

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

8 The Avenue, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9RQ

Proposed development: Insertion of rear dormer window and rooflights to front and side roofslopes. Alterations to existing ground floor rear element to include raising walls and change to flat roof and insertion of oriel window.

An application for householder planning permission is hereby submitted, for the above development at 8 The Avenue, Hitchin. The application comprises of the following documents:

- Application Form
- Design and Access Statement

Drawings:

- LAY 24025 DR001 - Location & Site Plan
- LAY 24025 DR010 - Existing Plans
- LAY 24025 DR011 - Existing Elevations
- LAY 24025 DR015 - Existing 3D Massing
- LAY 24025 DR110 - Proposed Plans
- LAY 24025 DR111 - Proposed Elevations
- LAY 24025 DR115 - Proposed 3D Massing

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Site and surroundings

The site comprises a semi-detached dwellinghouse, with a spacious sized rear garden, located off The Avenue within the urban area of Hitchin.

The site contains no listed buildings but is located within the Hitchin Conservation Area, which is also subject to Article 4 Direction for alterations and extensions.

The dwelling adjoins No. 7 and lies adjacent a private area of open space, close to the junction with Chiltern Road.

The proposed development

The proposal comprises a rear dormer window to be to the rear roofslope and partly onto the rear outrigger part of the dwelling. Rooflights are proposed to the front roofslope. The scheme has been fully re-considered in light of the previous refusal of a larger L shaped dormer design and, from the response to a recent pre-application submission.

The addition would enlarge the existing loft conversion, to provide an overall two bedrooms and a shower room at this second floor level.

Also proposed are minor alterations to the ground floor rear projection, including raising the current lean-to roof up to a flat roof design, with an oriel window. Materials are proposed by way of zinc cladding to the dormer window, with a grey membrane roof. Fenestration is proposed in grey aluminium frames to the dormer window and white or grey aluminium to the oriel window.

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Key issues

In regard to the key issues of the proposal, these are the same as the previous scheme. The reason for refusal under application reference 24/00679/FPH was as follows,

The proposed dormer window, by reason of its glazing, design and siting, would result in an unacceptable form of development that causes harm to the character of the street scene, the Hitchin Conservation Area and the host dwelling. This would set a precedent for similar development within the area that would erode and harm the character of the conservation area. The proposed development would fail to comply with Policy D1, D2 and HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan and Sections 12 and 16 together with Paragraph 130 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Therefore, the key issue in this case is the size and design of the dormer window, in regard to the impact upon the Conservation Area as a heritage asset but also to the area generally for sensitive design and the context of the site.

Size, design and impact upon the Conservation Area

In regard to the size and design of the overall dormer window, it is first noted that the officer informally commented that a dormer window for the rear roofslope section could be acceptable, in email discussion following the last decision.

Then the subsequent pre-application submission sought the opinion of the Planning Authority on the overall rear dormer, which was proposed over the main rear roofslope and partly over the rear outrigger, as an L shaped form still but of reduced depth from the refused scheme.

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The response concluded that a part L shape could be supported but would need to be reduced further in depth by 1.25 metres, which is the position of the first floor window below.

Policy D1 of the Local Plan states that development will be granted provided the design of the development appropriately and positively responds to the site's local context together with other criteria to encourage a positive and sustainable form of development.

Policy D2 of the Local Plan requires extensions to houses and the erection or replacement of buildings to incorporate design that is sympathetic to the main dwelling in terms of its scale, form and orientation and does not harm the character and appearance of the locality around the site. These policies are broadly consistent with Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The last officer report stated under this key issue as follows, *"Although the proposed dormer window would be to the rear/side roof slope of the dwelling, some views would be gained from the public realm along Chiltern Road and The Avenue from the side/front. The surrounding area is within the Hitchin Conservation Area and Article 4 Areas and is therefore sensitive to change. I consider that the introduction of the dormer window to be a harmful addition to the streetscape that would be at odds with the traditional and predominantly consistent nature and character of this part of Hitchin. The proposed materials of construction, glazing to the side elevation and the scale/bulk would result in an incongruous addition that would detract from the special nature of The Avenue and the surrounding Conservation Area"*.

In responding to this primary concern of the proposal, the L shaped dormer now proposed is materially reduced in size from the last application and the pre-application submission. The size of the 'L' part has been reduced by the suggested 1.25 metres in the pre-application response.

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The length has been reduced by 1.7 metres from the refused scheme and the width has been reduced by 350mm. These two reductions in dimensions means that the projecting L part of the dormer window, would have no or very limited public view in the street scene.

Although the site abuts an area of open space, this land is private and has no public access of footpath or use of the land. As such, the only publicly viewable angle of the side of the property is as shown in the following photograph position. This is an angled view of the dwelling from the junction of The Avenue and Chiltern Road.



View of side elevation from junction of The Avenue and Chiltern Road

This lack of view of the outrigger part of the rear dormer, is fully demonstrated by the 3D drawing of this view, as shown below.



3D Massing view of proposal

– No view of rearmost part of dormer window

Therefore, the 3D massing indicates that the outrigger part of the dormer window is now fully obscured by the first part of the dormer on the rear roofslope. Furthermore, the previously proposed side window to the outrigger part is now removed in this reduced proposal and, the rear windows are now reduced in size and aligned to widths of the first floor fenestration.

Given this lack of any discernible public view of the now further reduced L shape part of the dormer window, it is considered that there would be no adverse impact upon the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, or the visual amenity of the street scene.

In regard to materials, the zinc cladding would be entirely in keeping with the neighbouring extensions and some of the more contemporary additions in the area. These additions include the very similar L shaped dormer window at No. 7 The Avenue and, the large two storey side / rear extension at 1 Chiltern Road. These two additions of contemporary appearance are shown in the following photographs, as viewed in the street scene of The Avenue.

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It is therefore considered that the materials should blend with these more contemporary additions, instead of seeking to imitate an older or original part of the property. As a purposeful distinguishment between historic and modern design. This was agreed with on the recent pre-application response.



Larger L shaped dormer window at No. 7 The Avenue, as seen from The Avenue

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Two storey side / rear extension at 1 Chiltern Road

The front elevation is unchanged apart from the addition of rooflights. It is noted that No. 7 have rooflights to front roofslope so are also considered acceptable for the host dwelling.

In regard to any impact upon the living conditions of nearby occupiers, the last application concluded there to be no adverse impact from the roof extension works and minor alterations to ground floor.

Therefore, the primary amenity areas and rear elevations of the neighbouring properties would be unaffected. Access is unaffected by the proposal, with car parking retained as the two existing spaces, which was considered acceptable in the last application.

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Summary

Following the useful pre-application advice process, which followed the earlier refusal, the now further reduced size of the overall dormer window, means the rearmost part would have no view or impact upon the street scene of The Avenue.

The rear roofslope dormer element was considered possibly acceptable by the officer following the last application process and the subsequent pre-application response was supportive of a reduced sized part over the outrigger.

Therefore, taken in combination, the two elements of the overall dormer window are considered to have no harmful impact upon the setting, character and appearance of the Conservation Area, as a designated heritage asset. Just as concluded in the approved applications at 7 The Avenue and 1 Chiltern Road.

The proposed development is therefore considered to now be in accordance with Policies HE1, D1, D2 and D3 of the Local Plan and with Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

As such, the proposal is acceptable for the grant of planning permission accordingly. Please contact us should you require any further information.

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