

Standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside

Ms Eilis Edmonds
Development Management
East Herts District Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford
SG13 8EQ

Our Ref:

Your Ref:

2nd October 2019 (by email)

Dear Ms Edmonds,

Application No. 3/19/1900/FUL

The demolition of existing dwelling, Construction of replacement 3 storey dwelling with basement and adjoining car port, Incorporating 2 dormer windows, a basement skylight, first floor terrace, 4 parking spaces and extension of the existing residential curtilage At Spinney View, Duck Street, Little Hornead, Buntingford, Hertfordshire SG9 0LS

The address included in the description of the application on the Council's website is incorrect. This proposal is for development in 'Duck Street' not 'The Street', hence our amendment above.

Little Hornead is classed as a Group 3 Village in the East Herts District Plan and, as such, this application must be considered against Policy VILL3. As development in the Rural Area Beyond The Green Belt, it must also be considered against Policy GB2.

The proposal is for the replacement of an existing dwelling house with another. Policy VILL3 does not make allowance for this circumstance. Policy GB2, however, is specific. Section (d) states that approval will be given for the replacement, extension or alteration of a building, *"provided the size, scale, mass, form, siting, design and materials of construction are appropriate to the character, appearance and setting of the site and/or surrounding areas"*.

The existing building is a two-storey, 3-bed house with a footprint of 80 sq.m. The proposed building is a three-storey, 4-bed house with a footprint of 142 sq.m., an increase of 77%. Similarly the volume increases by 89%. Consequently the size, scale and mass of the proposed building are substantially greater than the existing and will consequently impact on the setting of the site and the surrounding countryside.

In the applicant's view (para. 8.2.7 of the Planning Statement) the *"proposal improves the efficiency of the use of the land through the creation of a larger dwelling."* We do not follow the logic of this statement. The site currently contains one residential dwelling. Following redevelopment it will still contain one residential dwelling. This is not *"better"*

utilisation of the plot” as the applicant claims at para. 5.5., it is merely providing a bigger building. Nor do we follow the logic in para. 8.1.1 that increasing the size of the building will “*support its classification as residential property that is currently let on the open market and the social benefits this subsequently offers.*” The existing property is let on the open market and presumably provides the same social benefits.

The Applicant presents two justifications for redevelopment on the site:

The first is that as the property is let, from April 2020 it has to comply with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards, which the applicant says that it does not (para. 5.2). There is no evidence presented to support this statement, or to demonstrate that the building cannot be economically brought up to the required standard. The Council should satisfy itself on this point before determining the application. Furthermore, if the proposal is to give full regard to energy efficiency, the most sustainable course would be to retain the embodied energy of the existing dwelling and to retrofit energy efficiencies.

The second is the repeated statement that “*the existing dwelling is unsightly and is not in keeping with the character of the local area.*” (para. 5.6 et. al.) and that “*creating a more aesthetically pleasing dwelling will have a lesser impact on the local environment compared with the current dwelling.*” (This latter point is somewhat contradicted by the comment in para. 5.8 that “*the aesthetic and visual impact of the development will be mitigated through the layout of the site and proposed landscaping.*”.)

The matter of aesthetics has no bearing on the planning merits of the application. The buildings in Little Hornead are of a wide variety of styles. Some are rendered and painted white. Others are timber clad and painted black. Some, like Spinney View and its immediate neighbour are of brick construction. The existing building sits comfortably in its setting and is no more offensive than any other in the village. In our view it is not true to say, as the applicant does at para. 5.6 that if submitted today Spinney View “*would be refused based on design and impact on the character of the local area.*”

We urge the Council to refuse this application.

Yours sincerely,

David Irving