

**5e 3/12/0392/FP – Two storey extension to Rochester House, plus construction of new disabled ramp and entrance steps at Hockerill Anglo-European College, Dunmow Road, Bishop’s Stortford, CM23 5HX for Hockerill Anglo-European College**

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**Date of Receipt:** 13.03.2012

**Type:** Full – Minor

**Parish:** BISHOP’S STORTFORD

**Ward:** BISHOP’S STORTFORD – ALL SAINTS

**RECOMMENDATION:**

That planning permission be **REFUSED** for the reason:

1. The proposed two storey side extension, by reason of its size, scale, siting and design would result in a building of unbalanced proportions, harmful to the historic and architectural significance of the existing building known as Rochester House as an undesignated heritage asset, the setting of nearby Listed Buildings and the Conservation Area. The proposal would thereby be contrary to policies ENV1 and BH5 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007, and the National Planning Policy Framework.

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**1.0 Background:**

- 1.1 The site is outlined on the attached OS extract.
- 1.2 Rochester House is a mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century symmetrical house with a shallow pitch slate roof and tall chimneys. It is located within the Bishop’s Stortford Conservation Area, which in this part is characterized by the built form of Dunmow Road. Rochester House is located within the historic curtilage of the grade II listed Hockerill Anglo-European College main school building.
- 1.3 This proposal is for a two storey side extension to the west facing elevation of the building. It would measure 3.5 metres in width to the front elevation and would expand in an ‘L’ shape to 7 metres in width to the rear. The depth of the extension is proposed to match that of the existing building (approximately 13.9 metres), and it would have an eaves height matching that of the existing building (approximately 7.5 metres). The ridge height of the rear element of the proposed extension would be approximately 0.3 metres lower than that of the existing building at 9.5 metres. The design proposes to incorporate the soffit,

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string course and fenestration details of the main building.

- 1.4 This proposal also includes the development of a new access to the east elevation together with a disabled ramp and steps.
- 1.5 The Planning Statement accompanying this application justifies the need for this extension as to “increase the number of residential boarders in the house from 10 to 18 students with appropriate boarding facilities, common room and shared facilities to meet the current boarding regulations. In addition the extension is to provide suitable living accommodation for the main ‘live in’ residential house manager and suitable staff sleep-over accommodation for the relief member of staff when the main house manager is sick or on vacation...”The proposed extension is necessary for the college to manage and accommodate the current number of residential students (which fluctuates between the number of boys and girls in each age group which under the boarding regulation must be separated). Currently the college is in urgent need of this small block increase to be ready for occupation in 2013”.

### **2.0 Site History:**

- 2.1 Whilst there is a long planning history related to Hockerill Anglo-European College, there is no relevant history relating to Rochester House.

### **3.0 Consultation Responses:**

- 3.1 The Conservation Officer recommends refusal of the application and comments that Rochester House is identified on the 1874 OS Map as a dwelling known as Clapham Place with a formal access from Dunmow Road; on the 1920 OS Map as Clonmore and on the 1963 OS Map as Rochester House. The date of the buildings integration or direct relationship with the 19th Century Grade II listed school house, located north east of the dwelling is unknown, however today Rochester House has an associated function with the school and forms part of its immediate setting.

Rochester House is a mid-C19<sup>th</sup> symmetrical house with a shallow pitch slate roof, tall chimneys, three sash windows to the first floor, the central window has a bracket cill, above a string course band and keystone semi-arched lintel to a central entrance door, accessed via a flight of steps flanked by a canted bay with shallow pitch roof. Later double hipped roof two storey rear extension. The interior is almost complete in planform with well-proportioned rooms. Rochester House provides a good example of a mid C19th house which makes a positive contribution

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to the immediate and wider setting of the principal listed building and conservation area – On this basis Rochester House is identified as an undesignated heritage asset.

The wider conservation area surrounding Dunmow Road is residential in character comprising of a collection of brick built houses, which includes the historic core of Hockerill School a Grade II listed gothic style building. The immediate setting of which has a collection of buildings of various architectural styles and ages including Rochester Cottage which, together with its brick boundary wall, forms the edge of the public footpath located on the western periphery of the school, to the north west of Rochester House. Although it is accepted some randomly placed modern school buildings within the Hockerill School setting ultimately detract from the listed building this is not the case when considering the character Rochester House.

In assessing the mass, scale and design of the extension against the existing symmetry of the building, which forms a significant part of the buildings character and appearance, the proposal is considered to have a detrimental impact on the architectural value of this undesignated heritage asset, and as such wider setting of the listed building and surrounding conservation area. In summary the Officer comments that the proposed works are considered to have a detrimental impact on the architectural value of Rochester House as an undesignated heritage asset, its immediate and wider setting.

#### **4.0 Town Council Representations:**

4.1 Bishop's Stortford Town Council have raised no objections to this proposal.

#### **5.0 Other Representations:**

5.1 The application has been advertised by way of press and site notice and neighbour notification.

5.2 No letters of representation have been received.

#### **6.0 Policy:**

6.1 The relevant 'saved' Local Plan policies in this application include the following:

- ENV1 – Design and Environmental Quality

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- BH5 – Extensions and Alterations to Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas

In addition to the above, the National Planning Policy Framework is also a material consideration in the determination of this application.

#### **7.0 Considerations:**

7.1 The application site is located within the built up area of Bishop's Stortford where in principle there is no objection to development. The determining issues in relation to the consideration of this application therefore relate to:

- The size, scale, siting and design of the proposed extension and its impact on the Bishop's Stortford Conservation Area and the setting of nearby Listed Buildings; and
- Its impact on the amenities of the occupiers of nearby buildings.

#### Size, scale, siting, design and impact on the Conservation Area and setting of nearby Listed Buildings

7.2 Policy ENV1 of the Local Plan states that development proposals should be of a high standard of design and layout that reflects local distinctiveness and relates well to the massing (volume and shape) and height of adjacent buildings and the townscape.

7.3 It is the opinion of Officers that although the detailing of the proposed extension reflects to some extent the detail of the existing building, i.e. the soffits, the string course and fenestration, the size, scale and siting of the extension results in an addition that is out of keeping with the distinctive character and appearance of the existing building. When viewed from the front elevation the proposed extension lacks subservience, and results in a partial blank elevation. This, together with the overall width of the extension, detracts from the existing proportions and character of the building. The proposed two storey side extension would be harmful to the balanced proportions of the building and detrimental to its architectural value.

7.4 The Conservation Officer has raised an objection to the proposed development commenting that the mass, scale and design of the extension would have a detrimental impact on the architectural value of this undesignated heritage asset. The Conservation Officer considers that the building is of local interest and should therefore be considered to be an undesignated heritage asset. It is considered that the existing

building is of historic and architectural interest, and in particular its design and planform is representative of the historical and architectural trends at the time of its construction. Furthermore the building has significance in terms of its association with the other buildings on the site of the College.

- 7.5 The National Planning Policy Framework states that the effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage assets should be taken into account in determining applications. It goes on to state that in weighing applications that affect directly or indirectly non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.
- 7.6 Taking into account the above considerations, it is the view of Officers that the proposed extensions, by reason of their size, scale, siting and design would result in harm to and the partial loss of the significance of this undesignated heritage asset. Furthermore, it is also considered that the extension and the resultant harm to the existing building would be detrimental to the setting of the Listed Buildings within the College site.
- 7.7 As detailed above, the application site is located within the Bishop's Stortford Conservation Area. Policy BH5 of the Local Plan states that proposals to extend or alter an unlisted building in a Conservation Area which requires planning permission will be permitted where they are sympathetic in terms of scale, height, proportion, form, materials and siting in relation to the building itself, adjacent buildings and the general character and appearance of the area.
- 7.8 For the reasons described above, Officers consider that the proposed two storey extension would be harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Officer's view that this building is an undesignated heritage asset acknowledges its importance as part of the College site and the surrounding area, and the resultant harm caused by the proposed extensions to the existing historic and architectural importance of the building would be detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. It is therefore considered that the proposed extension is contrary to policy BH5 of the Local Plan.
- 7.9 Whilst the need for the extension to the building (set out in the background section of this report) is acknowledged, it is the opinion of Officers that these matters do not outweigh the harm that is caused to the historical and architectural significance of the building. However, Officers are of the view that some form of subservient extension to the

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building could be successfully designed to achieve the required expansion of the building, without resulting in any significant harm to the character and appearance of the building and its setting.

- 7.10 Turning to the proposed new access to the east elevation together with a disabled ramp and steps, Officers consider that this element of the application is of a minimal scale, and is a necessity for the function of the building. This element of the proposal is therefore considered to accord with the design considerations of policy ENV1 of the Local Plan.

#### Amenity considerations

- 7.11 The proposed extension to Rochester House would bring the building closer to Rochester Cottage to the northwest of the application site, and the properties to the west in Manor Road. Turning firstly to the impact of the proposal on the properties in Manor Road, approximately 20 metres would be retained between the flank wall of the extension and the rear of the properties in Manor Road. Taking into account this distance and the existence of landscaping close to the boundary, it is considered that the proposal would not result in significant harm to the amenities of the occupiers of these dwellings such as to warrant refusal of the application.
- 7.12 The proposal would also bring the building that is known as Rochester House closer to Rochester Cottage to the northeast of the application site, resulting in some 6 metres between the buildings. However, taking into account the orientation of these buildings, it is considered that the resultant degree of overlooking would not be to such a degree as to warrant refusal of the application.

### **8.0 Conclusion:**

- 8.1 Officers acknowledge the need for the College to expand and improve their boarding facilities and the urgency of the 2013 deadline as outlined in the supporting Planning Statement. However, notwithstanding the above, Officers consider that the harm that would be caused by the size, scale, siting and design of the proposed two storey extension to the historical and architectural significance of this undesignated heritage asset; the detriment to the setting of the Listed Buildings within the College site and the impact on the Conservation Area, would not be outweighed by the need for the development as outlined above.
- 8.2 It is therefore recommended that planning permission be refused for the reason given at the head of this report.