

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL – DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT
DELEGATED REPORT

APPLICATION No: N6/2014/0539/FP

SITE ADDRESS: 7 Densley Close, Welwyn Garden City

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT: Erection of two, two storey side extensions

RECOMMENDATION: Refusal

1. SITE AND APPLICATION DESCRIPTION:

The application site comprises of a two storey dwellinghouse with a tall pitched roof with front and rear dormers creating a three storey dwellinghouse internally. Either side of the dwellinghouse is a flat roofed, single storey extension.

The application plot is square in shape located towards the end of the cul-de-sac. With the exception of the projecting single garage, the dwelling is set back from the highway with a small canopy roof above the front entrance. All the existing windows have a horizontal glazing bar design.

The proposal seeks planning permission for a two storey side extension either side of the existing dwelling with two rooflights upon the proposed rear roofslope.

2. SITE DESIGNATION: The site lies within the Central Welwyn Garden City Conservation Area as designated in the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY:

N6/1991/0676/FP - Single storey side extension. Granted 14 October 1991

N6/2013/1278/FP - Erection of single storey front, side and rear extension and alterations to roof. Refused 21 August 2013

N6/2013/1337/PA - Erection of first floor side extensions. The officer pre application advised the following (in summary):

- *'The proposed extension beyond the northern elevation is 3m in width and the extension beyond the southern elevation is 3.9m in width. To create a more balanced appearance against the existing dwelling, it is advised that the proposed 3.9m extension is to be reduced to 3m in width. Furthermore, to reduce the overall bulk and scale and create a more subordinate extension, it is advised that the first floor side extensions in relation to the existing front elevation of the dwellinghouse are set back further and the flat roof design element seen along the front elevation of the existing dwelling between the first floor and the roofspace is replicated on the two side extensions',*
- *'It is advised the proposed front and rear elevation windows reflect both the size and design of the existing windows',*
- *'With regards to the proposed rooflights, they would be located upon the rear elevation where public vantage points are minimal and therefore it is considered that the proposed rooflights would have a minimal impact upon the streetscene'.*

N6/2013/2219/FP - Demolition of existing side extension and erection of single storey side extension along with alterations to roof and windows at single storey level. Granted 19 December 2013

4. CONSULTATIONS:

Hertfordshire Biological Records – No known ecological constraints regarding the proposed development

5. NEIGHBOUR REPRESENTATIONS:

Nine representations have been received from the public which may be summarised as:

- Would destroy the carefully considered concept of two similar buildings as a matching pair either side of, and standing back from, the hammerhead to the cul-de-sac,
- The scale represents a substantial over development of the site,
- The proposed extensions add significant bulk at first floor level and is a disproportionate increase in comparison to the original dwelling,
- The new windows do not relate proportionately to the originals and emphasise the lack of symmetry between the old and the new,
- The extensions/windows would cause loss of light/overlooking,
- The style of extension will not fit in well with the rest of the houses in this conservation area,
- The existing ground floor layout suggests that it would not likely be possible structurally to support a two storey extension above both the garage to the left and the living space on the right of the property,
- With parking for up to 3 cars on the drive it would be inappropriate to extend the current dwelling from a 4 bed house to a 6 bed house. The current parking facilities would be insufficient, and we would not like the front garden to be converted so it is entirely used for parking,
- Increase in traffic on a very small narrow close with a tight turning space at the bottom,
- Unclear how the proposed works will be carried out without skips and vehicles intruding into the public highway and obstructing access to properties 8 and 10 Densley Close,
- There are numerous enormous trees within striking distance of the house and one or two would need to be cut which are subject to a TPO,
- The provision of so many en-suite bedrooms might indicate an intention to rent out rooms, in which case the possibility that tenants would be less supportive of the local ambience should be considered, including the need to respect the parking requirements of the surrounding properties.

6. TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL REPRESENTATIONS

None

7. MAIN PLANNING ISSUES AND RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES:

The main planning issues with this application are:

- a) Whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area, and would sufficiently sustain and enhance the conservation

area and would respect and relate to the character and context of the property and surrounding area (NPPF para.131. Local Plan Policies D1 and D2)

b) Impact upon the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers (Local Plan Policy D1)

c) Impact of the proposal upon existing car parking provision (Local Plan Policy M14)

8. ANALYSIS:

- a) Whether the proposed development would preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the area, and would sufficiently sustain or enhance the conservation area and would respect and relate to the character and context of the property and surrounding 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.*” It is now accepted case law that preserving the character or appearance of a conservation area can be achieved not only by a positive contribution to preservation, but also by development which leaves the character or appearance of the area unharmed. Chapter 12, paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework (March, 2012) states, ‘*In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should take account of:*

- *The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- *The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- *The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness’*

The National Planning Policy Framework states that good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people. Planning decisions should aim to ensure that developments add to the overall quality of the area; respond to local character and history; reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.

Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005 respectively require high quality design in all new development and for proposals to respect and relate to the character and context of their location. 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 buildings and area.

The application site sits within a residential area to the west of the town. Densley Close is a residential cul-de-sac comprising largely of detached properties situated within similar sized plots. The application dwelling is two storeys in height with dormer windows within the front and rear roofspace giving a three storey appearance. The dwelling has been extended upon previously by virtue of single storey, flat roofed extensions either side of the dwelling and a rear conservatory.

The proposal seeks planning permission for a 3.9m wide extension either side of the existing dwelling at first floor above the existing single storey side extensions incorporating a pitched roof above. The pitched roof will be set below the ridgeline of the main roof by approximately 0.5m. The proposed first floor side extension will provide three ensembles and walk-in wardrobes. The proposed pitched roof will also provide two additional ensembles with a roof light upon the rear roof slope of both side extensions.

Whilst a minimum of 2.35m separation space will exist at first floor level along the shared boundary with No.5 Densley Close and at least 4.8m at first floor level with 19 Scholars Mews, the proposed side extensions at 3.9m wide are considered to add additional bulk to the existing dwelling which would fail to appear as subordinate in scale and design to the existing dwelling. Furthermore, the proposed set back from the front elevation of the existing dwelling by approximately 1.3m is not considered a sufficient enough set back to appear subordinate in scale, creating side extensions of approximately 5.1m in depth.

Paragraph 5.2 (i) of the supplementary design guidance states that, '*extensions should be designed to complement and reflect the design and character of the dwelling*'. A projecting flat roof design feature exists on both the front and rear elevation of the existing dwelling and therefore the eaves design of the proposed side extensions would fail to appropriately reflect the eaves design of the existing dwelling to the detriment of the design and character of the existing dwelling.

The proposed windows upon the front and rear elevation of the proposed side extensions are considered to be of a scale and design to appear in keeping with the scale and design of the existing first floor windows.

To conclude, the scale and design of the proposed side extensions would add additional bulk to the side of the dwelling that would fail to appear subordinate in scale to the existing dwelling and would be visually prominent within the streetscene to the detriment of the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Furthermore, the eaves design of the proposed side extensions would fail to appropriately reflect the eaves design of the existing dwelling to the detriment of the design and character of the existing dwelling. Overall, the proposal would fail to represent high quality design and is therefore contrary to paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, 2005.

b) Impact upon the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers

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.

The dwellings most impacted by the proposal are neighbouring properties, No.5 Densley Close to the north and No.19 Scholars Mews to the south.

No. 5 Densley Close is a two storey dwellinghouse with a single storey flat roofed side extension which forms the shared boundary with the application dwelling. In addition to the 2.35m separation space of the proposed side extension from the shared boundary with No.5, the first floor element of No.5 is set back from the shared boundary by approximately 6m. The only window which exists along the side elevation of No.5 is a dormer window which has obscure glazed windows. Two windows are proposed upon the first floor northern elevation of the proposed extension which will form two en-suites. To protect privacy and prevent direct overlooking to the neighbouring dormer window, it would be appropriate to condition these two windows to be obscure glazed and non opening below 1.8m.

In respect of loss of sunlight/daylight/skylight, No.5 is orientated to the north of the application dwelling and whilst the proposed extension may result in some overshadowing within the rear garden, the proposal is not considered to result in a detrimental impact upon loss of sunlight/daylight/skylight by virtue of the separation space.

The neighbouring property to the south east, No.19 Scholar Mews is a two storey detached dwellinghouse with the front elevation orientated to face the north east. Whilst the proposed extension will be visible from the windows on the front elevation of No.19, its orientation facing north east in addition to the proposed extension measuring approximately 17m from the corner of No.19, the visibility of the proposed extension is not considered to be overbearing. Furthermore, due to the siting of No.19 to the south of the application dwelling and the distance of the proposed extension, the proposal is not considered to result in a detrimental loss of sunlight/daylight/skylight to warrant refusal. No windows are proposed upon the side elevation of the proposed extension, resulting in no loss of privacy/overlooking to No.19.

The proposal as a whole is not considered to result in a detrimental impact on the amenity of adjoining properties and therefore it complies with Policy D1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, 2005.

c) Impact of the proposal upon existing car parking provision

The proposal will result in an additional two bedrooms, creating a six bedroom dwelling. The maximum car parking standards for a four or more bedroom dwelling within this location requires 3 on site car parking spaces. The proposal will retain the garage in addition to hardstanding to the front of the property which can accommodate at least two cars and therefore the proposal will provide sufficient car parking in accordance with Policy M14 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan, 2005.

9. CONCLUSION:

The scale and design of the proposed side extensions would fail to represent high quality design by adding additional bulk to the side of the dwelling that would fail to appear subordinate in scale to the existing dwelling and would be visually prominent within the streetscene by virtue of their width and depth. Furthermore, the eaves design of the proposed side extensions would fail to appropriately reflect the eaves

design of the existing dwelling to the detriment of the design and character of the existing dwelling. The proposal would therefore fail to sustain or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area contrary to paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan and the Supplementary Design Guidance; Statement of Council Policy 2005.

The proposal is not considered to result in a detrimental impact on the residential amenity of adjoining properties.

10. RECOMMENDATION: REFUSAL

1. The scale and design of the proposed side extensions would add additional bulk to the side of the dwelling that would fail to appear subordinate in scale to the existing dwelling and would be visually prominent, by virtue of their width and depth, to the detriment of the character and appearance of the streetscene. Furthermore, the eaves design of the proposed side extensions would fail to appropriately reflect the eaves design of the existing dwelling to the detriment of the design and character of the existing dwelling. The proposal would therefore fail to represent high quality design and would fail to sustain or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area contrary to paragraph 131 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies D1 and D2 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan and the Supplementary Design Guidance; Statement of Council Policy 2005.

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR REFUSAL

The decision has been made taking into account material planning considerations and where practicable and appropriate the requirements of paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (see Officer's report which can be inspected at these offices).

REFUSED DRAWING NUMBERS:

3018-OS1 & 3018-OS2 & 3018-E01 & 3018-E02 & 3018-P02 received and dated 17 March 2014

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