Design & Access Statement

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Project: The Folly, Great Wymondley

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Contents

Contents 1

1. Site Description 2

1.1. Site Summary 2
1.2. Location Plan 2
1.3. Site Photographs 2

2. Planning History 5

2.1. Site History 5

3. Application Proposals 6

3.1. Proposal Description 6
3.2. Proposed Layout 6
3.3. Density & Massing 6
3.4. Appearance & Scale 7

4. Planning Policy 8

4.1. National Planning Policy Framework 8
4.2. Local Planning Policy 8
4.3. Sustainability 9

5. Summary 10

1. Site Description

1.1. Site Summary

The application site lies within the settlement limit of Great Wymondley, near Hitchin, Hertfordshire. Located off Willian Road, The Folly is a recently completed former workshop/store conversion approved in 2013. The site lies within the village conservation area and neighbour's open farmland to the North, an open playing field to the East, with a denser collection of residential properties South and West. The site is located wholly within the Green Belt.

1.2. Location Plan



Figure I - Site location plan

1.3. Site Photographs



Figure II - Photograph of existing dwelling.



Figure III - Proposed garage position.



Figure IV - Existing garage adjacent at Long Close.



Figure V - View of proposed garage site from The Folly.



Figure VI - Long Close & associated out-buildings.



Figure VII - View of proposed garage site from entrance.

2. Planning History

2.1. Site History

Planning history on the site includes:

Date	Reference	Description
January 2013	12/02830/1	Conversion of garden workshop to detached 3-bedroom dwelling.
July 2013	13/01479/1NMA	Change roof finish to natural blue/black slate tiles.
January 2014	13/03042/1HH	Single storey side extension to facilitate double garage.
October 2017	17/02587/1HH	Erection of double garage and bike store [Refused].

Table I - Site planning history

3. Application Proposals

3.1. Proposal Description

The application submitted sought approval for the erection of a double garage with bike store. The proposed garage, finished in stained featheredge boarding and a slate roof, would provide additional covered and secure vehicle parking in this rural setting surrounded by trees. An additional bin and bike store would be added to better serve the property and reduce the current refuse travel distances on collection day.

3.2. Proposed Layout

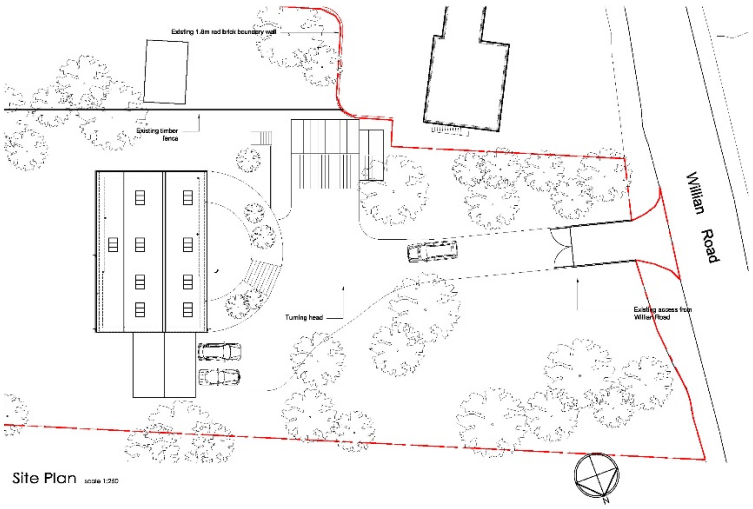

Figure VIII - Proposed site layout

3.3. Density & Massing

There is a substantial collection of existing structures in this area, and therefore the introduction of an additional twin garage does not sit out of place as the below massing diagram displays. This proposal is therefore considered to be minor infill.

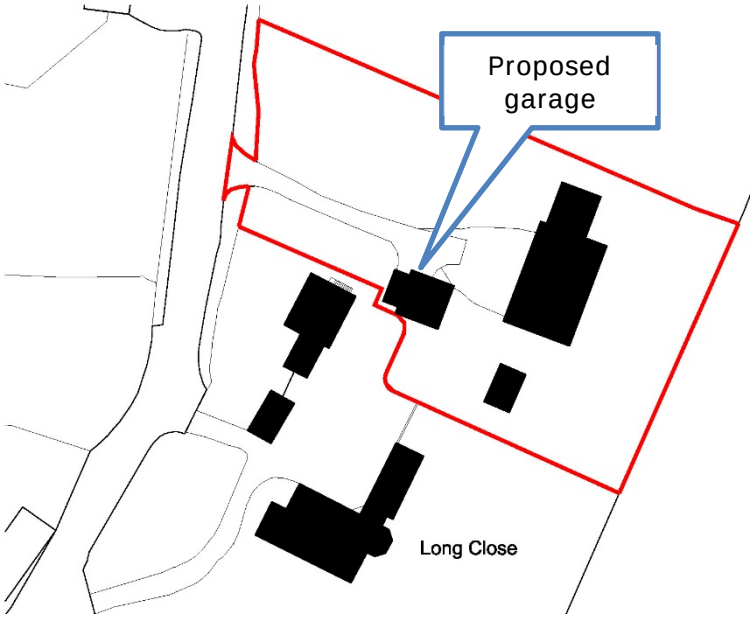

Figure IX - Proposed massing model

The existing 1.5 storey triple garage immediately adjacent to the proposal on Long Close forms a far greater structure and the proposed unit sits subservient to this.

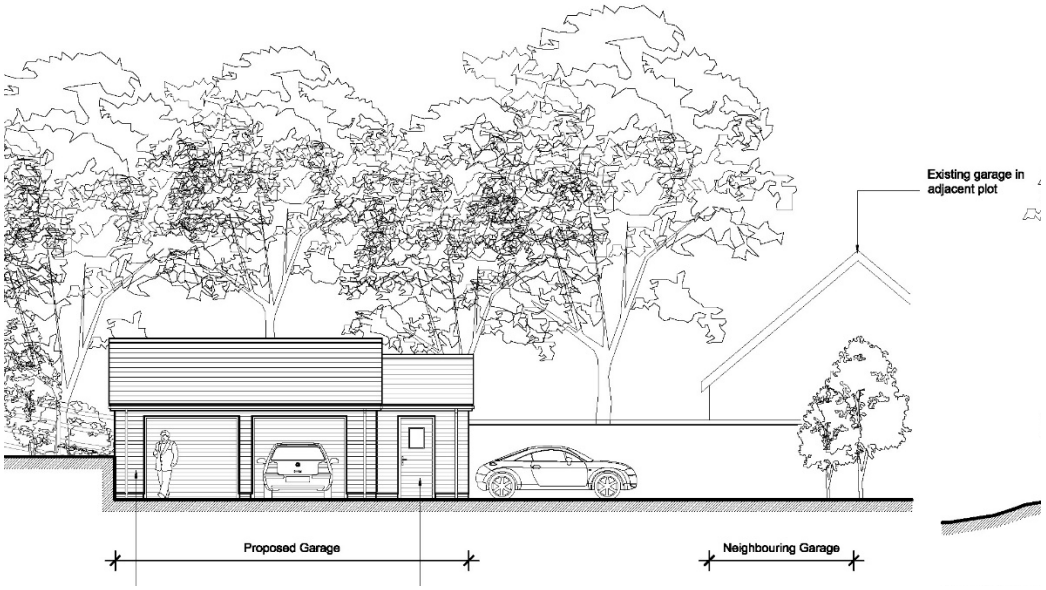

Figure X - Elevation of Existing and Proposed Garages

3.4. Appearance & Scale

The appearance of the proposed dwellings would be wholly sensitive to the existing established architectural features of the surrounding properties. The height of the garage is well in-keeping with the existing garages located behind at Long Close and is in a suitable perspective with the host dwelling.

4. Planning Policy

4.1. National Planning Policy Framework

This application was refused previously against Section 9 of the NPPF which relates to protecting Green Belt land. The NPPF states that Green Belt land serves five purposes. These are:

1. To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
2. To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
3. To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment
4. To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns
5. To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land

Considering the application proposal against these five points:

1. The addition of a twin garage is not contributing to an increase in large built-up forms. The proposal maintains an open rural feel with the additional garage built.
2. Not relevant in this case.
3. No encroachment into the countryside is proposed, this is re-use of an already developed site.
4. The proposal is sympathetic and in-keeping with surroundings and there is precedent already set for proposing detached garaging within Great Wymondley.
5. Not relevant in this case.

Policy 87 from the NPPF states that inappropriate development is harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. The addition of a twin garage is not considered to be inappropriate. It has a residential use in an existing residential setting, provides additional storage to the benefit of the existing residence and is built on a site within the curtilage of an existing dwelling, adjacent to existing detached garages on adjoining properties.

Policy 89 from the NPPF allows construction of new buildings in the Green Belt which are providing limited infill within villages, and where the proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt. The proposed construction of a new garage sited within the settlement limits of Great Wymondley would therefore be fully compliant with these policies and no impact on the openness of the Green Belt when considering the massing of existing buildings in this area.

Therefore, the proposed erection of a double garage is not inappropriate to Green Belt planning policy given consideration to the points above.

4.2. Local Planning Policy

Policy 2 of the adopted Local Plan states:

> *"In the green belt, as shown on the Proposals Map, the Council will aim to keep the uses of land open in character. Except for proposals within settlements which accord with Policy 3, or in very special circumstances, planning permission will only be granted for new buildings, extensions, and changes of use of buildings and of land which are appropriate in the Green Belt, and which would not result in significant visual impact.*

Policy 3 as mentioned in the above states:

> *"In settlements within the Green Belt, the Council will not normally permit development proposals, except for:*
>
> 1. *that strictly necessary for the housing and employment needs of agriculture, forestry, leisure and local services in the rural areas that cannot practicably be met outside the Green Belt; or*
>
> 2. *the local facilities and services needs of the settlement within which the development is proposed; or*
>
> 3. *the meeting of an identified rural housing need in compliance with Policy 29; or*
>
> 4. *a single dwelling on a small plot located within the built core of the settlement, which will not result in the outward expansion of the settlement or have any other adverse impact on the local environment or other policy aims within the Green Belt."*

Considering Policy 2 first, the local plan requires that the land remains open in character, and that there is no significant visual impact created. When considering this against the proposals the land will retain its open feel as the important open northern and eastern boundaries are retained and therefore propose no loss of openness in the character. The proposed garage is sited next to the existing triple garage at Long Close and with the proposed design for a low shallow roof there will be no alteration on the visual impact.

The case officers report for the refused application read with regards to openness that *"in some ways it would be difficult to argue that the proposed building would be harmful to openness in a wider sense."* The report goes on to say openness is recognised as the absence of built form, though if this was the case then all development within Green Belt areas would be considered in detriment of this and most other policies. Consideration needs to be given to the size of the proposal, and as with this case the proposed building is so minimal in size that the harm on the openness is not a detrimental factor.

Policy 2 refers to Policy 3 when the proposal is within a settlement, as this case is. Whilst the first 3 points of this policy are not relevant as they relate to other uses, the final point regards single dwellings. Albeit this application does not seek a new single dwelling, the precedent is set whereby if this policy could be used to approve the erection of a single dwelling, then a small subservient garage related to an existing dwelling is clearly not in conflict with this and the proposal cannot be considered inappropriate.

4.3. Sustainability

From a sustainability point of view, the host dwelling The Folly as previously approved is built to conform and meet the standards of Code for Sustainable Homes Level 5, and the additional garage proposed offers storage for the occupier's electric vehicle with a new charging point, as well as refuse and cycle storage.

Solar panels were fitted to the host dwelling as part of the previous construction though with no South facing roof slopes the new proposed garage offers the opportunity for additional PV installations to maximise renewable energy gains.

The construction of the garage would be in timber frame from FSC certified sources with natural slate roof and timber cladding. There is an existing concrete hardstanding under so the environmental impact within the Green Belt is highly minimised.

5. Summary

Given the minor scale of development which this application proposes, it is considered that there is no substantial harm upon the Green Belt which would be imposed.

The already established built form immediately surrounding the proposed garage clearly demonstrates that there is no substantial increase in the built form and that the proposal is fully in-keeping within its setting.

The application site is wholly within the Great Wymondley settlement boundary and as policies allow for the erection of dwellings in Green Belts, a proposal for a subservient residentially used garage must fall within the controlling parameters of these policies.