

DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION NUMBER	S6/2005/0225/FP and S6/2005/0226/LB
LOCATION	Mymwood House, Shepherds Way, Brookmans Park, Hatfield
PROPOSAL	Alterations and Extensions to Care Home

THE SITE

Mymwood House was built as a single residential dwelling around 1820 and comprises a detached white painted stucco building with a pitched slate roof with additions dating from the 20th century. The building has been used as a residential care home for the elderly since the mid-1980s and before this had been used as a boarding school from the 1930s. Mymwood House is a Grade II Listed building (as is Mymwood Lodge located to the south) and is accessed via a private driveway off the northern side of Shepherds Way. The site lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt and is to the east of the settlement of Brookmans Park.

The site slopes upwards from west to east and the eastern boundary of the site and that of neighbouring residential development (Lysley Place) comprises a brick retaining wall. Trees to the southern boundary of the site (ie adjacent to Shepherds Way) are protected by Tree Preservation Order No 3 (Group 72).

THE PROPOSAL

The application seeks permission for the erection of a part single, part two-storey and part three-storey extension to be attached at ground floor level to the northern side of the existing building. The existing flat-roofed prefabricated additions are to be removed. The proposed extension is to be U-shaped around a central courtyard and it is to have a footprint of dimensions 26.5m in width and 20.5m in depth. The single storey part is to be located to the front of the site (ie western side) with a three-storey lift structure located more centrally and a two-storey block to the rear (west) of the site. The proposed extension is to have pitched roofs of natural Welsh slates and red clay ridge tiles, external facing walls are to be brick, parapets and window cills are to be re-constituted limestone and windows are to be painted softwood.

The total number of single occupancy bedrooms for residents in the present building is 22, 5 of which are within the prefabricated structures that are to be demolished. The proposed extension is to provide 13 additional bedrooms (bringing the resultant total bedrooms to 30) together with ancillary accommodation. At ground floor level the proposal is to provide 8 bedrooms and ancillary space together with new dining and smoking rooms. At first floor level, the proposal is to provide a further 5 bedrooms, plant room and store and this accommodation is served by a centrally located lift. A glazed conservatory is proposed within the central courtyard.

There are to be alterations to the existing building in two locations on its northern elevation where the proposed extension is to be connected. No changes are proposed to the existing internal layout of the listed building.

The application is accompanied by a photographic survey and a supporting planning statement that includes sections on historical analysis, a listed building assessment, Information on residential care home provision (including national minimum standards for care homes for older people) and comments on the planning context.

PLANNING HISTORY

- S6/1985/601/FP Construction of fire escape stairs in connection with change of use of existing building to old peoples home - Granted
- S6/1984/519/FP Change of use from boarding school to residential home for the elderly – Granted
- S6/1983/592/FP Change of use from school house to office - Refused

SUMMARY OF RELEVANT DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Planning Policy Guidance Note 2 (PPG2): Green Belts
Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 (PPG15): Planning and the Historic Environment

Hertfordshire Structure Plan Review 1991- 2011:
Policy 5: Green Belts
Policy 38: Critical Capital and Other Environmental Assets

Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005:
GBSP1 – Definition of Green Belt
RA1 – Development in the Green Belt
D1 – Quality of Design
D2 – Character and Context
R25 – Works to Listed Buildings
Supplementary Design Guidance (Statement of Council Policy)
Parking Standards (Adopted January 2004)

REPRESENTATIONS

Neighbouring occupiers:

Adjacent owners/occupiers were notified of the applications by letter sent on 1 March 2005. The applications were also advertised by the display of a site notice posted on 7 March 2005.

No comments from third parties have been received.

Parish Council:

North Mymms Parish council has not commented on the applications.

BEAMS (Built Environment Advisory and Management Service):

Recommends refusal (see discussion)

Welwyn Hatfield Access Group:

Request that the application be considered subject to the standards and criteria outlined in the current District Plan and that planning approval is conditional on

compliance with detailed access requirements. Also that application, where appropriate, is considered against criteria outlined in the Building Regulations Part M and BS8300 Code of Practice.

DISCUSSION

The main issues relate to the acceptability of the proposed extension in terms of their impact on the Grade II Listed Building and whether an extension of this size and in this location would be appropriate development within the context of the Metropolitan Green Belt.

Green Belt considerations

PPG2 sets out Government policy on Metropolitan Green Belts. Paragraph 3.1 states that: -

“The general policies controlling development in the countryside apply with equal force in the Green Belt but there is, in addition, a general presumption against inappropriate development within them. Such development should not be approved, except in very special circumstances”

Policy 5 of the Hertfordshire Structure Plan and Structure Plan Review and Policy RA1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 reflect the guidance as set out in PPG2 and identify those forms of development that are considered appropriate in the Green Belt (eg mineral extraction, agriculture, sport and recreation). Because Mymwood House is not a single family dwelling, Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 is not applicable here (ie this is not an extension to a dwelling). A residential care home is not one of those uses acceptable in the Green Belt, and therefore this proposal is for what constitutes “inappropriate” development within the Green Belt. It will be necessary therefore for the applicant to demonstrate that there are very special circumstances of sufficient weight to overcome the presumption against such inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Gross floorspace figures as presented by the applicant are as follows: the original listed building has a total of 1353 sq m gross floorspace, comprising 600 sq m at ground floor level, 438 sq m at first floor, 185 sq m at second floor and 130 sq m in the form of prefabricated single storey extensions to the northern side of the building. The applicant states that the proposal is for 608 sq m of additional floorspace. Taking the removal of the existing single storey prefabricated structures into account, the proposed extension therefore represents a net increase in floorspace of 478 sq m or 35% over and above the size of the existing building.

It is considered that the form and location of the extension proposed represents an unacceptable increase in the overall bulk and size of this building within the Green Belt. An extension of this size and design would make the building significantly more prominent visually, and this is particularly unacceptable in terms of its impact on open Green Belt land to the west.

Furthermore, it is considered that the supporting statement accompanying the applications does not form a robust argument for the setting aside of national and District Plan Green Belt policy in this case. Although the document provides some background information in a national policy context with regard to residential care

home provision and explains that proposals are necessary to meet national minimum standards of care homes for old people set out by the Department of Health in 2003, the document fails to provide specific information about local need and whether such need is likely to be accommodated in care homes within existing settlements (ie outside the Green Belt).

Design and Listed Building considerations

This is a Grade II Listed Building. Policy R25 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 states that permission will be refused for any proposal which would adversely affect the historic character or architectural quality of a Listed Building or its setting. Listed Building consent will not be granted for any extension or external or internal alterations to buildings of special architectural or historic importance unless all the following criteria are satisfied:

- (i) New works respect the character, appearance and setting of the building in terms of design, scale and materials;
- (ii) Architectural or historic features which are important to the character and appearance of the building (including internal features) are retained unaltered;
- (iii) The historic form and structural integrity of the building are retained; and
- (iv) Full detailed drawings of the proposed works are submitted with the application.

It has been Mr Craig's view in the course of pre-application discussions that any extensions to this listed building would require very careful handling. The building sits on an elevated site, which is prominent from lower ground in the vicinity and from high ground across the valley to the north. Alternative forms of development were explored at a meeting with the architect and agent in December 2004. Rather than a two storey replica of the existing building sited nearby and connected to it by a link, it was suggested that a smaller complex perhaps in the form of a single storey wing or U shaped block ranged around an internal courtyard would be more appropriate.

Mr Craig considers that the applicant has responded partly to the suggestions made at the meeting in December 2004, but he is not satisfied with the combination, in the location and form proposed, of one and two storey accommodation. Mr Craig considers that the large tall block on the north elevation is particularly bulky and unattractive. It seems be wasteful of space on the upper level which is occupied by a lift, plant room, staircase and questionable circulation space. This block protrudes awkwardly into the proposed courtyard, as does the proposed conservatory. Perhaps with appropriate hard and soft landscaping the courtyard space can be treated in a manner that will render it more practical and visually acceptable.

When Mr Craig and I visited the site on 23 March 2005, we discussed the possibility of locating the two storey block, if one is required, at the rear of the site i.e. on the eastern side of the courtyard, although a simple extension incorporating a single storey block ranged around an attractive courtyard would be preferred. However, Mr Craig considers that, although the design of the proposals represents an improvement on the original scheme submitted at pre-application stage, in their present form he could not recommend approval.

The proposals do not respect the character, appearance and setting of the building

in terms of design and scale and will detract from the appearance of the existing building to the detriment of the character and appearance of the Listed Building as a whole.

Parking Matters

The applicant does not propose any additional car parking. The existing building is served by two car parking areas, the smaller of the two immediately to the south of the building and the main car park to the east of the building.

The total number of single occupancy bedrooms for residents in the present building is 22, 5 of which are within the prefabricated structures that are to be demolished. The proposal is for an additional 13 bedrooms bringing the resultant total bedrooms to 30. The applicant states that there are 24 full-time and 4 part time staff currently employed on the site and that this will not change as a result of the proposals.

According to the Adopted Parking Standards, the maximum requirement for car parking provision for Class C2 residential institutions (elderly persons residential & nursing homes – Category 3) is 0.25 space per resident and parking for resident staff is based on the general needs standard. Therefore for a proposed total of 30 single occupancy bedrooms the maximum requirement would be 7.5 spaces.

It is considered therefore that there would be no requirement for additional car parking and that existing provision is adequate because there is ample space within the larger of the two car parking areas to accommodate this number of vehicles. In any event, the site is a significant distance from Shepherds Way and so there would not be likely to be parking overspill onto this public highway.

Other matters

The proposal would not bring about any impact on trees to the southern boundary of the site (ie adjacent to Shepherds Way) that are protected by Tree Preservation Order No 3 (Group 72).

CONCLUSION

The extension proposed represents inappropriate development in the Green Belt and an unacceptable increase in the size and bulk of the existing Listed building. On account of its design, size and location, it is likely that the proposal would be prominent and therefore detrimental to the open character of this area of the rural Green Belt. Furthermore, the applicant has failed to demonstrate that there are very special circumstances of sufficient weight to overcome the presumption against such inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

The proposal is contrary to the aims of Policy RA1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the advice contained in PPG2.

The design, scale and location of the proposed extension fail to respect the character, appearance, setting and historic form of this Grade II Listed building. This is contrary to Policy R25 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That planning application **S6/2005/0225/FP** be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

REASONS:

1. The site is within the Metropolitan Green Belt in the Hertfordshire County Structure Plan Review 1991- 2011 and the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, wherein permission will only be given for erection of new buildings or the use of existing buildings or land for agricultural, other essential purposes appropriate to a rural area or small scale facilities for participatory sport or recreation. The proposed development is an inappropriate use within the Green Belt. On account of its design, size and location the extension would be prominent and therefore detrimental to the open character of this area of the rural Green Belt. This is contrary to Policy 5 of the Hertfordshire County Structure Plan Review 1991-2011, Policy RA1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the advice contained in PPG2. The proposed development cannot be justified in terms of the purposes specified and no exceptional circumstances are apparent in this case.
2. The proposed extension is not designed to complement and reflect the design and character of the existing building. The proposal fails to comply with Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and Supplementary Design Guidance (Statement of Council Policy).

That application **S6/2005/0226/LB** for Listed Building consent be **REFUSED** for the following reasons:

REASONS:

1. The design, scale and location of the proposed extension fail to respect the character, appearance, setting and historic form of this Grade II Listed building. This is contrary to Policy R25 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

DRAWING NUMBERS

Site location plan (scale 1:1250)

JDA/03/940/SUR.001
JDA/03/940/SUR.002
JDA/03/940/SUR.003
JDA/03/940/SUR.004
JDA/03/940/SUR.005
JDA/03/940/SUR.006
JDA/03/940/SUR.007
JDA/03/940/SUR.008

JDA/03/940/P.APP/SITE.001

JDA/03/940/P.APP/SECTS.001
JDA/03/940/P.APP/LAYS.001
JDA/03/940/P.APP/ELEVS.001

Signature of report writer.....

Date.....