

From: Jon Hill [REDACTED]
Sent: 07 October 2026 18:40
To: Saffron Loasby
Subject: Planning Application Reference: 26/01902/FPH

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Saffron Loasby
North Herts District Council
Planning Authority

Date: 7th October 2026

Planning Application Reference: 26/01902/FPH

Proposal: Part two-storey, part first-floor and part single-storey rear extensions. Single-storey front and side extensions including single-storey link between main dwelling and existing detached garage. Alterations to existing garage fenestration to facilitate garage conversion into habitable accommodation. Alterations to fenestration including insertion of two rooflights in north-west roof slope.

Site: Armar, Whitehill Close, Hitchin, Hertfordshire SG4 9HX

Dear Ms Loasby,

We write in connection with the above planning application to provide our representations on the proposed development and respectfully request that this letter is placed on the public record and taken fully into consideration in the determination of the application.

Firstly, we wish to make clear that we are not opposed in principle to the property being extended or renovated. Our concerns relate specifically to the scale, height, massing and design of the current proposal, and the consequential impact that the development would have upon the residential amenity, privacy and outlook of our property.

Existing relationship between the properties

At present, our house and rear garden benefit from a particularly private and largely unoverlooked setting. The existing bungalow at Armar has a relatively limited visual relationship with our property because of its current single-storey form, the difference in levels between the sites and the existing landscaping and mature vegetation.

The proposed development would fundamentally change that relationship.

Of particular concern is the introduction of substantial first-floor/two-storey accommodation to the rear of the application property. Given the elevated position of Armar relative to our property, the effective height and visual impact of the proposed development when viewed from our home and rear garden would be considerably greater than might be apparent from considering the proposed building height in isolation.

We therefore respectfully request that the Planning Authority considers the development not simply by reference to its dimensions on the submitted drawings, but in the context of the actual site levels and relationship between the two properties.

Scale, massing and overbearing impact

The proposed two-storey rear element represents a substantial increase in built form compared with the existing bungalow.

Because of the proximity of the development, combined with the higher ground level of the application site, we are concerned that the proposed first-floor accommodation would appear visually dominant when viewed from our property and garden.

Our concern is therefore not simply that an extension would be visible. Rather, the combination of height, mass, proximity and elevated position would create a materially different and significantly more imposing relationship between the two properties.

We consider that this has the potential to result in an unacceptable overbearing and enclosing effect, particularly within our rear garden, which currently enjoys a relatively open and private outlook.

This represents a material planning consideration and we respectfully request that the Planning Authority assesses the proposal against the relevant provisions of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, including Policies D2 and D3, particularly insofar as they seek to ensure that development responds appropriately to its context and does not cause unacceptable harm to neighbouring residential amenity.

Overlooking and loss of privacy

We are also concerned about the potential for overlooking arising from the introduction of first-floor accommodation.

Our property and garden are currently largely unoverlooked from the application site. The introduction of elevated first-floor living accommodation would create an entirely different relationship, with occupants positioned significantly higher than at present and potentially having views towards and across our rear garden and home.

The planning impact should therefore be assessed not merely by determining whether a particular window directly faces another window. Consideration should also be given to the perception of overlooking and loss of privacy within private amenity space, particularly where a neighbouring garden currently benefits from a high degree of seclusion.

The combination of the natural site levels and proposed first-floor accommodation makes this issue particularly important in this case.

We would therefore ask the Planning Officer to assess the proposal from within our rear garden as part of the site inspection, so that the actual relationship between the proposed development and our private amenity space can be properly understood.

Trees and existing screening

We recognise that there are currently mature trees and vegetation between the properties which provide a degree of screening.

However, we do not believe that the acceptability of the proposed development should depend upon the continued presence of this vegetation.

Trees and landscaping can be removed, substantially reduced, become diseased or die, and their screening effectiveness also changes seasonally. The permanent built relationship created by the development should therefore be acceptable in its own right, irrespective of existing vegetation.

If the proposal would cause unacceptable overlooking, loss of privacy or visual dominance in the absence of those trees, we respectfully suggest that existing landscaping should not be relied upon as the principal means of mitigating those impacts.

The presence of the existing trees also demonstrates the degree of privacy and enclosure currently enjoyed by our property. The development should therefore be assessed against that existing baseline rather than on an assumption that the current screening will permanently conceal the proposed first-floor development.

Effect on the character and enjoyment of our property

One of the defining characteristics of our property is the private and unoverlooked nature of the rear garden.

We appreciate that there is no planning right to preserve a particular view, and we are not seeking to prevent reasonable development of the neighbouring property.

However, loss of a view is fundamentally different from a material change in the relationship between neighbouring properties resulting in overlooking, loss of privacy, visual dominance or an overbearing sense of enclosure.

Those are established residential amenity considerations.

While the potential effect of a development upon the monetary value or saleability of a neighbouring property is not itself a material planning consideration, the factors that may give rise to such concerns — including loss of privacy, overlooking, visual dominance and an overbearing impact upon a previously private garden — are material planning considerations and should be assessed accordingly.

Importance of the site levels

We believe that the difference in levels between the properties is particularly important to the determination of this application.

A two-storey extension constructed on a site which already sits above the neighbouring property can have a substantially greater effect than the same development constructed on broadly level ground.

We therefore respectfully request that the Case Officer carefully verifies the relative ground and finished floor levels during the site visit and considers the proposed development from our property and garden before reaching a conclusion regarding its impact upon neighbouring amenity.

Relevant planning principles and appeal decisions

Planning appeal decisions have consistently demonstrated that Inspectors consider the combined effects of height, proximity, massing, site levels, overlooking and the existing relationship between properties when assessing residential amenity.

Similarly, the existence of vegetation or boundary screening does not necessarily make an otherwise unacceptable relationship acceptable, particularly where such screening cannot reasonably be guaranteed for the lifetime of the development.

We therefore believe the correct assessment is whether the proposed development would create an acceptable permanent relationship with

neighbouring properties without depending upon existing trees or vegetation to mitigate its impact.

Requested action

In light of the above, we respectfully request that North Hertfordshire District Council:

1. Undertakes a site inspection which includes viewing the proposed development from within our rear garden and, if considered necessary, from within our property.
2. Carefully considers the difference in ground levels between the application site and our property.
3. Assesses the cumulative effect of the proposed height, massing, proximity and elevated position, rather than considering each element independently.
4. Considers the potential for overlooking and loss of privacy to our home and private rear amenity space.
5. Does not rely upon existing trees and vegetation as permanent mitigation for an otherwise unacceptable relationship between the properties.
6. Assesses whether the proposal complies with the residential amenity requirements of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan, including Policies D2 and D3.

We again stress that we do not object to the principle of our neighbours extending or improving their home. We simply believe that the current design, particularly the scale and position of the proposed first-floor/two-storey rear element, would have a disproportionate impact upon our property.

We would therefore respectfully request that the application in its current form is refused or amended to reduce the height, scale and massing of the rear development and to ensure that an appropriate degree of privacy and residential amenity is maintained between the properties.

We would be very happy to facilitate access to our property should the Case Officer wish to assess the relationship between the proposed development and our home and garden.

Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Hill

Saffron Loasby
North Herts District Council
Planning Authority

Date: 2 October 2026

Planning Application Reference: 26/01902/FPH

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Yours sincerely,

Jonathan Hill and Nicola Oxby

9, Broadmead, Hitchin, SG49LU