By email only
For the attention of Ben Glover
North Hertfordshire District Council
Council Offices
Gernon Road
Letchworth Garden City
Hertfordshire
SG6 3JF

Email: ben.glover@north-herts.gov.uk

Mr Gareth Stinton
8B Park Lane
Knebworth
SG3 6PE

Tel:

REF: 18/01238/FPH

28 May 2018

Dear Mr Glover

OBJECTION TO PLANNING PERMISSION REQUEST: For ground floor carport infill extension to create double length garage at 8A Park Lane, Knebworth, Hertfordshire

I write further to my wife's letter of 20 May 2018, and wish to register my own objection to the above planning request.

To avoid duplication, I do not repeat the content of that 20 May letter. The primary purpose of this letter is therefore to provide new supporting information on our objections, based upon our further consideration and research.

As you are aware, we have also been speaking to Councillor Deakin-Davies and Councillor Nash with regard to this issue and I am therefore copying them to this letter.

1. **Existing garage width does not meet minimum requirements**

I refer you to 'Screenshot 1' which is attached to this email. This is a screenshot taken from NHDC's own website at https://www.north-herts.gov.uk/sites/northherts-cms/files/files/vehicle_parking_at_new_development_spd_sept_2011.pdf.

This clearly states that in order to count as a parking space, a garage must measure 3 metres wide by 7 metres in length. This is to be measured internally.

We have measured our existing garage at 8B Park Lane (which is identical to that at 8A) and record that it is 290cm wide, so below minimum width. The existing garages for these properties therefore do *not* count as car parking spaces. As a matter of fact, neither property currently uses their existing garages for the purpose of car parking at any time.

Again, according to NHDC's website, the minimum number of car parking spaces per property over two bedrooms in size is two parking spaces. The new-build five-bedroom properties at 8A and 8B, which were only completed in 2015, therefore already have only the absolute *minimum* number of spaces for car parking – namely one space in front of each house and one space each in the shared car port.

2. **An extended garage would reduce parking by 2 spaces**

Our parking space in the currently shared car port will become redundant in the event that a dividing wall is built. It would simply be too narrow to be able to get properly into and out of our car.

The proposed plan would have the effect of extending 8A's current garage lengthways and, by default, would effectively turn our side of the car port into a garage (albeit with no door).

There is no additional width available in the car port area in order to make these 2 new garage spaces meet the minimum width requirements – they would mirror the existing garages.

They would, therefore, each be no more than 290cms in width, and 445cm in length – so below minimum dimensions. The result would be two five-bedroom homes with just one car parking space each – below even the very low minimum requirements. These new-build properties would surely never have been approved for planning permission on this basis. We certainly would not have purchased the property in 2015 with only one car parking space.

I refer to the **photos numbered 1 to 6** attached to this email, which demonstrate how narrow the existing car port area is. It is simply not possible to get into and out of the vehicle without opening the door out over the other side of the car port and stepping onto that side. I would like to emphasise how impossible it would be to access a child seat or assist elderly relatives.

3. **Parking and access issues – serious safety concerns**

As the NHDC will be aware, parking in the village of Knebworth is already a serious ongoing concern for residents. In particular, our property is very close to Knebworth train station and there is currently an ongoing consultation to put double yellow lines outside the property, which would make parking even more difficult.

Within the new development of 8A, 8B, 8C and 8D Park Lane, the parking situation is quite chaotic already, with vehicles regularly parked in places which the deeds of the properties specify should *not* be parked on – as the existing parking provision (which is at minimum levels) is inadequate as a matter of fact. Access into and out of the shared driveway and car port area is already very tight.

In the event that 8A extends its garage lengthways they will have no option but to try to park their two existing vehicles on the shared driveway. Indeed, they have made it known that this is their intention as the extended (too-narrow) garage is to be used as a workshop whilst the back of the existing garage is converted to form part of the house.

This is not in line with the currently designated parking spots for the shared driveway which are set out in the deeds of the properties (copies can be provided on request but I assume you have access to these).

There is no room for two vehicles to be parked in front of 8A and it would have the effect of blocking safe access to the highway. The purpose of the shared driveway design is to allow vehicles to drive in one way and drive out the other, thus ensuring vehicles are not reversing out onto the highway. If the shared driveway were blocked on one side by cars then you would need to reverse out into the highway to exit the property.

Furthermore, as our own car port would be rendered unusable then we too would potentially be trying to park two cars on the driveway (quite apart from any guest parking) and this would also block the shared driveway for all parties.

I refer to **photos 7 to 12**. These show the existing shared driveway with 2 narrow entrances, one on 8B's side and one on 8A's side. The photos also show the parked cars currently outside the property along the highway, a situation which already makes access into and out of the property dangerous (hence the double yellow-line consultation). In the event that we needed to reverse out of the driveway due to the driveway being blocked then it will be a serious accident waiting to happen.

4. **Delivery trucks and service vehicles**

The planned extension would create particular problems for delivery trucks and service vehicles. Currently a delivery van arriving at our property will drive onto the driveway through the entrance shown at **photo 9** and exit via the entrance shown at **photo 8** (or vice versa). As stated above, this is why the shared driveway was designed in this way, in order to ensure that vehicles did not have to reverse onto the highway.

There is generally no available street parking as this is a very congested area next to the station – and as noted, there is currently a consultation to place yellow lines outside the property in any event. The planning proposal will therefore have serious implications for delivery access.

5. **Risk of property damage**

I have already explained that the current parking situation and access to the properties is tight. This is demonstrated further by the fact that the driveway pillar walls and lights have been knocked down now on multiple occasions, often by delivery vehicles seeking to manoeuvre into the already narrow space.

Specifically, the brick pillar on entrance to the driveway on the 8A side has been knocked down once in August 2016. The light on the 8B side of the driveway has been knocked down once in February 2017, whilst the brick wall on that side has been knocked down or damaged on 5 separate occasions: 31 December 2015, 23 January 2016, April 2017, October 2017 and March 2018.

We have a substantial amount of photographic evidence of this if it would assist and I note that the latest incident was dealt with by the police.

6. **Interference with right of way**

The car port is very much an extension of the shared driveway of the properties. As demonstrated in **photos 1-6**, we need to be able to step onto the other side of the car port in order to access our vehicle. We have a right of way to do this which would be interfered with in the event a dividing wall was erected. We will seek legal advice on this in the event the planning is approved.

7. **Visual impact**

I am concerned about the detrimental visual impact that the planned garage extension would have on the frontage of the property. The current appearance of the properties is identical and attractive, whilst the result of the garage extension would be to make the properties uneven and leave our side with a very odd, narrow space at the front akin to a garage but without a door.

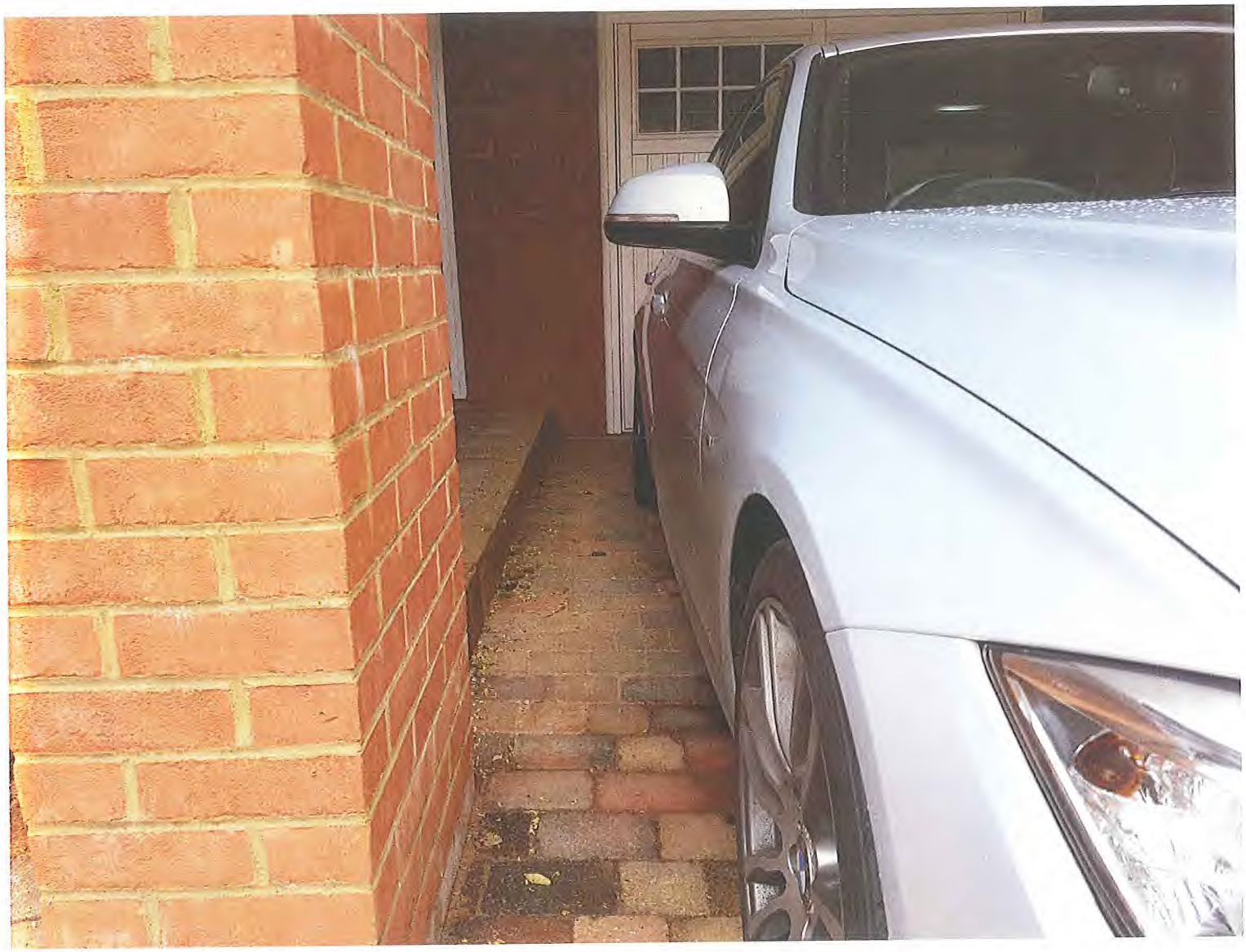
Conclusion

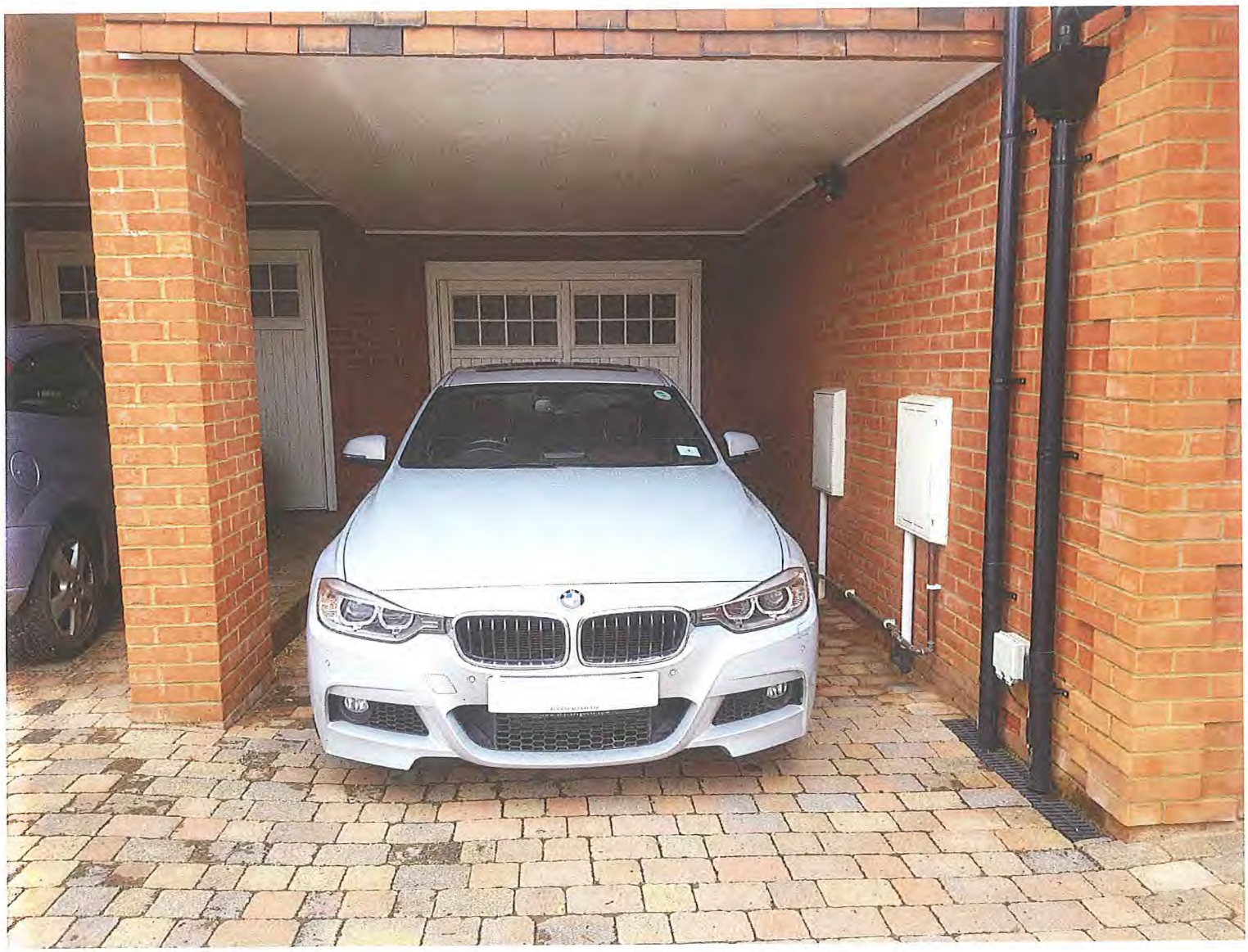
I would be happy to provide any further information or evidence concerning the content of this letter.

Yours sincerely,

Gareth Stinton












126



2.19 Previously a garage has counted towards parking provision even if it is unsuitable in size, adding increasing pressure on on-street parking. For this reason only garages above 7.0m x 3.0m (internal dimension intended for a single car plus some storage) will be considered as a parking space and whilst it cannot be insisted upon that residents use it for this purpose, its provision at this size means it is adequate should they chose to do so and will be counted within the provision for that dwelling.

(12)

2.20 Consideration must also be given to accessing the garage. In a number of instances the garage has not been set back a full vehicle space, on occasion half a space, resulting in residents parking their vehicle in front of their garage and blocking the footway.

