

**4/01492/13/FHA - GARAGE CONVERSION, NEW ROOF COVERING TO RAISED  
FLAT ROOF AND EXISTING DORMER. LANDSCAPING TO DRIVEWAY.  
3 PRIORY GARDENS, BERKHAMSTED, HP4 2DR.  
APPLICANT: MR R FARQUHAR.**

---

[Case Officer - Luke Robertson]

[Grid Ref - SP 99277 07610]

### **Summary**

The application is recommended for approval.

The proposal is consistent with Policy CS4 and CS12 of the Dacorum Core Strategy (September 2013) and saved Policy 58, Appendix 5 and area-based policy BCA9 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011. A number of aspects of the proposal could be considered permitted development under Class A and C of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended). There will not be any significant adverse effects on the appearance of the building, the street scene or the amenity of neighbours and parking will be sufficient.

### **Site Description**

The application site is located within the residential area of Berkhamsted close to the Conservation Area boundary but not within this designated area. The dwelling is the third in a line of 8 similar designed 'A' frame appearance dwellings constructed in the 1970s with eaves lines that finish at ground level, giving a unique appearance. The prominent design feature of each of these dwellings are the sloping roofs and projecting dormer windows at first storey level. The original properties all had single storey flat roof projecting garages and small pitched roof external stores attached to the front, but many of these have been converted to habitable accommodation over the years. Changes have also been made to the external cladding of at least one of the dwellings. These two issues have detracted from the group value of the terraces.

The subject dwelling has not had any obvious improvements since its construction. There is a long and narrow rear garden and small front garden, mainly occupied by a sloping driveway which provides access to the garage and allows parking space for one vehicle.

### **Proposal**

The applicant is proposing:

- a.) The conversion of the garage into a habitable room. The roof of the garage will be raised by approximately 500mm and a flat, raised, openable skylight inserted to allow additional light. Windows will also be added to the front and side elevations of the garage and the existing brickwork will be rendered in white.
- b.) A new roof covering is proposed for the existing dormer and raised garage roof;
- c.) The enclosure of the porch area in line with the overhanging dormer window; and
- d.) The landscaping of the driveway to improve vehicular access. A car parking pad would be provided on the driveway at a 1 in 10 slope, with a separate footpath to the front door from the road.

### **Referral to Committee**

The application is referred to the Development Control Committee due to the contrary views of Berkhamsted Town Council.

## **Planning History**

There is a history of similar garage conversions and alterations to the front of dwellings within this part of Priory Gardens. Dwellings at 1, 4, 5, 6 and 8 Priory Gardens have converted garages into habitable rooms and a number of these dwellings have also raised the roof height of the garage. Changes have also been made to the cladding of the dormer at 8 Priory Gardens and the dormer window finishes at 5 and 8 Priory Gardens. Details of relevant planning permissions are as follows:

4/00842/04/FHA – First floor extension over garage and conservatory to rear (8 Priory Gardens) – Grant  
4/01835/09/FHA – Conversion of existing bin store to utility room, extension of existing porch and construction of external store (8 Priory Gardens) – Grant  
4/01959/10/FHA – Single storey front infill extension with covered walk, roof light, and cladding of front dormer and existing extension (5 Priory Gardens) – Grant  
4/00468/11/FHA – Conversion of garage to habitable accommodation, single storey front infill extension and alterations (7 Priory Gardens) – Grant

## **Policies**

### National Policy Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework 2012

### Dacorum Core Strategy (September 2013)

Policies CS1, CS4 and CS12

### Saved Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011

Policy 58  
Appendix 5

### Saved Supplementary Planning Guidance

Residential Character Area [ BCA 9 : Priory Gardens ]  
Water Conservation & Sustainable Drainage  
Accessibility Zones for the Application of Parking Standards

## **Representations**

### Berkhamsted Town Council

Berkhamsted Town Council objected to the application. They stated that the proposed design and use of a rendered finish was out of character in the row of 8 terraced houses, was not keeping with the street scene and was contrary to the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011.

### Trees and Woodlands

Trees & Woodlands have identified the loss of approximately 3 front garden trees. Whilst pleasant in the street scene, these trees are only of cosmetic value and not sufficient to prevent this proposal. Whilst the planted landscape area appears small, most residents have a vested interest in making their front gardens look good. No objection.

#### Archaeology

The County Archaeologist has advised that works of this nature are unlikely to have an effect on items of archaeological significance and as such offered no objection.

#### 4 Priory Gardens - Supports:

- The proposal is in keeping with the rest of the street;
- The proposal will enhance the view of the property.

### **Considerations**

#### Policy and Principle

Policy CS4 of the Dacorum Core Strategy (September 2013) states that appropriate residential development should be encouraged in towns and large villages such as Berkhamsted. Policy CS12 helps define what development is appropriate, stating that development should provide safe access, sufficient parking, avoid visual intrusion, loss of privacy and loss of light to surrounding properties, retain important trees and integrate with the streetscape character. In this final respect, the development should respect adjoining properties in terms of layout, site coverage, scale, height, bulk, materials, landscaping and amenity space. With regards to parking, saved Policy 58 of and Appendix 5 to the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011 continue to be relevant.

The relevant area based policy, BCA9 - Priory Gardens, states that any development shall maintain the defined character and that extensions should be subordinate in scale and height to the parent building, as well as using architectural features, themes, styles, colours and materials from the parent building within the extensions.

It is worth noting that a number of aspects of the development could be completed under existing permitted development provisions. The garage could be converted to a habitable room and painted with a white render, however the roof height could not be raised. New roof coverings could also be applied to the dormer and garage. These works would fall under Class A and C of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 (as amended) as the materials used in the exterior work will be of a similar appearance to those used in the construction of the exterior of the dwelling. It should also be noted that the painting of an existing building is permitted development.

#### Effects on appearance of building

The primary impacts on the appearance of the property will be associated with the increase in garage roof height, white render proposed for the garage and the enclosure of the porch area. The porch enclosure will not be immediately obvious from the street and will not look out of place in relation to the existing building. A small increase in the height of the garage will not affect the appearance of the building and

the addition of a rooflight, as demonstrated by a number of other dwellings in the street where this has occurred. The white render will have the most visual impact, as only a small aspect of the existing building, the side dormer walls, are painted white. It should be noted that a number of other properties in the terrace have raised the height of the garage roof.

The applicant has however expressed concerns about the poor quality of existing materials and resultant difficulties in finding matching bricks to match. Given the existing white colour of the dormer side walls, it is felt that the white render will link in with the existing dwelling and will not result in significant adverse effects on the appearance of the building or the terrace as a whole.

### Effects on the Street Scene

When considering the impact of the development on the street scene, it is worth considering changes that have occurred to front elevations in this group of terraces. BCA9 states that any development shall maintain the defined character and Policy CS12 states that development should integrate with the streetscape character. In this case, the defined character has been eroded by changes made to the front elevation of properties, including timber cladding and an extension at 8 Priory Gardens, and white render on the front wall of the former garage at 1 Priory Gardens. The height of a number of garages have also been raised to create more headroom for their use as habitable rooms and a number of different coloured garage doors have been installed along the street.

Given the changes already made to front elevations, it can be argued that the white render proposed on the garage, the increase in garage height and the enclosure of the porch area in line with the existing dormer window will not result in significant adverse effects on the streetscape character. The white render will be consistent with the white highlights within the dormers of the terraced dwellings. The existing character will be maintained after the work is complete consistent with both BCA9 and Policy CS12.

### Effects on Trees and Landscaping

Trees & Woodlands have identified the loss of approximately 3 small trees in the front garden, however, they consider that these are only of cosmetic value and do not warrant protection. A small front garden will remain with turfed areas alongside the footpath and in front of the car parking pad. There will be no significant adverse effects on trees and landscaping as a result of the proposal.

### Effects on the amenity of neighbours

The development will not result in any significant adverse effects on the amenity of neighbours. Development is proposed to the front of the property only and the only potential impact is likely to result from the increase in the height of the garage. This height increase of 500mm will not however result in any loss of light to the property at 4 Priory Gardens, as the front door is set back approximately 1.5 metres from the edge of the garage.

### Sustainability

The applicant has included drains at the bottom of the car parking pad and between the house, lawn and footpath. A strip of lawn is proposed alongside the footpath to provide a natural drainage area, and varying slopes will allow runoff from the car parking pad and footpath to reach this area.

### Parking

The conversion of the garage and shortening of the driveway will result in the loss of approximately 1.5 car parking spaces. The useability of these car parking spaces has been challenged by the applicant, who has had access problems during winter conditions. This would improve with the gradient changes proposed. One car parking space will remain however, and this is consistent with the maximum car parking standards for Residential Zone 2 in Appendix 5 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan which identifies a maximum of 1.5 car parking spaces as being suitable for 3 bedroom dwellings. Off-street parking is available to provide for any overflow parking when necessary.

**RECOMMENDATION** - That planning permission be **GRANTED** for the reasons referred to above and subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:**

Design and Access Statement  
PRI1 - Site Location Plan  
PRI2 - Site Plan  
PRI3 - Ground Floor Existing  
PRI4 - Ground Floor Proposed  
PRI5 - Ground Floor Existing  
PRI6 - Ground Floor Proposed  
PRI7 - Ground Floor Existing (Photographic representation)  
PRI8 - Ground Floor Proposed (Photographic representation)  
PRI9 - Exterior Elevation Existing  
PRI10 - Exterior Elevation Proposed

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.**

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 (1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 3 The development hereby permitted shall be constructed in accordance with the materials specified on the approved drawings or such other materials as may be agreed in writing by the local planning authority.**

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development and in

accordance with Policy CS12 of the Dacorum Core Strategy (September 2013) and area based policy BCA9 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991-2011.

Note:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2012