

SUPPORTING STATEMENT STATEMENT

Retrospective Application for raised deck

At 1 St Andrews Place, Hitchin

PENTANGLE
DESIGN GROUP

INTRODUCTION

The applicants have had a raised deck installed at the above property, unaware that this requires planning permission. This was brought to their attention in a letter from NHDC dated 23rd December.

Pentangle Design have been appointed to assist in seeking retrospective permission.

Permission for the St Andrews Place development of 13 houses was granted under application ref: 13/023131/1.

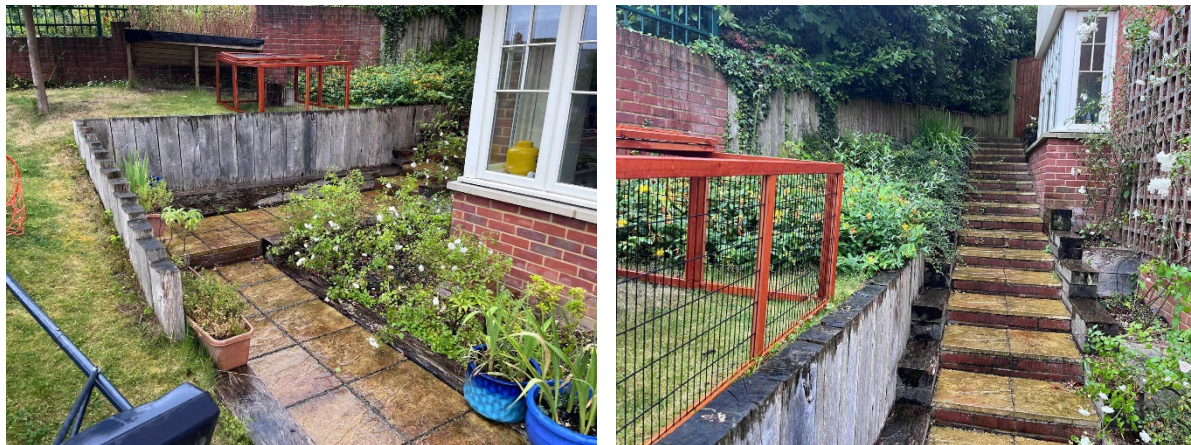
Under condition 12 of the approval, Permitted Development rights were removed for Classes A (enlargement, improvement or alteration); B (additions to the roof); and F (hard surfaces).

It is understood that raised decks come under Class E of the Permitted Development order. While this was not removed under the permission granted, the constructed deck is forward of the principal elevation of the house and in parts is more than 300mm above the previous ground levels.

The applicants have been advised in a follow up letter dated 16th January, that the Development Management Team have indicated that they consider it unlikely that permission will be granted., although no specific reasons were given for this position.

This statement seeks to explain the reasons for the constructed deck and the reasons permission should be granted for it to remain.

SITE PHOTOS - BEFORE



SITE PHOTOS - AFTER



Clockwise from Top-left: View looking south-east towards 1 St Andrews Place; View looking east towards 1 St Andrews Place; View from the footpath outside the site access to St Andrews Place; view looking east across the deck towards the steps and gate to the back garden; Close up view of the deck from the pedestrian access to the house; close up view over the boundary wall to the deck

PLANNING POLICY, GUIDANCE and COMMENTARY

EXTERNAL AMENITY SPACE

The original house was granted permission and built with a reduced amount of private external space relative to most family dwellings. This was partly in order to make 'efficient' use of a sustainable town centre site, but also constrained by the significant changes in level across the site. Many of the houses on this development – as well as adjacent development to the south and east – have significant changes in levels, which has resulted in various unusual and innovative landscape solutions in gardens to make effective use of the space available.

The rear patio area for 1 St Andrews Place provides approx. 34m² of useable space in the form of a hard paved patio. The area to the north and west of the house (which is the subject of this application) had significant changes in level, with a raised grass area approx. 1-1.2m above the footpath. While this area is small, it provides a space with a south and south-westerly aspect, benefiting from afternoon and evening sun. The family have been using this area as a sitting out area for a number of years. The originally constructed timber retaining wall was becoming rotten and created a risk of falling.

In this instance, the applicants do have this additional space on their property, for which it is not unreasonable for them to adapt this to make it more useable for their family.

Paragraph 145 of the councils Design Supplementary Planning Document states the following:

145. External space – private dwellings should have adequate private space to meet the needs of the occupants. The Council encourages a mix of garden sizes. Houses should have gardens which meet the needs of the occupants outdoor living requirements such as children's play, patio for entertaining, lawn/shrub area for leisure and recreation, recycling bins and storage facilities. Flats and apartments should have outdoor space such as balconies or roof gardens to meet the need for useable out-door space.

As far as I am aware, NHDC do not have specific requirements for the amount of external space that should be provided for new dwellings. For reference, Central Bedfordshire's Design Guide does provide some recommendations with a minimum area of 60m² suggested for houses

with more than 3 bedrooms. The provision of this deck, along with the existing patio area brings the provision of space up to the area stated as a reasonable minimum by the nearby planning authority.

IMPACT ON CHARACTER

While the deck is located to the front of the house, in a relatively public position, it is actually well screened, by both the site boundary wall, planting and railings, onto St Andrews Place, as well as by a recently planted beech hedge, which will mature to provide more screening from within the development itself.



IMPACT ON NEIGHBOURING PROPERTIES

The deck is not located in a position that has any significant impact on the outlook or amenity of any of the adjacent properties. A significant number of the occupiers of St Andrews Place have advised the applicants that they have no issue with the deck and are willing to write in support.

Policy D2 of the NHDC Local Plan (relating to house extensions) states that extensions should (I paraphrase) be sympathetic to the existing dwelling house in height, form and proportion; should not dominate adjoining properties; be well related to floor levels of adjoining properties, and provide appropriate distance between the proposal and windows of adjoining properties.

We consider the constructed deck does not contravene any of the requirements or principles set out in this policy.

CONCLUSIONS

It is acknowledged that the constructed deck is not covered by any permitted development rules that pertain to the house and that permission is required. While NHDC do not have specific policies directly relating to raised decks, policies and design guidance relating to extensions and housing developments - including that from a neighbouring authority - set out relevant considerations in relation to this work.

We consider permission should be granted for the following reasons:

1. The provision of the new deck provides the house with a level of external amenity space that has been recognised as a reasonable minimum and consistent with the requirements set out in paragraph 145 of the council's design guidance.
2. The existing boundary and new planting provided - as well as the topography of the site - means that the deck is quite discretely located and is not visible from most public vantage points. As such, it does not adversely impact the character of the house or its environs. This is demonstrated in the photos provided on pages 3 and 5.
3. The provision of a guarding to the edge of the deck creates a safe area of garden that previously created a fall risk.
4. The deck does not impact on the outlook or amenity of any adjoining or nearby properties.

In short, we consider the deck is an innovative solution on a site with a challenging topography that provides the family with useful additional external space that causes no harm to either immediate neighbours or the wider community.

Therefore there is no reason to refuse planning permission for it.