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NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE

MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES, GERONON ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF
ON TUESDAY, 25TH FEBRUARY, 2025 AT 7.00 PM

MINUTES

Present: *Councillors: Elizabeth Dennis (Chair), Nigel Mason (Vice-Chair), Ruth Brown, Emma Fernandes, Ian Mantle, Bryony May, Caroline McDonnell, Louise Peace, Martin Prescott, Val Bryant and Steve Jarvis.*

In Attendance: *Amy Cantrill (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Shaun Greaves (Development and Conservation Manager), Andrew Hunter (Senior Planning Officer), James Lovegrove (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Manager), Alina Preda (Trainee Solicitor) and Sonia Sharp (Senior Planning Solicitor (Locum)).*

Also Present: *At the commencement of the meeting there was 1 member of the public, including registered speakers.*

125 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Audio recording – 1 minute 32 seconds

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Tom Tyson, Amy Allen and Sadie Billing.

Having given due notice Councillor Steve Jarvis substituted for Councillor Tyson and Councillor Val Bryant substituted for Councillor Allen.

126 MINUTES - 30 JANUARY 2025

Audio Recording – 2 minutes 4 seconds

Councillor Elizabeth Dennis, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Nigel Mason seconded, and following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 30 January 2025 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

127 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 50 seconds

There was no other business notified.

128 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

Audio recording – 2 minutes 55 seconds

(1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.

- (2) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.
- (3) The Chair clarified matters for the registered speakers.
- (4) The Chair advised that Section 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution applied to the meeting.
- (5) The Chair advised that Agenda Item 7, 24/02606/FP Land west of Tuthill House, had been withdrawn from the agenda due to outstanding issues to be resolved.

129 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Audio recording – 5 minutes 25 seconds

The Chair confirmed that the registered speakers were in attendance.

130 24/02577/FPH 4 ARCH ROAD, GREAT WYMONDLEY, HITCHIN, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG4 7EP

Audio Recording – 5 minutes 54 seconds

N.B. Councillor Caroline McDonnell declared an interest as Member Advocate and moved to the public speaking gallery.

The Senior Planning Officer presented the report of Application 24/02577/FPH supported by a visual presentation consisting of photographs and plans.

The Chair invited the Member advocate Councillor Caroline McDonnell to speak in support of the application. Councillor McDonnell thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, including that:

- The current application would have less impact on both greenbelt openness and neighbouring residents.
- The increase on the original building is large but that the property is on a large plot approximately 0.25 acres.
- The original building covered 14% of the plot, whereas the proposal covered 38% of the plot.
- A 6ft wall already existed at the site which prevented openness and the proposal would not affect openness further.
- The permission for the site granted previously would have been more impactful to greenbelt openness than the current application.
- Similar proposals had been recommended to the Committee and approved.
- Offices are now key to new housing designs due to a change in work life.
- Allowing the proposal to go ahead would allow a growing family to remain in the village.

The following Members asked for points of clarification:

- Councillor Ruth Brown

In response to a point of clarification from Councillor Ruth Brown, Councillor McDonnell advised that the previous permitted plan would have been behind the existing building, rather than to the side.

The Chair thanked Councillor McDonnell for her contribution.

N.B. Councillor Caroline McDonnell left the Chamber for the remainder of the consideration of this Item.

The Chair invited the Applicant, Mr Shaun Doughty, to speak in support of this application. Mr Doughty thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, including that:

- He had lived at the dwelling since 2019 with his wife and they have since had 2 children.
- The family were active members of the village and had a strong emotional attachment to the dwelling and surrounding area.
- The planning application of 2016 was a contributory factor in them buying a property.
- The purpose of the application was for a home office and an at home gym.
- He had consulted neighbours during the application process to ensure the proposed plan was not detrimental to them.
- A previous proposal in 2023 was rejected and the officer gave recommendations which were considered in this application.
- The proposed planned extension would not overlook neighbouring dwellings or impact the view from these properties.
- The application is for an extension at the front rather than the agreed location to provide better security.

The following Members asked for points of clarification:

- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Val Bryant

In response to points of clarification, Mr Doughty advised that:

- There were no objections raised by the Parish Council or neighbours.
- The building materials are in line with the village aesthetic and the building that already exists at the dwelling.

The Chair thanked Mr Doughty for his contribution

In response to points raised by the public speakers, the Senior Planning Officer commented that:

- Green belt policy stated that the proposal must be compared with the original building size and not the size of the plot.
- A building at the back of the existing dwelling would cause less of a visual impact than the previously proposed extension.
- The proposed increase is 200% of the original structure which is more than what is outlined in the Local Planning Policy.

In response to a question from Councillor Nigel Mason, the Senior Planning Officer commented that there would be a high chance this would set a precedent for future planning applications as 70% increase is the current upper limit for expansion and approving a 200% increase could set a precedent for bigger applications in the future.

Councillor Ruth Brown proposed to grant permission and this was seconded by Councillor Steve Jarvis.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Val Bryant

- Councillor Nigal Mason
- Councillor Elizabeth Dennis
- Councillor Louise Peace
- Councillor Ian Mantle

Points raised during the debate included:

- The application seemed to be founded on common sense and had received no objections and therefore should be approved.
- The rules had changed recently around planning applications and the Officers advice to deny the application is due to the legislation as updated in December 2024.
- The rules allowed for special circumstances, but Members need to consider whether this qualified as special circumstances.
- This could set a precedent for the other houses in the area, and continued expansion in green belt would not be good.
- This exact building could not be allowed under current permitted development and the new application was a more efficient plan.
- With the existing 6ft wall already obscuring the view, the benefits of the new plan would outweigh the harm.
- This application did not seem to be doing any substantial damage to the greenbelt.
- The roof was slightly higher than the 6ft wall but this is negligible and visually would be an improvement.

During the debate the Development and Conservation Manager advised that:

- Precedent was important for future applications, but each application was considered on its own merit.
- The 200% increase was the cumulative effect of all previous extension as well as this application.
- It was for Members to consider whether the points raised at the meeting by the Applicant were grounds to consider whether exceptional circumstances applied.
- If Members think that material considerations put forward by the applicant are exceptional circumstances, then this is for Members' discretion.
- If Members were minded to approve the application, Officers would usually recommend the following conditions, that construction should begin within 3 years, that the development should be built in accordance with the approved plans, that materials used should match that of the existing dwelling and that the outbuilding should be used ancillary to the main dwelling.

Councillor Brown, as proposer, and Councillor Jarvis, as seconder, accepted the conditions suggested for inclusion, and, following a vote, it was:

RESOLVED: That application 24/02577/FPH be **GRANTED** planning permission subject to the following conditions:

'Condition 1:

The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Condition 2:

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans listed above.

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

Condition 3:

The outbuilding hereby permitted shall be built in external materials to match the existing dwellinghouse unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To protect the visual amenities of the locality and to comply with Policies D1 and D2 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.

Condition 4:

The outbuilding hereby permitted shall be used only for the purposes ancillary to the main dwellinghouse No. 4 Arch Road, Great Wymondley, Herts, SG4 7EP.

Reason: To protect the amenities of the locality and to comply with Policies D1 and D3 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 to 2031.'

N.B. At the end of this item Councillor Caroline McDonnell returned to the Chamber at 19:44

131 24/02606/FP LAND WEST OF TUTHILL HOUSE, KELSHALL TOPS, THERFIELD, HERTFORDSHIRE

Audio Recording – 44 minutes 42 seconds

The Chair advised that this Item was withdrawn from the Agenda due to outstanding matters to be resolved and would be brought back to the Committee at a future meeting.

132 APPEALS UPDATE

Audio Recording – 44 minutes 54 seconds

The Development and Conservation Manager provided an update on Planning Appeals, including that:

- An appeal had been submitted in relation to an altered vehicle access to facilitate a community car park on Old Hale Way, Hitchin.
- The Public Inquiry for Rhee Spring was scheduled to begin on 29 April 2025, and it may be necessary for a confidential update to be provided to Committee before this, depending on advice from Counsel.

The meeting closed at 7.46 pm

Chair

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