

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

DELEGATED APPLICATION

Application No: 6/2019/0900/EM
Location: 54 Bridge Road Welwyn Garden City AL8 6UR
Proposal: Erection of 2 x two-bedroom semi-detached dwellings with associated vehicular access and parking
Officer: Ms Lucy Hale

Recommendation: Refused

6/2019/0900/EM

Context	
Site and Application description	<p>The application site is located on the north side of Bridge Road and comprises a two storey semi-detached dwelling within a large plot with front, side and rear gardens. The site adjoins a public footpath to the side and rear.</p> <p>The application seeks estate management consent for the erection of a pair of semi-detached dwellings in the rear garden of the site, a new access, and hardstanding and part removal of front hedge.</p> <p>The application follows a previous application reference W6/2014/2503/EM at Nos 52 and 54 Bridge Road which granted the erection of a pair of semi-detached dwellings in the rear garden of the two plots with an access off No.52, and car parking area to the rear of No.54. The access and hardstanding have been implemented at No.52.</p>
Constraints	Estate Management Scheme, as defined within the Leasehold Reform Act 1967
Relevant history	<p>Application Number: 6/2018/2232/PA Decision: Refused Decision Date: 14 December 2018 Proposal: Pre application advice for erection of 2 x two bedroom dwellings with vehicular access</p> <p>Application Number: 6/2017/2722/EM Decision: Granted Decision Date: 19 December 2017 Proposal: Shared party wall of proposed extension at 52 Bridge Road</p> <p>Application Number: 6/2016/1547/EM Decision: Refused Decision Date: 30 September 2016 Proposal: Alteration to widen existing access and create a driveway</p> <p>Application Number: W6/2014/2503/EM Decision: Granted Decision Date: 13 August 2015 Proposal: Erection of two dwellings with associated garages and access</p>

Notifications			
Neighbour representations	Support: 0	Object: 6	Other: 0
Summary of neighbour responses	<p>The objections are summarised below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overdevelopment of the site • Crammed development • Small gardens • Little soft landscaping • Trees and hedges to be removed • Impact on oak tree • No precedent of developments in rear gardens • Against Garden City ethos • Unsuitable vehicle access • Access to public footpath and bridleway • Construction vehicles entering the site • Dark environment of new dwellings due to existing trees • Overlooking issue • Falling material from close by trees could result in risk to inhabitants and vehicles 		
Consultee responses	<p>WHBC Landscaping - The loss of hedging, the construction of the drop kerb and entrance will change the appearance of the frontage which is considered contrary to Policy EM3 of the Estate Management Scheme</p>		
Relevant Policies			
<input type="checkbox"/> EM1 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EM2 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EM3 Others: EM4			
Considerations			
Design (form, size, scale, siting) and Character (impact upon amenities and values of Garden City)	<p>Policy EM2 of the Estate Management Scheme (EMS) requires proposals to respect the visual appearance of the area in terms of its siting, scale and not result in a visually over prominent or discordant element. Proposals will only be permitted where they do not have a detrimental impact on the amenities and values of the surrounding area.</p> <p>The existing property is semi-detached with a large rear garden. The surrounding area is predominantly residential also with large rear gardens. This part of the Garden City is largely characterised by a formality of layout and architecture including the complete integration of soft landscaping within the built form. This gives the locality a relatively spacious character and appearance, which this property is in keeping with.</p> <p>The proposal seeks to erect two semi-detached dwellings to the rear of No.54. The dwellings would feature a gable roof with red multi brickwork, burnt pan tiles and blackened weatherboarding. The windows would be painted white and feature Georgian glazing. The architectural design and detailing of the semi-detached pair of dwellings would reflect character and appearance of the properties within the streetscene of Bridge Road in accordance with Policy EM2.</p> <p>Notwithstanding this, the proposed footprint and scale of the proposed dwellings would appear large in comparison to the existing property to the front</p>		

	<p>on the site. Furthermore, the proposed dwellings, together with the existing dwelling, would appear excessive and overdeveloped in comparison to the size of the plot, which would be out of keeping with the immediate character of the area. The outcome would be that the proposal would have a cramped nature and would impact detrimentally on the overall spacious character and appearance of the locality as a whole. This harm would also be exacerbated as the development would be visible from public vantage points.</p> <p>It is noted that a previous application under reference W6/2014/2503/EM was granted consent for a pair of semi-detached dwellings to the rear of No.52 and No.54. In comparison, this proposal seeks to erect two dwellings within one plot instead of the built form across two plots, thereby resulting in the existing and proposed dwellings appearing contrived and cramped within the new reduced plot, which would be out of keeping with the special character and context of the area, contrary to the objectives of Policy EM2.</p>
<p>Impact on neighbours</p>	<p>The impact of the proposed development on the residential amenity of neighbouring dwellings is considered in terms of the impact on neighbouring properties access to day/sun/sky light and privacy. Policy EM2 seeks to provide a good standard of amenities in all new development and expects that development should not have adverse impact on amenity of adjoining occupiers.</p> <p>The main property that is likely to be impacted upon is No.52 Bridge Road. The proposed dwellings would be located within the rear garden of No.54 approximately 1 metre from the shared boundary. There are two first floor side elevation windows proposed which would serve bathrooms which could be conditioned as obscure glazed and non-opening to ensure the level of privacy of both occupiers is maintained to an acceptable level in the event of a grant of permission. As a result of window design and separation distance, there are no concerns with regard to overlooking to No.52.</p> <p>The siting of the dwellings would introduce built form close to the boundary of No.52, which would impact upon their outlook to some degree, whereby the existing outlook is spacious and open. However, the dwellings would sit alongside the rear garden of No.52 and the separation distance is such that it is not considered the proposed development would result in a detrimental loss of light or appear unduly dominant to warrant refusal of the application.</p>
<p>Landscaping issues (incl. hardstandings)</p>	<p>Landscaping is of particular importance in the Garden City, with the 'Arcadian' landscape context with mature trees, hedgerows and planting contributing to the significance of the area. This is prevalent on the site and the locality in general.</p> <p>Policy EM3 seeks to ensure that proposals take into account the impact on visual amenities of the site and its immediate surroundings. Works to trees and hedgerows will only be allowed where the works would not result in the loss of landscaping which would harm the character and amenities of the area and where sufficient justification for the works has been given. Policy EM4 outlines that proposals for hard surfacing will only be allowed where the works would retain and appropriate balance. The Council will aim to ensure that a significant proportion, around 50% unless individual circumstances indicate that this would not be appropriate, of the frontage is retained as landscaped greenery to retain the appearance and ethos of the Garden City. This policy</p>

also applies to side gardens facing open space, footpaths or roads.

The proposal seeks to install a new vehicle access, turning area and parking spaces to the rear of No.54. A 4.8 metre wide access is proposed which would involve part removal of the existing front boundary hedge. The access on site would be maintained at 4.8 metres wide for the first 14 metres and is proposed to wrap around No.54, reducing to 3 metres in width to the turning area and car parking spaces. The proposed hard surface cumulates to a substantial amount on site. When compared to the existing site, which does not benefit from an access or on-site car parking, the proposed hard surface would be significant.

Policy EM4 stipulates that a suitable balance must be retained and the guidance suggests that 50% of the frontage should be maintained as soft landscaping. However, in some circumstances where the site adjoins a footpath, this may not be appropriate.

In this instance, the site is unique as joins a public footpath both to the side and rear. The site is therefore largely exposed from public vantage points. The public footpath is extensively used by local residents to access Sherrardspark Wood and as a cut through from the residential houses behind the site to the Town Centre. The landscaped greenery of the rear gardens that adjoin the footpath contribute to the character and appearance of this area. The introduction of the amount of hard surface alongside this footpath, combined with the introduction of parked cars would be out of keeping with the character of this area.

Furthermore, the proposal seeks the removal of 4.8 metres of front boundary hedge which is considered to be a significant amount. The front boundary hedge contributes to the landscaped appearance of Bridge Road and its removal, alongside the large amount of hard surface that would be visible from the road frontage, would significantly alter the soft landscaped character of the frontage of the site which contributes to the amenities and values of the streetscene to which it is located.

Application reference W6/2014/2503/EM was granted consent for an access, turning area and car parking to No.52 and No.54 Bridge Road. Whilst it is acknowledged a similar amount of hard surface was originally approved, this was proposed across two sites. Therefore, the proportion of hard surface in comparison was lower than the remaining soft landscaping on the previous scheme. This application proposes a new access at No.54 and the hard surface and parking areas would be contained within one reduced plot, resulting in a higher proportion of hard surface to soft landscaping

Part of the hard surface has been implemented at No.52 to the front of the site and the remainder could be implemented. It is acknowledged that an application to amend the frontage of No.52 under reference 6/2016/0065/EM was granted, it is considered that this consent allows more than what would normally be allowed and does not set a precedent for similar hard standings to be allowed at other sites as it would appear excessive. Whilst it is appreciated that the proposed dwellings are now entirely located at No. 54, the hard surface granted consent at No. 52 together with the proposed hard surface would result in further detrimental harm to the character and appearance of the site and the immediate streetscene which would result in harm to the ethos of the Garden City.

	<p>In conclusion, the proposal would fail to achieve a balance of preserving the unique character and appearance of the site and its locality as required by Policy EM3 and EM4 of the EMS. The proposal is considered to be contrary to EMS policy.</p> <p>A number of trees were removed from the site under reference W6/2014/2503/EM. The site benefits from a mature oak tree to the front of the site which has significant amenity value. The proposal shows the access path within the root protection area of the tree, however, a no dig driveway is proposed. In the event of a grant of consent, this method would be suitably conditioned to ensure this tree is protected.</p>
Any other considerations	None
Conclusion	
<p>The proposed development would appear contrived and cramped in comparison to the size of the plot which would be out of keeping with the immediate spacious character and appearance of the site and surrounding area. This harm would also be exacerbated as the development would be visible from public vantage points. The proposal is therefore considered to be contrary to Policy EM2 of the Estate Management Scheme which seeks to ensure the amenities and values or the surrounding area are maintained.</p> <p>In addition, by virtue of the proposed amount of hardstanding and removal of front boundary hedge, the proposal would fail to achieve a balance of preserving the unique character and appearance of the site and its locality as required by Policy EM3 and EM4 of the Estate Management Scheme.</p>	

Reasons for Refusal:

1. The proposed dwellings by virtue of their scale and siting, would represent an unduly cramped and over intensive form of development on the site, poorly related to the established character and form of this part of Welwyn Garden City. This harm would be exacerbated as the development would be visible from public vantage points. The proposed development would fail to maintain or enhance the amenities and values of this part of the Garden City, contrary to Policy EM2 and EM3 of the Welwyn Garden City Estates Management Scheme.
2. By virtue of the amount of hard surface and removal of front boundary hedge, the proposed development would fail to retain an acceptable balance of hard and soft landscaping thereby failing to preserve the unique character and appearance of the site and its locality as required by Policy EM3 and EM4 of the Estate Management Scheme. The proposal would therefore result in harm to the amenities and values of this part of the Garden City.

REFUSED DRAWING NUMBERS

Plan Number	Revision Number	Details	Received Date
IND-754-E01	A	Existing Site Plan	15 April 2019

IND-754-P01	B	Proposed Site Plan	15 April 2019
IND-754-LP01		Location Plan	15 April 2019
IND-754-P03		Proposed Elevations	25 April 2019
IND-754-P02		Proposed Ground and First Floor Plans	25 April 2019
IND-754-P10	B	Proposed Landscaping Plan	25 April 2019
IND-754-P20		Proposed Access Cross Section	25 April 2019

Determined By:

Mr Chris Carter
20 June 2019