

ITEM NUMBER: 5f

23/02025/FUL	Alterations including front and rear extensions to provide enhanced community facilities to the existing building	
Site Address:	Community Centre Great Sturgess Road Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire	
Applicant/Agent:	Mr Kevin Clinton	Mr John Soper
Case Officer:	Heather Edey	
Parish/Ward:		Chaulden And Warners End
Referral to Committee:	DBC Scheme with Neighbour Objections	

1. RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be GRANTED.

2. SUMMARY

2.1 The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in principle, according with Policies CS1, CS4 and CS23 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (2013).

2.2 Whilst the proposed additions would significantly alter the visual appearance of the existing building, it is felt that the extensions would comprise a subordinate appearance, integrating with the character and appearance of the site and wider streetscene. Furthermore, given the nature, scale, height and bulk of the additions, and noting the relationship between the development and neighbouring properties, it is not considered that the resultant building would appear visually overbearing or that it would result in a significant loss of light or privacy to neighbouring properties.

2.3 The proposal is also considered to be acceptable on highway/pedestrian safety grounds, having no adverse impacts on the safety and operation of the existing highway network. Whilst generating a shortfall of off-street car parking, the site is noted to be within a highly accessible and sustainable location, served by on-street parking. Given all of the above, the proposal complies with the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), Policies CS1, CS4, CS8, CS11, CS12, CS23 and CS29 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (2013), Saved Policy 51 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan (2004), Saved Appendices 3 of the Local Plan (2004) and the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (2020).

3. SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 The application site comprises a single storey detached building, situated off Great Sturgess Road within an urban area of Hemel Hempstead. The existing building comprises a gable end roof finished in dark brown roof tiles, and a modest front flat roofed canopy, with walls externally finished in yellow facing brickwork, comprising brown stained timber windows and doors with associated orange brick detailing.

3.2 The building serves as a community centre and is used in close connection with the Dacorum Borough Council dispersed Supported Housing scheme at Varney Road, comprising a communal lounge/common room, kitchen and toilets.

4. PROPOSAL*Previous History*

4.1 Planning permission was previously granted under application 4/00299/19/FUL for the construction of single storey front and rear extensions to the existing building to provide laundry

facilities, a new wardens office and a new social space to be used in connection with the existing dispersed Supported Housing scheme at Varney Road. This permission was however never implemented and has now expired.

Current Proposal

4.2 The current application seeks to reinstate planning permission for the above works. The submitted application form indicates that the new extensions would be constructed in materials to match the main building.

4.3 The proposed new front extension would measure approximately 5.4m deep x 7.6m wide, comprising a matching gable end roof with a maximum height of 4.7m. The proposed single storey rear extension would measure approximately 3.9m deep x 7.5m wide, comprising a flat roof with a maximum height of 3.1m.

5. PLANNING HISTORY

Planning Applications

4/00299/19/FUL - Single storey extensions
GRANTED - 20th May 2019

6. CONSTRAINTS

CIL Zone: CIL3

Parish: Hemel Hempstead Non-Parish

RAF Halton and Chenies Zone: Green (15.2m)

Residential Area (Town/Village): Residential Area in Town Village (Hemel Hempstead)

Residential Character Area: HCA3

Smoke Control Order

Parking Standards: New Zone 3

Town: Hemel Hempstead

7. REPRESENTATIONS

Consultation responses

7.1 These are reproduced in full at Appendix A.

Neighbour notification/site notice responses

7.2 These are reproduced in full at Appendix B.

8. PLANNING POLICIES

Main Documents:

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

Dacorum Borough Core Strategy 2006-2031 (adopted September 2013)

Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1999-2011 (adopted April 2004)

Relevant Policies:

NP1 - Supporting Development

CS1 - Distribution of Development

CS4 - The Towns and Large Villages
CS10 - Quality of Settlement Design
CS11 - Quality of Neighbourhood Design
CS12 - Quality of Site Design
CS23 – Social Infrastructure
CS29 - Sustainable Design and Construction

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents:

Site Layout and Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice (2022)
Accessibility Zones for the Application of Car Parking Standards (2020)
Planning Obligations (2011)
Roads in Hertfordshire, Highway Design Guide 3rd Edition (2011)

9. CONSIDERATIONS

Main Issues

9.1 The main issues to consider are:

The policy and principle justification for the proposal;
The quality of design and impact on visual amenity;
The impact on residential amenity; and
The impact on highway safety and car parking.

Principle of Development

Policy

9.2 The site falls within an urban area of Hemel Hempstead wherein Policies CS1 and CS4 are relevant. Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy (2013) states that Hemel Hempstead will be the focus for homes, jobs and strategic services, with the emphasis upon retaining the separate identity of the town, noting that new development should support relevant town-wide needs. Furthermore, Policy CS4 of the Core Strategy (2013) states that non-residential development for small-scale social, community, leisure and business purposes are also encouraged, provided the works are compatible with their surroundings.

9.3 Policy CS23 of the Core Strategy (2013) provides specific guidance for social infrastructure, noting that social infrastructure providing services and facilities to the community will be encouraged.

Assessment

9.4 The application proposes the construction of single storey front and rear extensions to an existing community centre to facilitate the creation of laundry facilities, a new wardens office and a new social space to be used in connection with the existing dispersed Supported Housing scheme at Varney Road. Given that new development and social infrastructure are encouraged in urban areas of Hemel Hempstead, the proposal is acceptable in principle, according with Policies CS1, CS4 and CS23 of the Core Strategy (2013).

Quality of Design / Impact on Visual Amenity

Policy

9.5 The NPPF (2023) states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that new development should be sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting. Policies CS11 and CS12 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (2013) seek to ensure that new development respects adjoining properties in terms of layout, scale, height, bulk and materials.

Assessment

9.6 The application seeks permission for the construction of single storey front and rear extensions.

9.7 The proposed single storey front extension would measure approximately 5.4m deep x 7.6m wide x 4.7m high, comprising a gable end roof form to match that of the main house. Whilst projecting deeper than the front elevation of the existing build line of properties sited along Great Sturgess Road, given the siting of the building, (i.e. sited at the end of a row of properties, significantly set back from the highway behind an existing area of amenity land), and its modest height/scale, it is not considered that this addition would appear overtly prominent in this context.

9.8 Whilst sited to the rear of the building, the new rear extension would be visible from public vantage points from public footpaths extending to the side and rear of the site. Whilst comprising a flat roof, the proposed addition would comprise a maximum height of approximately 3.1m, and would be set significantly down from the height of the existing roof. In light of this, and noting that the addition would be predominantly screened from view by way of the boundary fencing extending around the site, it is not considered that the addition would dominate the main house or wider streetscene.

9.9 With respect to materials, the submitted application form and plans indicate that the new extensions would be externally finished in materials to match the main building, replicating the brick detailing of the main building. The proposed material finishes are therefore considered to be acceptable, enabling the proposed additions to integrate with the original design, character and appearance of the main building.

9.10 Given everything above, the proposal is considered to be acceptable on design/visual amenity grounds, according with Policies CS11 and CS12 of the Core Strategy (2013) and the NPPF (2023).

Impact on Residential Amenity

Policy

9.11 The NPPF (2023) outlines the importance of planning in securing good standards of amenity for existing and future occupiers of land and buildings. Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy (2013) states that new development should avoid visual intrusion, loss of sunlight and daylight, loss of privacy and disturbance to properties in the surrounding area. Furthermore, Saved Appendix 3 of the Local Plan (2004) states that residential development should be designed and positioned to maintain a satisfactory level of sunlight and daylight for existing and proposed dwellings.

Assessment

9.12 The application site is sited within close proximity of a number of residential properties, including 16-20 Great Sturgess Road, 1, 2 and 2A The Hollies Farm Cottages and 398, 400, 402 and 404 Long Chaulden.

9.13 Given its modest scale, height and siting, and noting the separation distances retained between the front extension and neighbouring properties, it is not considered that this addition would appear visually overbearing or that it would result in a significant loss of light to neighbouring properties.

9.14 Whilst comprising a new ground floor side window facing towards neighbouring properties 402 and 404, a separation distance of approximately 8m would be retained between this opening and these neighbouring properties. Taking this into account and noting that boundary fencing would be retained between the two buildings, it is not considered that any harmful overlooking of these properties would be facilitated by the development.

9.15 Whilst visible from public vantage points, the proposed rear extension would be predominantly screened from view by way of its siting behind solid boundary fencing extending around the site. In light of this and noting that separation distances of over 15m would be retained between this addition and neighbouring properties, it is not considered that the development would appear visually intrusive or that it would result in a significant loss of light to these properties.

9.16 A significant degree of mutual overlooking is already in existence between the site and neighbouring properties, with the rear of the site and existing public footpaths facilitating views of the openings of existing properties, (in particular, properties 16-20 Great Sturgess Road, 1, 2 and 2A The Hollies Farm Cottages). Whilst comprising new side facing windows and large rear patio doors, it is not considered that these openings would worsen the existing situation, with views obtained from these openings being similar to those currently achieved from standing in the garden area to the rear of the building.

9.17 In terms of noise, it is noted that the proposed extensions would support the existing use of the building, providing additional community facilities. Whilst it is acknowledged that the works would be likely to increase the use of the existing community centre, given the nature of the works and the nature of the use of the building, it is not considered that harmful levels of significant noise would be generated by the development. The Dacorum Borough Environmental Health Team have been consulted as part of the application and have also deemed the proposal acceptable on these grounds.

Impact on Highway Safety and Parking

Policy

9.18 The NPPF (2023), Saved Policy 51 of the Local Plan (2004), Policies CS8 and CS12 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (2013), and the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (2020) all seek to ensure that new development provides safe and sufficient parking provision for current and future occupiers.

Assessment

9.19 The application does not propose any changes to the existing site access or public highway. In light of this and noting that the proposal would not by nature, significantly intensity vehicle movements, it is not considered that the proposal would have any adverse impacts on highway or pedestrian safety grounds.

9.20 The existing community centre is not served by any off-street parking spaces. Given that the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (2020) state that community centres in this location should provide one off-street car parking space for every 9m² of gross external area and an additional space for every full-time staff member, it is concluded that a shortfall of approximately 8 spaces are generated by the development.

9.21 Paragraph 6.10 of the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (2020) states that changes to the Council's parking standards may be appropriate or required wherein the nature, type and location of the development proposed is likely to make this acceptable, (e.g. the re-use of previously developed land/buildings with low parking provision in highly accessible areas with acceptable on-street conditions).

9.22 The site falls within a highly sustainable location and is notably within close proximity of a number of local facilities, (i.e. including the Stoneycroft shops), and is served by public transport links, (i.e. local buses). Whilst not formally served by any off-street car parking spaces, unallocated parking bays are available to the front of the site, and on-street parking is available along Great Sturgess Road.

9.23 In light of everything above and taking into account the nature and scale of the works, (i.e. noting that the new extensions would support the existing use of the site), it is considered that sufficient parking would be retained for the site.

9.24 The proposal is therefore acceptable on highway/pedestrian safety and parking grounds, according with Saved Policy 51 of the Local Plan (2004), Policies CS8 and CS12 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (2013), and the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (2020) and the NPPF (2023).

Other Material Planning Considerations

Impact on Trees and Landscaping

9.25 Saved Policies 99 and 100 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan (2004), Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy (2013) and NPPF (2023) all seek to ensure that trees are retained and protected, and that suitable replacement trees are planted in instances where trees are proposed for removal.

9.26 Whilst the submitted plans indicate that the proposed single storey front extension would be constructed in close proximity to an existing tree, having visited the site, it is evident that this tree is no longer in situ. Taking this into account and noting that no trees would be removed to facilitate construction of the development, it is not considered that the proposal would have any adverse impacts on existing trees.

Response to Neighbour Comments

9.27 Two neighbours have raised objection to the development, raising concerns that the development will have an adverse impact on the residential amenity of their properties, in terms of generating harmful levels of noise and facilitating harmful overlooking. These concerns have been considered and addressed during earlier sections of the report.

9.28 Concerns have also been raised with respect to the potential adverse impacts that construction works will have on neighbouring properties. Given that this is not a material planning consideration, these concerns cannot be considered as part of a formal assessment of the application.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

9.29 Policy CS35 requires all developments to make appropriate contributions towards infrastructure required to support the development. These contributions will normally extend only to the payment of CIL where applicable. The Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was adopted in February 2015 and came into force on 1st July 2015. The application is not CIL liable.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in principle, according with Policies CS1, CS4 and CS23 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (2013).

10.2 Whilst the proposed additions would significantly alter the visual appearance of the existing building, it is felt that the extensions would comprise a subordinate appearance, integrating with the

character and appearance of the site and wider streetscene. Furthermore, given the nature, scale, height and bulk of the additions, and noting the relationship between the development and neighbouring properties, it is not considered that the resultant building would appear visually overbearing or that it would result in a significant loss of light or privacy to neighbouring properties.

10.3 The proposal is also considered to be acceptable on highway/pedestrian safety grounds, having no adverse impacts on the safety and operation of the existing highway network. Whilst generating a shortfall of off-street car parking, the site is noted to be within a highly accessible and sustainable location, served by on-street parking. Given all of the above, the proposal complies with the National Planning Policy Framework (2023), Policies CS1, CS4, CS8, CS11, CS12, CS23 and CS29 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (2013), Saved Policy 51 of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan (2004), Saved Appendices 3 of the Local Plan (2004) and the Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (2020).

11. RECOMMENDATION

11.1 It is recommended that the application be GRANTED.

Condition(s) and Reason(s):

1. **The development hereby permitted shall begin 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.

2. **The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match the existing building in terms of size, colour and texture.**

Reason: To make sure that the appearance of the building is suitable and that it contributes to the character of the area in accordance with Policies CS11 and CS12 of the Dacorum Borough Core Strategy (2013).

3. **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans/documents:**

**8442/GS/CH/020 Rev A
8442/PD/DA/005**

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

Informatives:

1. 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 (paragraph 38) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2015.

APPENDIX A: CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Consultee	Comments
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APPENDIX B: NEIGHBOUR RESPONSES

Number of Neighbour Comments

Neighbour Consultations	Contributors	Neutral	Objections	Support
17	2	0	2	0

Neighbour Responses

Address	Comments
<p>1 The Hollies Farm Cottages Long Chaulden Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP1 2NU</p>	<p>I would like to make it clear to the planning committee that I strongly object to these proposals.</p> <p>To begin with, to see that the Community Centre is planning to develop the property on a grand scale indicates to me that they would be looking to use the Centre for a lot more events and activities in the near future. The noise pollution from this would greatly affect myself and all of my neighbours whose properties face onto the rear of the Centre.</p> <p>We all find that the noise pollution is an issue already, this is with the Centre in it's current format. So, to bring the rear of the building closer to us via the extension to the Common Room area (as planned) would make this matter far worse. We can already hear chatter and conversations very clearly when the doors to the Common Room are left open or when the users of the Centre are outside. So, to think that the reason for the extension is to increase the use of the Centre in a noticeable and regular way would therefore only increase the noise pollution even more.</p> <p>The next big issue for me is the issue of a loss of privacy. My property has large open glass windows on the front which is where many rooms, including my bedroom and bathroom are situated. To see that the Centre is planning on having large amounts of glass installed to the rear of the property, facing towards the front part of my house is causing me major concern.</p> <p>The Common Room part of the Centre will be where the users of the Centre will be sitting for a large part of the day, facing towards rooms which are in constant use by myself. The thought of strangers staring at me while sitting in a building which resides on a higher level to mine already, through my front facing windows (making me extremely visible to them) is causing me great anxiety and worry. Already exacerbating my existing health problems.</p> <p>This issue is not a new issue for me to have discussed with the council, as in 2016 a planning application was raised for the front of my property to house a car-park for a new residential development. This car-park would have faced directly towards my front door. This application was ultimately rejected by the planning committee on the grounds of privacy. I feel a real sense of Déjà vu regarding this latest proposal by</p>

	<p>the community centre, as it would be affecting me in my residency in a very similar way.</p> <p>Finally, my final objection to this planning application relates more broadly to the development situation surrounding the entire area. Less than five years ago, I was living with my mother as her carer in our cottage which had been a family residence for roughly 70 years. Since then, we have seen a large high-rise flat complex built a stones throw away from my front door, as well as having my neighbouring property become 2 residencies instead of the 1 that it originally was. This has had a huge affect on not just my health, but also on the last few years of my late mother.</p> <p>Therefore, to think that more building work and more development to the area in which I live will be taking place in the near future is something that I am strongly opposed to! The area has changed beyond recognition these past 5 years and the issue of over development is one which I am passionately concerned about.</p> <p>For context, I would greatly appreciate it if a member of the planning committee would arrange to make an appointment with me and my neighbours to discuss the local impact and implications that such a development plan would have on us.</p>
<p>2 The Hollies Farm Cottages Long Chaulden Hemel Hempstead Hertfordshire HP1 2NU</p>	<p>Dear planning committee,</p> <p>I am writing to publicly express my reservations regarding the proposed changes to the Great Sturges Community Centre on the two grounds that I have highlighted in the "reason for comment" section.</p> <p>To begin with, the first reservation that I have is regarding the privacy aspect of the proposed new development.</p> <p>Looking at the plans, it seems to me that the West facing side of the property is going to be extended and windows or doors are going to be added. This extension and these doors or windows would be going in the direction of my property which faces the rear of the Community Centre directly.</p> <p>As it stands, I am able to view the West facing walls of the Community Centre from my kitchen and bathroom windows at the front of my property. However, we are not able to see directly inside the Centre through the windows that are currently there. My worry is that if the Centre was to be extended further towards where we live and more glass was to be added (whether through the increase of windows or patio doors, etc), then suddenly there is a likely chance that we would be able to see directly into the Centre. Therefore, if we could see into the Centre, the users of the Centre would have a much higher chance of seeing myself or members of my family living here with me, too.</p> <p>I am married and have a very small child, under the age of 1 years old. Our bathroom is front facing, with windows facing directly towards the West facing wall of the Great Sturges Community Centre. The thought that our travels throughout our house could potentially be viewed by users of the Centre standing in the "new common room extension", unless we permanently keep our blinds closed, is something that certainly gives me concern. This concern is heightened by the fact the fences surrounding the property are under 6ft tall, therefore making it</p>

relatively easy for some people to peer over.

To counteract my concern on this matter, the small job of installing higher fence panels, preferably as tall as the apex of the shed in the far West corner of the garden area, would be greatly appreciated and would go a long way to allaying my fears on the matter of potential intrusion of privacy.

An added benefit of higher fences would be to the users of the Community Centre, as higher fences naturally create a more secure environment for them to relax and spend time in.

As a neighbour of the Great Sturgess Community Centre, I know of incidents involving criminals and the police clambering over low fences around the Centre in the middle of the night, therefore emphasising the fact that these fences are indeed quite low and access into the garden area is far from impossible in its current form.

My second cause for anxiety on this matter concerns the issue of more open space being required for this proposed development. This is in relation to the large dead tree that currently has big branches overhanging into the boundary of the Great Sturgess Community Centre.

For me personally, the fact that residents could be sitting in the proposed "new common room extension", blissfully unaware that a dead tree's branches are swinging and potentially breaking above them is something that would give me and my family serious emotional and mental fatigue and consequent distress.

I speak from experience when I say that I have observed on even mildly windy days small branches from the tree breaking off and tumbling into other surrounding properties. The fact that this happens already and will surely only get worse the longer the tree remains in place (despite being dead) is something that would cause great alarm should people be regularly sitting underneath it. Particularly on days where the wind speed is significantly above the average.

Therefore, it is on these two points that I would like to raise my objections to this proposed new development.

In conclusion though, I would like to briefly add that in principle, I do have no objection to the idea of creating more space for the elderly residents of Great Sturgess road to socialise in and generally spend more time together. I am fully aware of the importance of creating safe and comfortable surroundings for the older ones in our community to spend time in, in order to benefit their mental and physical health.

If these two issues regarding space and privacy could possibly be addressed and resolved then I would be more than happy to wholeheartedly support such a development scheme.

Thank you for taking the time to read my comments.

I hope to hear from a representative responsible for the decision making in due course.

