

**4/02947/16/FUL - CONSTRUCTION OF A LAUNDRY ROOM AT THE REAR OF THE
COMMUNITY HALL.
COMMUNITY HALL, THE ROWANS, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD.
APPLICANT: Dacorum Borough Council.**

[Case Officer - Briony Curtain]

Summary

The application is recommended for approval.

The site is situated within the town of Hemel Hempstead wherein non-residential development for social and community uses is acceptable in accordance with Policy CS4 and CS23 of the Core Strategy. The extension proposed is very modest in size and scale and would provide much needed laundry facilities to adjacent residents in the Local Authority sheltered accommodation site without harming the character or appearance of the existing building or wider area. The proposal complies with Policy CS12.

The extension would result in the restriction of the adjacent public footpath, and thus an increase in the sense of enclosure, however, having liaised with the crime prevention Officer, the design has been amended to remove the side windows, introduce some defensible space to the front. It is also proposed to install CCTV and additional lighting. The proposal is now considered acceptable from a safety and natural surveillance aspect in accordance with Policy CS12.

Site Description

The application site is located to the very north of The Rowans, a sheltered accommodation residential site in Warners End. The building subject of the application is situated in close proximity to a public footpath that links Wrensfield / Gravel path to the local shops and beyond. The building comprises the community hall for the adjacent sheltered housing.

Proposal

Planning permission is sought for the construction of a modest single storey extension to an existing building. Measuring 3.2m in depth by 6.56m in width (the width of the existing building), the extension would have a flat roof with central raised roof lantern and provide laundry facilities to the community hall of the adjacent sheltered housing. The footpath into the site has been relocated at an angle in order to provide some defensible space and deter crime.

Referral to Committee

The application is referred to the Development Control Committee as the site is owned by Dacorum Borough Council.

Planning History

Policies

National Policy Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Circular 11/95

Adopted Core Strategy

NP1 - Supporting Development
CS1 - Distribution of Development
CS4 - The Towns and Large Villages
CS11 - Quality of Neighbourhood Design
CS12 - Quality of Site Design
CS13 - Quality of Public Realm
CS23 - Social Infrastructure

Summary of Representations

Response to Neighbour Notification / Site Notice / Newspaper Advertisement

No comments received.

Design Out crime Officer

Original scheme;

Alleyways and remoter paths can always be problematical in that youths can gather to cause ASB and cause damage to the fencing, and that they are not overlooked by active rooms.

Our generic advice for alleyways is:

Secured by Design advice regarding segregated footpaths (alleyways) where they are unavoidable is: "...designers should consider making the footpath a focus of the development and ensure it is:

- As straight as possible
- Wide
- Well lit
- Devoid of potential hiding places
- Overlooked by surrounding buildings and activities
- Well maintained so as to encourage surveillance along the footpath and its borders.

..Where isolated footpaths are unavoidable, and where space permits, they should be 3 metres wide (to allow people to pass without infringing personal space and to accommodate passing wheelchairs). "

As you say the building will come right up to the alleyway and due to the proposed new buildings height (in spite of having a low flat roof), will create a sense of enclosure along the alleyway and the new fence currently does also (although less in height).

Also being a low flat roof youths could easily climb onto to break into or damage the community building. The Windows are also likely to be damaged and the wall could attract graffiti.

Therefore like you I have reservations regarding this. What was once open with a grass separation strip at the side has been removed, and a sense of enclosure has been created by the new fence, which has also removed a good deal of natural surveillance along the path, which is likely to cause a fear of crime or at least a feeling of being unsafe in users.

Amended plans;

My initial thoughts are:

- The parapet wall: This would raise the height and still create even more enclosure of the footpath.
- The window to the side is better, but would need some defensive panting against it (as is suggested). Then a low fence would not be needed?
- CCTV and lighting to cover the building and the alleyway would certainly be an

advantage.

- Additional thoughts are: Could the end wall against the footpath, does it need to go right against the footpath, or could it come back even a foot, so as to create some standoff? Then just a grass strip could go at the side or a cobbled strip (which would need no maintenance). Either of these strips would help create a slight stand-off and make the roof and end wall less enclosing to the footpath.

Therefore subject to your local knowledge I think we are reaching towards an agreement?

Considerations

Policy and Principle

The site is situated within the urban area of Hemel Hempstead wherein residential and non-residential development for small-scale social, community, leisure and business purposes is encouraged. The proposal seeks consent for non-residential development (laundry facilities) to serve the adjacent residential site. CS4 of the Core Strategy encourages social and community uses. Policy CS23 of the Core Strategy also encourages social infrastructure providing services and facilities to the community. New Infrastructure will be located to aid accessibility.

The proposal is acceptable in principle in accordance with Policy CS4 and 23 of the Core Strategy.

The main consideration in the determination of this application is its compliance with Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy; its the impact of the development on the character appearance of the building, and the wider street scene, the impact on the residential amenities of adjacent property and crime prevention in terms of its relationship with the adjacent well used public footpath.

In accordance with Policy CS12 the extension would;

- a) provide a safe and satisfactory means of access for all users; **The proposed laundry facilities could be accessed via the main entrance to the community day room (which is already set up to provide wheelchair access), or via the existing side access into the day room.**
- b) provide sufficient parking and sufficient spaces for servicing; **The sheltered accommodation is well served by off-street parking and this would not alter as a result of the proposal.**
- c) avoid visual intrusion, loss of sunlight and daylight, loss of privacy and disturbance to the surrounding properties; **Several options were explored for the siting of the laundry facilities, the proposed position adjacent to the communal day room provides the least disruptive location as it located away from the residential properties themselves. As such any issues with regard noise and disturbance through their use should be minimal.**
- d) retain important trees; **There would be no impact on any of the trees within the communal garden.**
- e) plants trees and shrubs to help assimilate development and softly screen settlement edges; **The scheme has been amended during the course of the application. In order to deter crime a defensible soft landscaped area has been provided immediately in front of the extension. This area is angled to increase visibility and natural surveillance and is enclosed by low level fencing. This area will be landscaped so it assimilates well.**
- f) integrate with the street scape character; **The simple design and very modest size of the extension means there would be no significant impact on the overall character or appearance of the wider area or street scene.**

g) respect adjoining properties in terms of

1. layout - **the extension will occupy an existing under used area adjacent to the existing garden fence.**
 2. security - **As part of the proposal and in response to the initial concerns about crime safety along the public footpath, CATV and additional lighting are to be introduced. The extension would provide some natural surveillance along the public footpath to the east. Visibility and natural surveillance to the west is very restricted but this is already the case due to the siting of the close boarded fencing.**
 3. site coverage - **adequate space is retained in and around the building,**
 4. scale - **the extension is very modest and compatible in size and scale to the existing building**
 5. height - **see above**
 6. bulk - **see above**
 7. materials - **the bricks to be used would match those of the existing building and thus harmonise well.**
- landscaping - **see (e) above.**

Effects on appearance of building / area

The modest size and scale of the extension, its simple design and the use of matching materials would mean it would not significantly alter the character or appearance of the building or the wider Rowans site. It would thus successfully integrate into the existing street scene. The proposal complies with Policy CS12 as set out above.

Impact on Neighbours

The proposed extension would not have an adverse impact on the residential amenities of adjacent properties in terms of light, privacy or visual intrusion. The properties of Northridge Way to the north are situated some distance away behind a mature dense hedgerow, which itself is set behind a wide public footpath. With regard to the sheltered accommodation the laundry facilities have been located adjacent to the communal day room in order to minimise adverse impact on residential amenity. The flats adjacent are set back from the application site and behind an existing boundary wall / side access alley. Again any impact on their residential amenity would be minimal.

Crime Prevention

Concern was expressed about the design of the initial proposal. The proposal has since been amended in line with the advice given. The amendments are summarised as follows;

- The flat roof has been replaced by a parapet wall to prevent access
- The windows to the alley have been omitted and a larger single window located to the front elevation. This would be located behind a landscaped area (and enclosed by a low fence to further prevent access but allow natural surveillance).
- CCTV and lighting installed

The proposal is now considered acceptable and will in accordance with Policy CS12 provide a safe environment for residents and the public.

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 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.

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

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development and to comply with Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy.

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

**T2-1042-1 Location and Block Plan
T2-1042-2 Existing layout
T2-1042-3 Existing Elevations
T2-1042-4 Proposed layout
T2-1042-5 Proposed Elevations
T2-1042-6 Proposed extension
T2-1042-7 Existing drainage
T2-1042-8 Proposed drainage
T2-1042-9 Sections**

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

Article 35

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted pro-actively through positive engagement with the applicant during the determination process which led to improvements to the scheme. 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 2015.