WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR - PLANNING, PUBLIC PROTECTION AND GOVERNANCE

DELEGATED APPLICATION

**Application No:** 6/2021/1643/HOUSE

**Location:** 159 Parkway Welwyn Garden City AL8 6JA

**Proposal:** Construction of 2 x rear dormers and 2 x front roof lights to facilitate the conversion of the loft to a habitable space

**Officer:** Ms Emily Stainer

# **Recommendation:** Refused

6/2021/1643/HOUSE

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| **Context** | | | | | | |
| **Site and Application description** | The application property is a two storey terraced dwelling which is located on Parkway in Welwyn Garden City. Planning permission is sought for the construction of 2 x rear dormers and 2 x front roof lights to facilitate the conversion of the loft to a habitable space.  A site visit was made by the case officer, but only from public vantage points due to the restrictions in place as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). A suitable level of information has been acquired in which to make a full and thorough assessment by use of the case officer’s photographs taken from the street scene and aerial imagery online. The specific merits of this case means that a full and complete assessment can be made in respect of this particular application. | | | | | |
| **Constraints (as defined within WHDP 2005)** | CA - Conservation Area: WGC1; - Distance: 0  EM - Estate Management - Distance: 0  Wards - Handside - Distance: 0 | | | | | |
| **Relevant planning history** | None | | | | | |
| **Consultations** | | | | | | |
| **Neighbour representations** | | Support: 0 | | | Object: 0 | Other: 0 |
| **Publicity** | | | Site Notice Display Date: 5 August 2021  Site Notice Expiry Date: 26 August 2021  Press Advert Display Date: 28 July 2021  Press Advert Expiry Date: 18 August 2021 | | | |
| **Summary of neighbour responses** | | | None | | | |
| **Consultees and responses** | | | Place Service Conservation Officer - An objection is raised as the proposed rooflights and dormers detract from the uniformity and largely uninterrupted appearance of the roofscape of the terrace and the contribution it makes to the streetscape. Dormers would be an incongruous feature to the terrace and the front rooflights are an unsympathetic addition to the streetscene. | | | |
| **Relevant Policies** | | | | | | |
| NPPF  D1  D2  GBSP1  GBSP2  M14  Supplementary Design Guidance  Supplementary Parking Guidance  Interim Policy for car parking and garage sizes    Draft Local Plan Proposed Submission August 2016:  SP1 Delivering Sustainable Development  SP9 Place Making and High Quality Design  SADM11 Amenity and Layout  SADM12 Parking, Servicing and Refuse  SADM15 Heritage | | | | | | |
| **Main Issues** | | | | | | |
| **Design (form, size, scale, siting) and Character (appearance within the streetscene)** | | | | Policy GBSP2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 states that development within the specified settlements will be limited to that which is compatible with the maintenance and enhancement of their character. Policy D1 requires the standard of design in all new development to be of a high quality and Policy D2 requires all new development to respect and relate to the character and context of the area in which it is proposed. It notes that development proposals should as a minimum maintain, and where possible, should enhance or improve the character of the existing area. The above objectives are broadly consistent with Policies SP1 and SP9 of the Council’s Emerging Local Plan 2016.  The application site is additionally located within the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area. Section 72 of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act states that *‘special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area’*. The specific historic environment policies within the NPPF are contained within paragraphs 189-208. Additionally, section 16 of the NPPF ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’ is broadly consistent with Policy SADM15 ‘Heritage’ of the Emerging Local Plan.  The character and appearance of much of Welwyn Garden City has a quality  that consists of carefully designed layouts with formal patterns where the design of architecture is in groups and individual buildings. Therefore in order  to preserve the unique architectural heritage of the town and its buildings, the  Council expects that all applications for extensions and alterations respect and do not harm the character and appearance of the building or the wider street scene.  Parkway is key component of the design of the original Garden City and is considered a principal axis which provides a dramatic approach to the town centre from the north and south. The formality of its layout and the buildings lining it are important elements of its overall character and appearance. The application property is located on the south-east side of Parkway. The rear of the property is visible from Stanborough Close which has single storey bungalows to the rear of the application site and glimpsing views can be made from Rooks Hill to the north-east. It is a mid-terrace property complete with red brick and a pantile roof that is typical of this part of the Garden City.  The Council’s Supplementary Design Guidance 2005 (SDG) expands on Policies D1 and D2 of the District Plan and outlines, amongst other things, that dormer windows should be contained within the roof slope, be subservient to the roof of the property and be in proportion to the existing fenestration of the property. They must not extend above the ridge height of the property and the dormer cheeks should be at least 1 metre from the flank wall of the property. The proposed dormers at the rear would be different sizes, but both would be of a similar style with a pitched roof. They would be set down from the main ridgeline and set in from the side boundaries, thus accord with the criteria in the SDG in this regard. However, given the sensitivity of the proposal in the Conservation Area, special regard must be given to whether the dormers and rooflights are reflective of the host dwelling and character of the surrounding area. The Council’s Conservation Officer has raised an objection to the proposal.  The roof slopes along the stretch of Parkway where the application property is located are uninterrupted and thus have a degree of uniformity which form part of the original character of the Conservation Area. The proposed dormers with pitched roofs on the rear of the property would be partially visible from public vantage points on Stanborough Close and Rooks Hill, which detract from the largely uninterrupted appearance of the roofscapes in the area. In addition, the rooflights on the front elevation have not been sited to be sensitive to the character of the area, given their prominent position in the street scene. The addition of these features would undermine the character and appearance of the building and this important arterial route within the Conservation Area. The proposal would therefore neither preserve nor enhance the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.  In correspondence, the applicant’s agent has referred to dormer windows which have been approved on Parkway Close and Colgrove. These roads stem off Parkway but are not positioned along the main road, therefore their existence does not constitute a reason for justifying these works as the circumstances are not the same. Another application has also been noted at 34 Parkway. This property is on the north end of Parkway in the town centre, which largely comprises neo-Georgian houses on the west side from Church Road to Bridge Road. These dwellings are among the earliest domestic buildings in the Garden City. Flat roofed front dormers, most of which are inset into the eaves, are characteristic of this part of Parkway. In comparison, the proposed dormers under this application would be finished with pitched roofs and are positioned in a row of terraced properties which have very few roof alterations.  The development is considered to cause ‘less than substantial’ harm to the significance of the Conservation Area, therefore paragraph 202 of the NPPF should be applied. Consideration should also be given to paragraph 199 which affords great weight to the conservation of heritage assets and Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 which states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas. It is viewed that there are no clear public benefits which would justify the harm to the Conservation Area on this occasion.  In summary, the front rooflights and pitched roof dormer windows would disrupt the original character of the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area. The proposal therefore represents poor quality design contrary to Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, the Welwyn Hatfield Supplementary Design Guidance 2005, Policy SADM15 of the Welwyn Hatfield Draft Local Plan 2016 and the National Planning Policy Framework. | | |
| **Impact on neighbours** | | | | Policy D1 and the Supplementary Design Guidance (SDG 2005) provide the local policy framework for assessing the impact of development on the residential amenity and living conditions of neighbouring properties and aim to ensure adequate amenity for future occupiers of the proposed development. The NPPF is similar in these aims. No neighbour comments have been received.  The proposed development would create a slightly different form of overlooking due to the rooflights and dormers being positioned within the roof. However, this is not thought to impinge on the privacy of neighbours a significant amount more than the existing windows at first floor. As such, no concerns are raised with regard to neighbour amenity. | | |
| **Access, car parking and highway considerations** | | | | Saved Policy M14 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 and the Parking  Standard Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG 2004) use maximum  parking standards that are not consistent with the NPPF and are, therefore, not afforded significant weight. In light of this situation the Council has produced  an Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards and Garage Sizes (2014) 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 floor plans are not labelled with the number of bedrooms but based on the layout there would appear to be 4 bedrooms at first floor. The proposed drawings indicate the loft conversion would create an additional bedroom. A property with four bedrooms or more would require 3 on-site parking spaces in accordance with the SPG. Whilst the plans do not clearly indicate the frontage of the property, observations made on site suggest that there is a driveway which can accommodate approximately two vehicles at present. The town centre and Welwyn Garden City train station are located approximately 0.6-0.8 miles away which is a reasonable cycling/walking distance and there are also bus stops located nearby on Stanborough Road. These provide alternative methods of travel to the private car. Furthermore, the site benefits from a sufficient frontage, where if necessary, additional spaces could be created in the future.  It is therefore considered that sufficient parking would still be maintained on site relative to the size of the resultant building in accordance with Policy M14 of the District Plan, the SPG Parking Standards and the Council’s Interim Policy for Car Parking Standards. | | |
| **Conclusion** | | | | | | |
| The development would also fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area and is therefore contrary to Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005, Policies SP9, SADM11 and SADM15 of the Emerging Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2016, the Supplementary Design Guidance 2005 and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework and contrary to the aims of Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. | | | | | | |

**Reasons for Refusal:**

1. The proposed dormers and rooflights would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of this part of the Garden City and would harm the significance of the Conservation Area. Accordingly, the proposed development is contrary to the provisions of Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies D1 and D2 of the District Plan 2005, the Welwyn Hatfield Supplementary Design Guidance 2005, Policies SP9 and SADM15 of the Welwyn Hatfield Draft Local Plan 2016 and the National Planning Policy Framework,

REFUSED DRAWING NUMBERS

2.

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| **Plan Number** | **Revision Number** | **Details** | **Received Date** |
| 2134-001 |  | Existing Plans & Elevations | 5 July 2021 |
| 2134-002 |  | Proposed Plans & Elevations | 24 May 2021 |

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 Derek Lawrence

26 October 2021