

**WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - PLANNING, PUBLIC PROTECTION AND GOVERNANCE**

DELEGATED APPLICATION

Application No: 6/2019/3025/HOUSE
Location: 2 Waterworks Cottages Northaw Road East Cuffley Potters Bar
 EN6 4RB
Proposal: Proposed loft conversion with a hip to gable roof, erection of storm porch and pitched roofs to front bay windows
Officer: Ms Lucy Hale

Recommendation: Refused

6/2019/3025/HOUSE

Context	
Site and Application description	<p>The application site is located approximately 400 metres to the north-west of Northaw Road East and accessed via a private road which runs parallel to the Hempshill Brook river. The site comprises a two storey semi-detached dwelling, in a pair with 1 Waterworks Cottages, which were originally built for the employees of the Water Authority as part of the adjoining Waterworks complex. The site is located within the Green Belt and Northaw Common Parkland Landscape Character Area.</p> <p>Planning permission is sought for the conversion of loft with a hip to gable roof, erection of a storm porch and pitched roofs to front bay windows.</p> <p>The application follows a refused planning application in 2017 which sought permission for a clipped gable hipped roof extension and single storey extensions. The proposal has been reduced under this planning application and now seeks a hip to gable extension.</p>
Constraints (as defined within WHDP 2005)	<p>GB - Greenbelt LCA - Landscape Character Area (Northaw Common Parkland) PAR - PARISH (NORTHAW AND CUFFLEY) Wards - Northaw & Cuffley - Distance MR - Main River - Distance: 4.15</p>
Relevant planning history	<p>Application Number: 6/2019/3003/LAWP Decision: Withdrawn Proposal: Certificate of lawfulness for the installation 1 x rear dormer with Juliet balcony and 3 x roof-lights</p> <p>Application Number: 6/2017/2333/HOUSE Decision: Refused Decision Date: 15 January 2018 Proposal: Erection of single storey side extension</p> <p>Application Number: 6/2017/0905/HOUSE Decision: Refused Decision Date: 29 June 2017</p>

	<p>Proposal: Erection of single storey front, side and rear extension, front porch, clipped gable hip roof enlargement, 3x front dormers, 1x rear dormer, 1x side roof light and alterations to openings.</p> <p>Application Number: S6/1990/0620/FP Decision: Granted Decision Date: 28 September 1990 Proposal: Two storey side extension; single storey rear extension</p> <p>Application Number: S6/1990/0326/FP Decision: Refused Decision Date: 08 June 1990 Proposal: Two storey side extension & single storey rear extension</p>		
Consultations			
Neighbour representations	Support: 0	Object: 0	Other: 0
Publicity	Site Notice Display Date: 12 December 2019 Site Notice Expiry Date: 4 January 2020		
Summary of neighbour responses	None		
Consultees and responses	None		
Relevant Policies			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NPPF <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> D2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GBSP1 <input type="checkbox"/> GBSP2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> M14 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supplementary Design Guidance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supplementary Parking Guidance <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Interim Policy for car parking and garage sizes Others: RA3 <u>Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission August 2016</u> SP3 Settlement Strategy and Green Belt Boundaries SP9 Place Making and High Quality Design SADM11 Amenity and Layout SADM12 Parking, Servicing and Refuse SP25 Rural Development SADM34 Development within the Green Belt			
Main Issues			
Principle of development within the Green Belt	<p>The Government attaches great importance to Green Belts. 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. In the Green Belt, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.</p> <p><i>Appropriateness</i></p> <p>The National Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the national planning policy approach to development in the Green Belt. The NPPF accepts that within the Green Belt the extension or alteration of a building is not inappropriate provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original buildings. This is consistent with Policy RA3 'Extensions</p>		

to Dwellings in the Green Belt' of the Council's District Plan.

The NPPF defines the "original building" as a building as it existed in July 1948 or, if constructed after that date, as it was originally built. Neither the NPPF nor the Local Plan provide any detailed guidance on how to determine whether an extension is disproportionate. This is, therefore, ultimately a matter for the decision maker and demands that each proposal is considered in relation to the size and character of the original building. The proposed increase in volume, footprint and floor area are commonly used indicators, however, as well as mathematical calculations, the visual impact of the extension also has to be considered.

The floorspace of the original dwellinghouse has been calculated at approximately 91m². A two storey side extension and single storey rear extension have been constructed under planning permission: S6/1990/0620/FP. As a result of these extensions, the building as it exists now has a floorspace of 160m² which equates to a 75.8% increase.

The proposal comprises the conversion of the loft with a hip to gable roof extension, erection of a storm porch and pitched roofs to front bay windows. The alterations to the front bay windows and storm porch, taken separately to the roof are not considered to result in a disproportionate addition to the property.

The proposal would increase the volume of the roof which could lead to the provision of habitable floor area within the roof space and the creation of an additional floor. In terms of floorspace the increase is considered to be approximately 26m², however in terms of useable floor space (headroom of 1.5m or more) it is more likely to be 15m² which equates to a 92% increase in floorspace to the original dwelling. It is acknowledged that most of the development would be contained within the existing loft space. Notwithstanding this, a hip to gable enlargement is proposed. A calculation can also be considered in terms of volume increase. The volume of the existing extension to the loft is calculated at 35m³ and the proposed addition is calculated at 19.9m³, the combined increase in volume would equate to approximately 54.9m³, which would almost double the volume of the original hipped roof.

The NPPF does not limit the concept of proportionality to size alone and an overall assessment of proportionality includes a qualitative judgement. A numerical assessment is not always the most accurate assessment, particularly in this instance as the development would be contained within the same footprint. In each case, it is necessary to make a judgement as to whether the enlargement of a building would be disproportionate in qualitative terms.

The existing dwelling is set in approximately 5.4m from the side boundary which abuts the former site of Waterworks Complex which now features no above ground development. Although only limited views of the site are afforded from the public right of way running parallel with Hempsill Brook river, it is however adjacent to open countryside. Whilst the dwelling would not increase in footprint, the roof proposed to increase. The original dwelling was constructed with a hipped roof, measuring approximately 2.9m along the ridge from the chimney. The proposed roof would result in a gable end and a ridge length of approximately 8.6m, almost tripling the original length of the ridge.

	<p>The proposal would add substantial bulk and mass to the original dwelling which would result in a disproportionate addition contrary to paragraph 89 of the NPPF. The NPPF confirms that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and this is afforded substantial weight.</p> <p><i>Openness, character and appearance</i></p> <p>The NPPF confirms that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt. There is no definition of openness in NPPF but, in the context of the Green Belt, it is generally held to refer to freedom from, or the absence of, development. Whilst the physical presence of any above ground development would, to some extent, diminish the openness of the Green Belt regardless of whether or not it can be seen, openness also goes beyond physical presence and has a visual aspect. In the visual sense, openness is a qualitative judgement.</p> <p>The property is semi-detached with a hipped roof. The extension of a hip to gable loft conversion to the already extended property will result in a sizeable addition to the roof compared to the original built form. It is inevitable that the bulk of the dwelling would be increased by the addition to the roof which would reduce the Green Belt openness. Whilst it is acknowledged that there would be limited views of the dwelling from public vantage points as a result of its location down a private road, this does not overcome or outweigh the loss of openness.</p>
<p>Design (form, size, scale, siting) and Character (appearance within the streetscene)</p>	<p>The proposed development comprises pitched roofs to the front bay windows and a storm porch. These alterations would be subordinate in scale and respect the appearance of the property.</p> <p>The resultant roof would inevitably increase in volume as a result of the hip to gable loft conversion, however it has been designed to mimic the gable end of its semi-detached pair (1 Waterworks Cottages) and the materials are proposed to match the existing. On balance, it is considered the proposal would result the character and appearance of the property within its semi-detached pair.</p>
<p>Impact on neighbours</p>	<p>No objections have been received from neighbouring occupiers.</p> <p>By virtue of the siting of the dwelling and nature of the development, it is not considered that there would be any significant impact on the living conditions of the neighbouring occupiers as a result.</p>
<p>Access, car parking and highway considerations</p>	<p>An additional bedroom is proposed however, the site has adequate space for on-site parking and therefore no concerns are raised.</p>
<p>Any other considerations</p>	<p>It is necessary to undertake a balancing exercise to establish whether there are very special circumstances that outweigh the harm to the Green Belt. The NPPF indicates that substantial weight must be attached to inappropriate development by reason of its inappropriateness. In addition to this harm, there is a limited harmful effect on the openness and the character and appearance of the Green Belt. There is a lack of harm to character and appearance of the wider area, to residential amenity but these are considered to be neutral factors.</p>

The NPPF advises that, when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' 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.

The covering letter submitted with this application states that the main reason for the extension is to provide additional ground floor living accommodation for the applicant's elderly father. A letter from the Doctor of the applicants' father has been submitted alongside this application and explains that the applicants' father is in need of constant care as a result of health and wellbeing factors and permitting the proposed extension would allow the applicant to look after his father and give his father a better quality of life in his latter years.

Whilst the Local Planning Authority is sympathetic to the Applicant's personal circumstances, and their intention to provide accommodation for a relative, these circumstances could apply to many other residents and properties in the Green Belt. Furthermore, personal circumstances will inevitably change overtime whereas the harm identified by the proposed extension would be permanent. In this context only very limited weight can be given to the personal circumstances of the Applicant.

The previous application (reference 6/2017/0905/HOUSE) sought permission for a much larger development to the property including '*Erection of single storey front, side and rear extension, front porch, clipped gable hip roof enlargement, 3x front dormers, 1x rear dormer, 1x side roof light and alterations to openings*'. The development to the property moved beyond providing accommodation for the father of the applicant to provide for his needs and failed to provide justification relating to these additional works. This previous reason for refusal remains.

The proposed plans outline that the ground floor can be adapted with a double bedroom and a large bathroom and the needs of the applicant's father can be catered for within the existing dwelling. The internal alterations at first floor would result in a loss of one bedroom and replacement of three larger bedrooms and a family bedroom. The fourth bedroom would be provided within the loft with an ensuite. It is evident that the works to extend the loft would be directly related to the existing family rather than catering for the needs of the father, which could be provided downstairs without any bearing on the current living conditions of the family at first floor.

It is considered that such extensions, taking into account the extensions the original dwelling benefits, is not considered as necessary. The proposed development has been concluded as disproportionate to the original building and inappropriate development within the Green Belt.

In conclusion, the substantial weight to be given to Green Belt harm is not clearly outweighed by other considerations sufficient to demonstrate very special circumstances.

Conclusion

The proposed loft extension represents an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt by reason that it would result in a disproportionate addition over and above the size of the original dwelling. Furthermore, the increased bulk and massing of the proposed development would result in a loss of openness and visual permeability of the Green Belt. Very special circumstances do not

exist. Accordingly, the proposal is contrary Policy GBSP1, GBPP2 and RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Reasons for Refusal:

1. The proposed development results in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building and therefore represents inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Furthermore, the increased bulk and massing of the proposed development would result in a loss of openness and visual permeability of the Green Belt. Very special circumstances do not exist. Accordingly, the proposal is contrary to Policy RA3 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and National Planning Policy Framework.

REFUSED DRAWING NUMBERS

- 2.

Plan Number	Revision Number	Details	Received Date
12537-S002-B		Existing Elevations, Site Plan & Location Plan	29 November 2019
1253-P008-1st		Proposed Plans and Elevations	29 November 2019
12537-S001-A		Existing Floor Plans	29 November 2019

1. **POSITIVE AND PROACTIVE STATEMENT**

The decision has been made taking into account, where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraph 38 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 Council's website or inspected at these offices).

Determined By:

Mr Mark Peacock
24 January 2020