

Design & Access Statement

77 Benslow Lane
Hitchin
Hertfordshire
SG4 9RA



Context

The site is located on the eastern side of Hitchin, within convenient walking distance of the town centre and railway station, thereby providing sustainable access to a wide range of local services and public transport connections.

The existing dwelling is a modest four-bedroom detached property incorporating a single-storey side extension, conservatory and converted loft space. It occupies a generous plot and is enclosed by a variety of mature trees and hedgerows, which contribute positively to the character of the site and provide a strong sense of privacy.

Use

The proposal seeks to provide a larger, family-sized home that better meets the needs of modern living. In addition, the design incorporates enhanced and dedicated workspace to support home working, enabling a sustainable and balanced relationship between work and family life.

Description of the Proposed Development

The proposal comprises of a two-storey rear and side extension, the erection of a new detached garage, and associated alterations to the fenestration and driveway. The existing driveway arrangement will be reconfigured to serve the proposed garage, resulting in an improved parking layout that adequately accommodates the additional bedroom provision.



Fig 1: Existing front elevation of property

Access

Access to the property is taken from Benslow Lane. The existing driveway arrangement will be reconfigured to facilitate the construction of the proposed detached garage, which supports the additional bedroom accommodation. As part of the proposals, the two existing vehicular accesses will be rationalised to a single access point, with the redundant access removed and replaced with railings to match the existing boundary treatment.

In accordance with the North Hertfordshire District Council Supplementary Parking Standards, a minimum of two parking spaces is required for dwellings comprising two or more bedrooms. The proposal will continue to provide ample off-street parking, including a new detached double garage, and therefore complies with the adopted parking standards. As such, the development will not give rise to any adverse impact on highway safety or on-street parking provision.

Layout

The proposed two-storey rear and side extension will provide additional space at ground and first-floor levels, creating larger living areas and improved bedroom provision. The layout also allows for flexible internal space, including potential home-working areas, enabling the dwelling to adapt to changing household needs.

The extensions are largely contained within the existing built footprint of the site. The side extension extends to the boundary sufficient space remains around the dwelling to maintain an open character within the plot and avoid a cramped appearance.

A detached double garage is proposed to improve on-site parking security. Its siting and design have been carefully considered to ensure it integrates with the site without detracting from the established street scene or neighbouring amenity. The design reflects approved garages in the immediate vicinity of Benslow Lane, including the detached double garage approved at Hilltop House in 2016 (Ref: 16/02566/1HH), and therefore remains in keeping with the prevailing character of the street.

The garage has been positioned to follow the established pattern of development along the lane, while existing and proposed planting, including mature shrubs and trees, will help soften its appearance. This landscaping will maintain the verdant character of the plot and create a sense of privacy and seclusion without appearing visually intrusive.



Fig 2: Street scene view facing towards Hilltop House and the recently approved double garage, illustrating the sense of seclusion and privacy created by mature hedgerows, trees, and established boundary treatments along Benslow Lane.



Fig 3: View of 77 Benslow Lane showing the proposed location of the new garage and the retention of the existing mature hedgerow and boundary treatments.

Appearance

In accordance with Policy D2 of the Local Plan, the proposed development has been carefully designed to respond positively to the established character of the area. The selection of materials and detailing has been considered to ensure that the extensions integrate seamlessly with the existing dwelling and remain sympathetic to the prevailing street scene.

The external walls of the proposed extensions will be constructed in brickwork and render to match the existing property. The roof of the two-storey side extension will be finished in plain roof tiles to correspond with the existing roof covering, thereby maintaining visual continuity. The roof of the existing single-storey side extension will be replaced with a flat resin system, incorporating parapet-style walls with stone coping to reflect the design approach of the proposed garage and to align with the character of other detached garages within the street.

The new detached double garage has been designed with regard to similar approved garage developments along Benslow Lane. Its siting and scale have been carefully considered to ensure that it does not result in visual harm to neighbouring properties. Additional tree and shrub planting will be incorporated to provide natural screening, soften its appearance within the streetscape, and enhance the overall character of the area.



Fig 4: 3D view of site.

Landscaping

The property is shielded via trees and hedgerow, creating a secluded feel to the plot as you enter Benslow Lane. To comply with Policy D1 the design will incorporate a Sustainable Drainage System by way of new soak aways.

Justification/ Conclusion

The proposed development has been carefully designed to remain proportionate to the host dwelling and sympathetic to the established character of the surrounding area. The extensions will improve the functionality of the property by providing additional living space while maintaining the openness of the site and respecting the relationship with neighbouring properties.

The proposed detached double garage and reconfigured access arrangement will enhance on-site parking provision in accordance with local parking standards, without adversely affecting the street scene or highway safety. The design reflects development approved in the immediate vicinity and retains the existing mature landscaping, which contributes to the sense of privacy and seclusion along Benslow Lane.

Overall, the proposal represents a well-considered and appropriate form of development that integrates with its surroundings and complies with the relevant planning policies and guidance.

Home Extension Team