.2015 and
18033:02b received and dated 24.12.2015.

REASON: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans and details.

3. C.8.1 – The brickwork, roof tiles, and other external finishes of the approved extension/alterations must match the existing dwelling/building in relation to colour and texture.

REASON: To ensure a satisfactory standard of development in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

4. The roof lights and windows in the east elevation of the dormer of the extensions/alterations hereby permitted shall be glazed with obscured glass and shall be fixed so as to be incapable of being opened below a height of 1.8 metres above floor level, and shall be retained in that form thereafter.

REASON: To protect the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers in accordance with Policy D1 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 inspected at these offices).

INFORMATIVES:

1. Party Wall Agreement
2. Hours of construction
3. Other legislation

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