

09/0390



**Revised Application showing new access for 2 pairs of semi-detached houses at
The Cottage, Homefield Road, Chorleywood, Hertfordshire, WD3 5QJ**

Design and Access Statement

March 2009

1.0 Context

Introduction

1.1 This application for planning consent is for the erection of two pairs of attached dwellings in the grounds of The Cottage, Homefield Road.

1.2 This application follows the refusal of planning and Conservation Area consent for the demolition of The Cottage and the erection of six dwellings (07/1332/FUL and 07/01333/CAC). In essence, the Council did not support the loss of The Cottage and considered that the development did not preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

1.3 Officers did however support the provision of a new access from Homefield Road to Orchard Drive and the closure of the existing vehicular access from Homefield Road to Station Approach. This highway improvement is seen by the council as essential to enable further development within Homefield Road and is once again incorporated into the current application. This has now been approved under planning permission

1.4 This proposal will be using the new access to Homefield Road from Orchard drive approved under planning permission 08/1963/FUL

Assessment

1.5 The formulation of the scheme proposal takes account of the physical characteristics of the site, neighbouring dwellings, relevant planning history and the pattern of development in the surrounding area.

1.6 It addresses both national and local planning policy aims and the location of the site within the Chorleywood Common Conservation Area.

a. The Site

1.7 The site, excluding Homefield Road, is 0.47 ha in size and irregular shape. It forms an area of land between the rear of frontage properties to Homefield Road to the west and the rear of properties fronting Colleyland and Common Road to the south and east. To the north is an overgrown, vacant plot of land belonging to a property named Crindau, fronting Common Road.

1.8 The Cottage is a large, two storey, detached property, centrally sited and set back from Homefield Road by about 48m

1.9 The site slopes up from the west to east with properties along Homefield Road set at a lower level than The Cottage, which in turn is set lower than properties fronting Common Road. The Cottage has garden areas on all sides with levelled areas accommodating a hard surfaced tennis court to the north of the dwelling and an open air swimming pool to the south.

1.10 There are a number of substantial trees within the site and on its borders, limiting views towards neighbouring properties and beyond. The site is fenced on all north, south and east boundaries.

1.11 There are two points of access from The Cottage to Homefield Road, via driveways to the north and south of an adjoining bungalow named Haradwaith (formerly Cwn-Glas-Bach). The northern access drive leads to the side of The Cottage, with hard surfacing adjacent to the tennis court. The main driveway runs beside the northern boundary of The Firs and leads to hard surfaced areas in front of The Cottage and to the south, in the vicinity of the swimming pool.

1.12 The character of the surrounding area is residential with detached, semi-detached and terraced properties of varying age and in a range of styles.

1.13 Homefield Road is a private road serving 15 dwellings. It has a tarmac surface without road markings and is bordered by verges. It is single lane, varying in width from 3.1 m to 5 m. It is separated from Orchard Drive to the North West by a narrow strip of land, with shrubs and trees of varying type and quality. Orchard Drive runs parallel with Homefield Road, bearing west, uphill, at a point level with the application site.

1.14 Access from Homefield Road to the wider road network is at its southern end onto Station Approach, at a complex junction with Shire Lane, Green Street and Orchard Drive.

1.15 The site is situated no more than 500 m from the railway station in Chorleywood and the full range of shops and services within this large village centre. Regular bus services run between Chorleywood, Rickmansworth, Amersham and beyond.

b. Planning history

1.16 The Cottage was built between 1926 and 1938 and was extended and altered following consent in 1970 (W/1391/70).

1.17 The principle of sub-division of the site has been established by a series of consents since 2003.

1.18 Consent was granted in 2003 for the erection of a detached dwelling to the front of the site (03/1804/FUL).

1.19 Outline planning consent was granted for the erection of a dwelling on the site of the tennis court in 2003 (03/05904/OUT). It considered that a suitably designed dwelling would not harm the character of the Conservation Area or the residential amenities of neighbouring residents. Details pursuant to this outline have recently been granted (071/1723/AOD).

1.20 Permission was granted for a substantial detached building to house the swimming pool in 2004 (04/1911/FUL).

1.21 Consent was refused in 2005 to erect a bungalow in place of the swimming pool building in 2005 (05/0743/FUL) on the grounds of increased traffic using the access; piecemeal development which has an awkward relationship with surrounding dwellings; and potential overlooking in relation to The Cottage.

1.22 An appeal against this refusal was dismissed (APP/P1940/A/05/1193473). The Inspector concurred with the Council in some respects. The proposed dwelling followed the form and siting of the permitted pool building. He felt that it would be too close to the southern elevation of The Cottage (at 18 m) and that its external design and appearance would not be an appropriate response to the nature and characteristics of the site.

1.23 The planning officer, in his report on the application, had considered that the development formed a piecemeal approach to the development of the site. The officer stated that a comprehensive approach would allow an assessment of all buildings on the site at the same time and avoid the issues that made this application unacceptable. In principle, it was stated that:

'... the addition of dwellings on The Cottage 's plot is acceptable, however, the relationship of these buildings with each other is important, and should be addressed'.

1.24 The Inspector agreed that a comprehensive development would be preferable and in Paragraph 5 of the decision notice stated that:

'In my opinion, the size of the appeal site would allow for a suitably designed dwelling to be constructed whilst maintaining the character of the area. Moreover, the degree of tree cover to the western and southern boundaries, together with the distance of the proposed bungalow from neighbouring properties in Homefield Road and Colleyland, would ensure no harm to the privacy of the occupiers of those properties.'

1.25 The Inspector agreed with Hertfordshire Highways, that the junction of Homefield Road with Shire Lane, Station Approach and Green Street was substandard and that any additional development likely to result in an intensification of vehicle use in Homefield Road was a cause for concern.

1.26 He did not however agree with the Council that the use of the access adjacent to The Firs by the proposed bungalow would result in an unreasonable increase in traffic.

1.27 Whilst both the Council and the Inspector were concerned about the relationship between the development of a dwelling on the pool site and The Cottage, neither expressed concern about any potential impact on its setting within the Conservation Area.

1.28 The extent of consents granted established the principle of development and at least four dwellings, covering all parts of the site. This represented the retention of The Cottage, consent for two additional dwellings and the potential for a third on the site of the pool.

1.29 Following submission of the recent applications to demolish The Cottage and erect six dwellings, the Council placed The Cottage on the Local List. Planning and Conservation Area consent was refused because:

1. The Cottage is "Arts and Crafts" influenced, it is a Locally Listed Building and contributes to the character and appearance of the street scene and Conservation Area. It has not been demonstrated that there is any justification for its demolition. In addition the design of the proposed replacement scheme would be obtrusive in the street scene and would fail to preserve or enhance the Conservation Area. The proposed demolition of the existing dwelling known as "The Cottage" would be contrary to Policies C1, C6, C12, GEN 3 and Appendix 2 of the Three Rivers Local Plan 1996-2011.

1.30 Planning consent was also refused for the following reasons:

2. The proposed development fails to comply with Policies C1, GEN3 and H14 of the Three Rivers Local Plan 1996-2011, which seeks to protect the character and residential amenity of the surrounding area. The proposal would result in overdevelopment of the site which would result in a layout unable to maintain the

particular character of the area in terms of the plot size, height, the proposed alignment of development uncharacteristic to the existing layout of development, which would result in the visual character and appearance of the area being significantly harmed and a detrimental impact on the street scene.

3. The proposed development fails to comply with Policies C1, C6 and C12 of the Three Rivers Local Plan 1996-2011 in that it would be overly prominent in the street scene, particularly when viewed from Homefield Road and Orchard Drive, and would cause material harm to the appearance of the Chorleywood Conservation Area. The proposal for redevelopment is therefore considered unacceptable.

4. The proposed dwelling in Plot 1 would, by virtue of its height, higher ground level and close proximity to Haradwaith, result in real and perceived impacts of overlooking to the detriment of the residential amenity of Haradwaith. This would be contrary to Policies H14, GEN3 and Appendix 2 of the Three Rivers Local Plan 1996-2011

1.31 The proposed new highway arrangements and issues relating to the potential impact on trees were accepted by the council and remain similar in connection with this current application. This new proposal has taken into account all issues by ADL Traffic Engineering and Patrick Stileman, arboriculturalist.

1.32 In the last two years, permission has been refused for further development proposals in Homefield Road as a result of highway concerns over the intensification of use of its sub-standard junction with Shire Lane, Station Approach and Green Street.

1.33 Permission was granted (08/1963/FUL) for two detached houses and a new access onto Orchard Drive.

c. Planning policies

1.35 The site is identified on the Proposals Map to the Three Rivers Local Plan in the built up area of Chorleywood and within the Chorleywood Common Conservation Area. The Council has not issued a character appraisal for this Conservation Area but its predominant characteristics are the Common itself and its topography, with buildings in a variety of styles and ages, interspersed around its perimeter.

1.35 Policy C1 of the Local Plan states that development should preserve or enhance the Conservation Area. In brief, development should:

- be sympathetic to features of surrounding buildings and the Area in terms of siting, proportion, bulk, scale, form, materials, details etc;
- respect existing landscape features and the relationship of buildings to plot boundaries;

- be acceptable in terms of traffic generation and parking in terms of townscape and Conservation Area character;
- not adversely affect important spaces;
- not adversely affect features of archaeological and historic significance, including historic boundaries.

1.36 Central Government guidance on Conservation Areas and historic buildings is given in PPG15. The emphasis for new development is on design respecting context, as opposed to an imitation of earlier styles. Preservation can be achieved by leaving character and appearance unharmed, as opposed to development necessarily needing to provide positive enhancement.

1.37 Policy C12 of the Local Plan encourages the preservation of buildings on a list, prepared by the Council, of locally important buildings that are of some architectural or local historic interest but do not qualify as statutory Listed Buildings.

1.38 General development policies of the Local Plan look to make development more sustainable. As part of this objective, the aim is to concentrate development in locations with easy access to public transport options. Policy GEN1a seeks to concentrate development in the urban areas outside the Green Belt, including Chorleywood.

1.39 Within such accessible urban areas, Policy H4 looks for development to be at the highest density possible, compatible with the site characteristics and residential amenity considerations.

1.40 This is a key aim of both PPS1 and PPS3, which seek to promote developments of good design that make effective and efficient use of previously developed land. Generally, a minimum density of 30 dwellings per hectare is sought. Paragraph 49 of PPS3 notes that even in Conservation Areas, intensification by taking new development opportunities can be achieved without adverse impacts on their character and appearance.

1.41 Policy H14 of the Local Plan relates to infilling and the development of garden land. The Council looks for comprehensive proposals as opposed to piecemeal development in order to properly address issues relating to tandem development; access; traffic generation; residential amenity; and layout in relation to the character of the area.

1.42 Policy GEN3 calls for developments to satisfy design and landscape criteria and be in accordance with parking standards. Two spaces are required for 3 bedroom dwellings, with three for 4 or more bedroom dwellings. Design policies seek to ensure safe, secure and well landscaped living environments.

1.43 Residential amenity criteria are set out in Appendix 2 to the Local Plan. To prevent overlooking, it is suggested that 28 m should be achieved between the faces of single or two storey buildings that back onto each other. Mitigating circumstances such as careful layout and orientation, screening and window positions allow a reduction in distances

between elevations. Private garden zones of at least 3 m from the wall of a dwelling are required.

1.44 Amenity space requirements are for at least 84 sq m per 3 bed dwelling. 105 sq m is required for a 4 bed dwelling with a further 21 sq m per additional bedroom.

1.45 In relation to trees, Policies N15 and N16 call for the retention of trees where possible and their protection during development. Landscaping schemes need to form an important part of the design process.

1.46 Transport Policy T7 relates to highways and new development and the acceptability of new or improved access points. These should not generally encourage the use of primary routes through direct access, nor compromise the safe movement and free flow of other highway users.

Evaluation

1.47 The application excludes the site of the permitted dwelling to the front of the site, which remains unaffected by this proposal.

2.0 DESIGN

2.1 The detailed design takes account of the views of the Councils conservation officer and consultant advice on trees and highways.

2.2 The conservation officer welcomed the retention of The Cottage within its own grounds with new dwellings subserviently sited. A new detached garage is proposed for the use of The Cottage.

2.3 Two pairs of attached dwellings are proposed. This attached form of development was preferred by the conservation officer as appropriate in this context. The houses are designed to be on the same axis as The Cottage and have taken a similar form with respect to the section and roof pitch. The treatment of the proposed houses has, like The Cottage, taken its influence from "Arts and Crafts" properties of the late 19th Century. Each pair of dwellings has been designed to give the impression of being one large house.

2.4 Two dwellings will be located on the site of the swimming pool, accessed from the main driveway that also serves The Cottage. A second pair of dwellings will be located on the site of the tennis court. These will be accessed from the existing driveway to the north of Haradwaith.

2.5 All four dwellings have a garage and driveway space for additional cars. A detached building containing two garages is provided for Plots 1 and 2. Garages for Plots 3 and 4 are attached to dwelling 4. All dwellings have their own private gardens.

2.6 The design of the new proposed access from Homefield Road to Orchard Drive is the same as permitted under 08/1963/FUL

Use

2.7 The residential use of the site is considered most appropriate, given its location in an established residential and sustainable urban area.

Scale and development

2.8 The proposal takes account of the scale of The Cottage and the nature and variety of neighbouring single and two storey properties.

2.9 Planning and conservation officers agreed that two storey dwellings would be the most appropriate, with first floors contained within the roof space. This takes account of the sloping nature of the site, the potential prominence of the buildings in the landscape.

2.10 The scale and bulk of all dwellings is minimized by the use of the roof space accommodation, hipped roof line and dormer windows. It is not considered that the dwellings will appear dominant in relation to The Cottage or the Conservation Area as a whole.

Amount of development

2.11 The development of four dwellings and the retention of The Cottage equates to a density of 10.6 dwellings/hectare. This is lower than that generally sought by current national and local planning policy guidance but takes into account the physical constraints of the site and the Conservation Area context.

2.12 Each dwelling will have floor space in the region of 150sqm

2.13 The addition of four dwellings on this site is considered achievable and appropriate, without detriment to the character of the area or residential amenity considerations.

2.14 Parking and amenity space standards are met for each property.

Layout

2.15 The main access to the site broadly follows the line of the existing driveway that serves The Cottage and the area in the vicinity of the swimming pool. Assuming that the existing consent for a dwelling to the front of the site is implemented, access will be immediately obtainable from this driveway.

2.16 A gap of 1-6m is maintained between the driveway and the side and rear boundary of The Firs, to ensure both the retention of all existing boundary hedging and space for

supplementary planting. This will help ensure that any noise and disturbance from the use of the dwellings to the rear of the site that will use this driveway, is minimised.

2.17 The existing driveway to the north of Haradwaith will be retained to serve Plots 1 and 2, as was intended by the detailed consent for a dwelling in this location.

2.18 All dwellings are sited to take account of the lie of the land and the proximity of all retained trees. All meet the recommendations given by Patrick Stileman in the previously submitted tree survey report to ensure the long term health of trees during and post construction.

2.19 The internal layout and window directions in all dwellings will ensure good living conditions for residents, without adverse impact on privacy or other amenity considerations.

2.20 The siting of all dwellings minimises bulk and prominence and maintains the open character of this part of the Conservation Area.

Plots 1 and 2

2.21 Dwellings 1 and 2 are in the northern corner of the site which has been levelled in the past in order to build the tennis court. The tennis court will be excavated bringing levels back to the level of the drive at the front. A landscaped bank at the eastern boundary will replicate, on a smaller scale, the current treatment at the rear of The Cottage. This will allow the new dwellings to be set at a similar level to The Cottage but set further back within the site so that they do remain subordinate.

2.22 Dwelling 1 has three bedrooms with accommodation totalling 168sqm. Dwelling 2 has two bedrooms and 135sqm of floor space. Dwelling 1 has a west-east orientation and in Dwelling 2 principal habitable rooms face east and south. Both dwellings have layouts that will be attractive and functional for future residents. Flat patio areas immediately to the rear of each dwelling will then give rise to gently sloping main rear garden area.

2.23 The dwellings are sited to give adequate clearance from trees lining the site on the northern boundary. The rear garden areas are 14m and 19m in length, which meets Council standards to maintain privacy. In any event, these plots back onto the 40m long rear garden areas of Applegarth and Berkeley House, which front Common Road. A substantial hedge on top of a steep embankment provides natural screening between properties and there is therefore no issue of overlooking in this respect.

2.24 The front facades of the proposed dwellings face the rear garden area of Haradwaith and there is a hedge and tree screening between the two properties. There are no windows in dwelling 2 facing this direction and those in dwelling 1 are at a distance of no more than 37m. This is well over the Councils standard length to maintain privacy and more than compensates for the higher level of the new dwelling. Advantages over the previous

application are also that the buildings are set lower into the site thus reducing potential dominance and overlooking in relation to Haradwaith.

2.25 There will be a gap of nearly 12m between plots 1 and 2 and The Cottage, maintaining space around this latter building. This is considerably in excess of that sought by the council standards and respects the spacious character of this Conservation Area location. The distances between dwellings will ensure no significant loss of sun or daylight.

The Cottage

2.26 No change is proposed to The Cottage and a large private garden area will be maintained around the building. The new proposed garage adjacent to the dwelling will be constructed in a design and using materials that reflect the appearance of The Cottage.

Plots 3 and 4

2.27 Dwellings 3 and 4 occupy the southern corner of the site, with access following a similar line to the existing drive. The linked dwellings are centrally sited but in common with Dwellings 1 and 2, are set back slightly from the building line of The Cottage, remaining subordinate. A gap of more than 15m is provided between Dwelling 3 and The Cottage, maintaining the spacious character of both this property and the Conservation Area

2.28 Both dwellings have three bedrooms. Dwelling 3 is 164 sq m in size. Dwelling 2 has 165 sq m of floor space. Both layouts offer functional and attractive floor space for prospective residents.

2.29 Both dwellings have principal rooms predominantly facing west and east. Dwelling 3 has no habitable room floor windows facing towards The Cottage. Dense tree screening separates the site from the rear of properties facing Homefield Road and there is a distance of more than 37m between any facing window.

2.30 Dwelling 4 has no first floor windows facing either properties in Colleyland of Homefield Road.

2.31 With the removal of the swimming pool, the man made bank will be removed and the dwellings will be set closer in level to The Cottage. As with Plots 1 and 2, a landscaped bank at the eastern boundary will replicate, on a smaller scale, the current treatment at the rear of The Cottage. Set back within the site, the proposed dwellings will appear subordinate and not dominant in relation to The Cottage.

2.32 Private Patio areas for both properties lead to gently sloping garden areas in excess of 17m in length. The dwellings are sited to ensure that all principal trees are retained, giving screening and adding to privacy on all sides. The distances between all dwellings will ensure no significant loss of sun or daylight.

Landscaping

2.33 The previously submitted Arboricultural Implication Assessment by Patrick Stileman identifies trees proposed for removal. The majority are dead or in a very poor condition or position. Patrick Stileman considers that those required for removal to facilitate the scheme can be justified given the low numbers of trees removed and their relatively poor quality or value and this was supported in the Councils consideration of the previously refused scheme. The housing design and siting takes account of all significant trees of good quality, which are retained and will be protected. On completion of the development, the site will retain its existing appearance of a green and well landscaped plot.

2.34 All garden areas and communal land around the access will be fully landscaped, in accordance with a plan that can be agreed with the Council by condition.

2.35 The materials used for all hard surfaced areas will be as agreed with the Council. These will define public and private areas, road surfacing and footpaths.

2.36 The garden areas to all plots will be edged with 1.8 m high close boarded fencing. Full details of boundary treatments can be governed by condition if necessary.

Appearance

2.37 The design of all dwellings has taken into account the features of The Cottage that are particularly attractive such as large sloping roofs and dormer windows at first floor level. The character of the dwellings is reminiscent of many other Arts and Crafts style dwellings in the Conservation Area.

2.38 The dwellings will be constructed of Chesham Multi bricks produced locally, from Bovingdon Brickworks, with plain clay tile roofs. Casement windows will be timber. The full detail of materials can be agreed in consultation with the Council.

2.39 The dwellings will be constructed adopting a high level of insulation, with efficient boilers. They will be designed to achieve a higher SAP rating than would be required under Building Regulations.

2.40 The development will be designed to include grey water storage for each dwelling.

Impact on the Conservation Area

2.41 Throughout this report, reference is made to the impact of the proposed development on the Conservation Area. A single dwelling on this site in the form of The Cottage is an underutilisation of "brownfield" land in an important, central and built-up location. This has been recognised by the Council in granting consents for development throughout the site.

2.42 This current proposal represents a comprehensive approach to the development of this site that will both enhance and preserve the character of the Conservation Area. It proposes a pattern and density of development that is appropriate in the context of the site itself and the surrounding area. This is evident from a consideration of the submitted location plan, superimposed with the scheme proposal.

2.43 The dwellings are well designed and will be attractively viewed from both within and beyond the site.

2.44 The point design and design of new access from Homefield Road to Orchard Drive addresses highway safety considerations but is also locate with regard to impact on trees and the belt of land currently separating the two roads. The western perimeter of this belt of land marks the edge of the Conservation Area.

2.45 The design of the closed access at the western end of Homefield Road will be as agreed with the Council. It is not considered that the proposal will have an adverse impact on the Conservation Area in this regard. Indeed, the provision of a new and safe access presents a substantial benefit, adding further justification for the proposal in terms of impact on the Conservation Area.

2.46 In all respects, it is considered that the Conservation Area's character will be preserved by the proposed development in a way that accords with the Local Plan policies C1 and C16 and national planning guidance given PPG15

3.0 Access

Homefield Road access

3.1 The previously submitted report by ADL Traffic Engineering Ltd explains the problems associated with the existing junction at the end of Homefield Road and the merits for its closure in highway terms. In essence, the complicated junction arrangement offers sub-standard and dangerous traffic movements for vehicles both entering and leaving Homefield Road. Sightline visibility standards are not met and are severely restricted.

The access has been approved under planning permission 08/1963/FUL

Parking

3.2 The proposed parking arrangements are in full compliance with Council policy. The new access proposal does not affect existing on-street parking opportunities.

3.3 Whilst disabled provision is not essential, spaces to the front of the dwellings will be designed to meet this standard. The size and configuration of all spaces and turning areas allows for safe and convenient access.

Public transport

3.4 The site is well located in terms of public transport links, situated within walking distance of Chorleywood railway station and bus stops within the village centre.

Access for all

3.5 The development will meet all Building Regulation requirements. Entrances and internal circulation will allow access to all with suitable door sizes, level thresholds and appropriate sanitary facilities. The external surfaces within the site will be level.

3.6 Open front gardens and fenced rear garden areas will maximise security. All dwellings will have windows and doors fitted with anti-theft locks.

3.7 It is considered that the proposal meets the terms of Local Plan Policy T7 in providing safe vehicular movements and indeed the rearranged access has considerable benefits. In all other respects it is considered that the proposal complies with transport and movement policies of the Local Plan.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 The proposal represents a comprehensive approach to redevelopment within the site of The Cottage that addresses all the reasons for refusal in connection with the previously refused scheme.

4.2 The Cottage is retained. Neighbouring proposed dwellings are sited to respect the setting of The Cottage and are designed in accordance with its appearance

4.3 The proposed closure of Homefield Road and new access onto Orchard Drive will facilitate the safe manoeuvring of all vehicular and pedestrian traffic to the considerable benefit of the area.

4.4 The proposed dwellings will increase housing availability in a sustainable, urban location. They are well designed with minimal impact in terms of residential amenity considerations.

4.5 The proposal will be appropriate in the street scene and preserve and enhance the character of the Conservation Area.

4.6 The proposal meets the terms of all relevant local and national planning policies.