

3/14/1183/FP – Creation of first floor including 8 No. dormer windows and front porch at Ashleigh, Patmore Heath, Albury, Ware, SG11 2LX for Mrs A Lockwood

Date of Receipt: 01.07.2014

Type: Householder

Parish: ALBURY

Ward: LITTLE HADHAM

RECOMMENDATION:

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Approved plans (2E02 – 1103.P.001, 1103.P.002, 1103.P.003 D, 1103.P.004 D, 1103.P.005 B, 1103.P.006)
3. Samples of materials (2E12)

Directives:

1. Other legislation (01OL)
2. Protected species (36PS)

Summary of Reasons for Decision

East Herts Council has considered the applicant's proposal in a positive and proactive manner with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (Minerals Local Plan, Waste Core Strategy and Development Management Policies DPD 2012 and the 'saved' policies of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007); the National Planning Policy Framework and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2012 (as amended). The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies, the amendments made since 3/13/1735/FP, and the limited impact in the Rural Area in this case, is that permission should be granted.

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract. It comprises of a detached 1960s single storey bungalow facing east across Patmore Heath Site of Special Scientific Interest. The site lies in the

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Rural Area and also within the Patmore Heath Conservation Area. The dwelling is set back some 14m from the road with an established front garden. Vehicular access is to the north of the site to an existing single garage.

- 1.2 The application proposes the creation of a first floor with dormer windows and a new front porch. The roof ridge will be raised by up to 1.6m. The application has been referred to Members for a decision as it is contrary to Rural Area policy, and neighbour objections have been received.

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 The existing dwelling was constructed in the 1960s following planning permission 3/64/1876/FP. A garage was later added under reference 3/67/0936/FP, along with a single storey side extension under reference 3/70/0409/FP.

- 2.2 More recently, application 3/13/1735/FP for first floor extensions, a single storey front extension and replacement windows and timber cladding was refused by Officers on 27th November 2013, and an appeal was dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate on 26th March 2014. The reasons for refusal were as follows:

1. The proposed extensions would disproportionately alter the size of the original dwelling, be out of keeping with its character and appearance, and would intrude into the rural qualities of the area. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies GBC3 and ENV5 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.
2. The proposed extensions, by reasons of their size, scale, form and design would be out of keeping with and harmful to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling and Conversation Area and would appear unduly prominent in the street scene. The proposal is therefore contrary to policies ENV1, ENV5, ENV6 and BH5 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.
3. Insufficient information has been submitted to enable the Local Planning Authority to properly determine the impact of the development on protected ecological sites and species

That application proposed an increase in the roof ridge by approximately 3m along with two storey eaves, and a full front canopy. The result was a large two storey dwelling that would have appeared unduly prominent and harmful in its setting. The Inspector agreed and

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dismissed the appeal on the grounds that, “by virtue of its disproportionate scale and bulk and its uncharacteristic full front porch, the appeal proposal would fail to preserve the character or enhance the appearance of the [Patmore Heath] Conservation Area.” A copy of the Inspector’s decision and previous elevation drawings are attached as **Essential Reference Papers A and B** to this report.

2.3 This revised application follows pre-application advice sought from Officers in response to the Inspector’s decision.

3.0 Consultation Responses

3.1 Herts Ecology comment that it would be unreasonable to require a bat assessment survey or Great crested newt survey to be submitted, but advise a precautionary approach and recommend a directive in the event that any protected species are found.

4.0 Parish Council Representations

4.1 No response has been received from Albury Parish Council.

5.0 Other Representations

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

5.2 2 letters of objection have been received which can be summarised as follows:

- Out of keeping with the site and surrounding area;
- The floor area has more than doubled which is disproportionate for a bungalow;
- Harm to the setting of adjacent listed buildings – the development would dwarf Westview;
- Roof line should be no higher than existing neighbours – approximately 6m;
- Use of render would result in the building appearing prominent and harmful in the landscape;
- Loss of views from The Cottage.

5.3 1 letter of support has been received which states that the revised scheme has a much better scale and more interesting roofscape.

6.0 Policy

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

GBC3	Appropriate Development in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt
TR7	Car Parking - Standards
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV5	Extensions to Dwellings
ENV6	Extensions to Dwellings – Criteria
ENV13	Development and SSSIs
ENV16	Protected Species
BH5	Extensions and Alterations to Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas

6.2 In addition to the above it is considered that the Planning Policy Practice Guidance (NPPG), and the following sections of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) are material considerations in determining this application:

Section 7	Requiring good design
Section 11	Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Section 12	Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

7.0 Considerations

Principle of Development

7.1 The site lies in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt wherein policies GBC3 and ENV5 allow for only limited extensions to existing dwellings that do not disproportionately alter the size of the original dwelling when taken cumulatively with previous extensions. In this case the original dwelling had a floor area of approximately 135m², and the proposed extensions will result in a total floorspace of approximately 264m². This results in an approximate floorspace increase of some 96% which is almost a doubling in the size of the property. Officers therefore consider the floorspace increase to disproportionately alter the size of the original dwelling in conflict with policies GBC3 and ENV5. However, it is important to consider the impact of the development and whether there is any harm arising from the scale of development proposed.

Scale and Design

7.2 The application proposes a first floor across the majority of the building,

with a lower single storey pitched roof element retained to the north elevation. The main roof will increase in height from 5.1m to 6.7m (for a length of 13.7m), whilst the single storey section will increase in height from 3m to 5.1m. The eaves are proposed to increase from 2.3m to 2.8m but will remain at single storey level to retain the original character of the bungalow. The lower section of roof to the north will also respect the original character of the building, and provide a visual break in the roofscape. This is considered to be a significant improvement over the appeal scheme which proposed a full two storey building with a ridge height of 8.2m and length of 16.7m.

- 7.3 Therefore, whilst the floorspace figures indicate a development that is disproportionate in size, the external scale of development is considered to be modest, and the design is considered to be sympathetic to the character and appearance of the existing dwelling. In his appeal decision the Inspector considered the existing bungalow to be simple in character and appearance, and not discordant with the surrounding area. He also commented that its low profile helps it integrate into the open corner location and does not dominate the nearby modest cottages. Although this application proposes a 1.6m increase in ridge height, the eaves will remain at single storey level, and Officers consider the resulting building to maintain a low profile that would not dominate the surrounding area.
- 7.4 The proposal also includes 8 no. dormer windows - 4 to the front elevation, 2 to the rear and 1 on each side elevation of the rear projection. The dormers are considered to be modest in scale and will not dominate the roof in accordance with policy ENV6. The front elevation maintains a balance and symmetry that respects the simple character of the original bungalow, and the new front porch has been re-designed as a modest simple flat roof structure. Officers therefore consider the revised scale and design to be of a high quality that will respect the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area.

Heritage Assets

- 7.5 The site lies in the Patmore Heath Conservation Area (not the Furneux Pelham Conservation Area as mistakenly referred to by the Planning Inspector) wherein policy BH6 requires extensions and alterations to be sympathetic in scale, height, proportion, form, materials and siting in relation to the building itself, adjacent buildings, and the general character and appearance of the area. Given the modest scale of extensions and height increase proposed, Officers do not consider the proposed development to be harmful to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

- 7.6 Although the site is located on a corner plot, the development will not harm any important views through the site in this location. Comments from the neighbour at The Cottage, located to the southeast, are noted; however impact on a private view is not a material planning consideration. They also raise concerns over the proposed use of painted render instead of the existing red brick which helps assimilate the existing bungalow into its surroundings. Whilst it is acknowledged that the use of painted render will result in the dwelling appearing more visible in its surroundings, Officers do not consider this be harmful, given the modest scale of development, and the mix of materials and use of render in the locality. A condition is recommended to secure samples of materials of construction, and this will include control over the painted colour of the building. This is considered to be reasonable and necessary given the sensitive location of the site.
- 7.7 There are a number of listed buildings in the vicinity of the site, including the Grade II listed Westview to the north, Hitch Lane Cottage, Thatched Cottage, The Cottage, and Pennies to the south/east. Westview is the closest listed building which sits at a distance of some 20m to the north and has its principal elevation facing south towards the application site. Concerns have been raised that the proposed height increase would be higher than neighbouring listed buildings (approximately 6.7m high, compared to 6m for Westview), and would therefore harm their setting. Whilst the increase in ridge height will change the appearance of the site, Officers do not consider the increased ridge to be harmful given the distance retained between the sites, the retention of single storey eaves, and the retention of a lower section of roof to the north of the site closest to Westview. In the previous appeal, the Inspector considered the 8.2m high ridge to be appreciably taller than other nearby traditional cottages in this corner of Patmore Heath. In contrast, 6.7m would not be appreciably taller. Officers therefore do not consider that the proposed development would harm the setting of any nearby heritage assets, in accordance with Section 12 of the NPPF.

Neighbour Amenity

- 7.8 As set out above, the nearest neighbour is Westview to the north at a distance of approximately 20m. A first floor bedroom dormer window is proposed to face Westview, along with a ground floor playroom window and rear door; however these are located on the rear wing at a distance of some 30m. No harmful overlooking will therefore occur at this distance. In terms of light and outlook, the proposal will have some impact on Westview; however given the modest scale of extensions, and the retention of a lower roof section to the north, the impact is not

considered to be harmful. The development will also change the outlook from dwellings to the south, but at a distance of over 50m the impact will not be harmful. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with the amenity considerations of policy ENV1.

Ecology

- 7.9 The site lies opposite the Patmore Heath Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which includes an established nature reserve and a number of ponds. The previous application was refused on the grounds that insufficient information had been submitted on the impact of the proposal on wildlife given the sensitive location of the site, and in dismissing the appeal the Inspector agreed that the Council's precautionary approach was justified. In respect of this re-submission, further discussions have been had with Herts Ecology and they have now confirmed that it would be unreasonable to require any further surveys to be carried out. However they recommend a directive to advise the developer of protected species, and that works should stop if bats or Great crested newts are encountered. A directive is therefore recommended and the proposal is now considered to be in accordance with policies ENV13 and ENV16.

Parking and Access

- 7.10 Vehicular access will remain as existing to the north of the site, and an existing garage is to be retained with frontage car parking. The development will increase the number of bedrooms from 3 to 4 but Officers are satisfied that the existing level of parking provision is acceptable for a site in this location, in accordance with policy TR7.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Whilst the floorspace calculations indicate a disproportionate 96% increase in the size of the dwelling, Officers consider the external alterations to be modest and appropriate in relation to the character and appearance of the site and surrounding area. The dwelling will retain the character of a single storey bungalow, whilst the increase in ridge height and provision of dormer windows are not considered to be visually harmful to the character or appearance of the wider Patmore Heath Conservation Area.
- 8.2 Although concerns have been raised over the height of the development in relation to nearby listed buildings, Officers do not consider the resultant scale of development to detract from the historic interest of these traditional cottages. Given that no harm has been

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identified in the assessment of this proposal, Officers consider the proposed development to be acceptable.

- 8.3 The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out above.