

North Hertfordshire District Council

Building Conservation comments

File Ref: 24/02291/FPH & 24/02292/LBC

Date: 17/02/2025

Planning Officer: HT

Address: 2 Eastholm, Letchworth Garden City, Hertfordshire SG6 4TN

Subject: Two storey rear extension with solar roof panels, following demolition of existing conservatory, existing single storey rear extension and two rear dormer windows, and internal alterations.

1.0 Recommendation

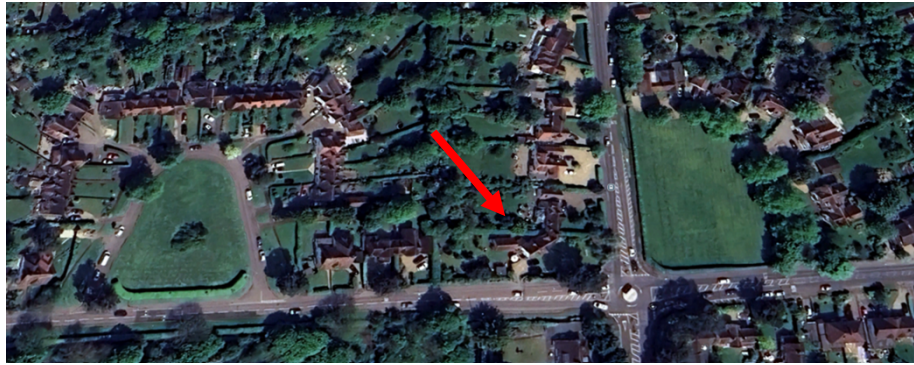
- 1.1 Nos. 1 and 2 Eastholm are a grade II listed pair of semi-detached houses with an angled footprint occupying a prominent corner position at the entrance to Eastholm. The significance of this pairing is in part attributed to them being architecturally designed by B Parker and R Unwin in 1906. The proposal would result in the loss of fabric including two rear dormer windows, a ground floor rear window and a catslide rear projection. By reason of its height, width, depth, mass and overall impact upon the splayed built form, the extension would occasion harm to the special character of both nos.1 and 2 Eastholm and also harm the special character of the Letchworth Conservation Area. The extension would fail to satisfy the provisions of Sections 16(2) (LBC only), 66(1) (FPH only) and 72(1) (both applications) of the Planning (LB & CA) Act 1990 and will not accord with Section 16 of the Framework and Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 – 2031.
- 1.2 The proposal is therefore **OBJECTIONABLE** in heritage terms.

2.0 Context

- 2.1 Nos. 1 and 2 Eastholm are together grade II listed and are located within the Letchworth Conservation Area. Both the building and area are Designated Heritage Assets for the purpose of applying the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework. The statutory list entry reads as follows:

Pair of semi-detached houses. 1905-6, by B Parker and R Unwin. Roughcast over brick; gabled plain tile roof; brick ridge stacks. L plan. One storey and attic; 6-window range. Wood casements with glazing bars to all windows. Central 2-storey canted bay window at angle to two wings; gabled projections with 3-light windows and round-arched plank doors set in continuous lean-to projections which extend towards centre; 3 gabled 2-light dormer windows set over 2-light windows. Gabled dormers and similar fenestration to rear. Interior: simply treated, with staircases rising between partition walls and plank doors.

Although described as L-plan, these could be described as almost 'wing-plan' due to the dwellings splayed relationship and contributes further to the building's special interest. The building sits between the two 'greens' of Eastholm and Westholm.



- 2.2 In the past, a similar design rationale has been applied to both dwellings i.e. a linked single-storey outbuilding, the one at no.2 being slightly higher than that at no.1.



- 2.3 It is useful to note that when commenting on a rear conservatory following demolition of existing (as amended by plan received on 25 January 2007) under refs: 06/02322/1HH and 06/02324/1LB (photo below taken at the time), the Conservation Officer wrote:

However, a conservatory structure would be the only form of addition in this position that would be considered as not being detrimental to the character of this building. It would ensure the original cottage form to be clearly seen through the glazed structure. It is therefore considered that the retention of solid walls would compromise the appearance of the listed structure and are not acceptable.



3.0 The Local Plan and NPPF (Dec 2024)

- 3.1 Policy HE1 of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011 - 2031 is relevant as are the following paragraphs of the NPPF:

- **135 c)** (sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment),
- **207** (local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting)

- **210** (desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness),
- **212** (great weight should be given to the asset's conservation),
- **213** (clear and convincing justification), and
- **215** (harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use).

4.0 The Proposal

- 4.1 As stated in the description, to facilitate the erection of the two-storey rear extension an existing conservatory (no special interest), an existing single storey rear extension and two rear dormer windows would need to be removed. The removal of a rear ground floor window is also proposed.
- 4.2 The left-hand dormer is either a later addition or has been modified. The submitted DAHS says that *"A rear single storey extension with a cat-slide roof, built from half brick construction, so believed to originally have been a coal shed or outhouse, will be partially demolished to facilitate the new extension. The proposals retain the cat-slide roof profile on the northern elevation"*.



- 4.3 The asymmetrical front gables of nos. 1 and 2 together with that of no.4 Eastholm above are imbued with a strong Garden City aesthetic. Whilst the proposed extension at no.2 is not poorly designed, the plot division with no.1 is such that even if considered acceptable, due to the extension's size this would most likely not work for no.1 should the owner there have similar aspirations to extend. What this means is that the proposed extension, if granted, would most likely lead to a permanent unbalancing or mismatch of the rear elevations of both properties eroding the building's character.
- 4.4 Although windows of a similar size to those at first floor on the extension exist at the front at first floor, it is considered that the first-floor windows of the

extension when paired-up may be considered overly large, regrettably though this would be missing the point. The listed building possesses significance in terms of being architecturally designed by B Parker and R Unwin in 1906 as part of the early Garden City but also because it makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Letchworth Conservation Area occupying a prominent corner position at the entrance to Eastholm.



- 4.5 The width and twin-gabled design would be a dominant form and would require the removal of considerable fabric and would significantly impact upon the linear splayed or angled plan form of the host building. Whilst paired gables are a feature of some dwellings in the conservation area, in this particular case they do not relate well to the host building. Whilst I understand the functionality of the space created, this does not sensitively address the building's special character where gabled projections are limited to the front elevations and even here, they are shallow projections presumably designed more to embellish the elevations as opposed to creating significant internal floor space. Whereas the rear extension would create 33m² on both the ground and first floors with the later creating a singular large master bedroom with ensuite.

- 4.6 The question is whether this amount of development is convincingly justified and whether this is required to ensure an optimal viable use. In my opinion, no such case has been made, and the DAHS says:

The client's requirements are to create a more generous master suite at first floor level and living space at ground floor level to replace the existing conservatory which is thermally inefficient and cannot be used for long periods of the year.

A two-storey rear extension is proposed. This provides a kitchen/living space at ground floor level and a new master suite at first floor level. At ground floor, a WC and utility space are provided at the front of the building. The existing utility room is small and constructed in half-brick thick construction. At first floor, the introduction of an additional bathroom enables the existing bathroom to be reduced in size, enabling the bedroom on the front of the property to be made a more useable size.

- 4.7 I am not prepared to accept the loss of the smaller original dormer (window 8 at 4.9 below) or window 11 or the erection of a double-gable rear addition as shown.
- 4.8 Even a less deep, single, asymmetrical gabled projection to the far left of the rear elevation that clears the smaller dormer may still present challenges (see red line overlay at 4.2). Whilst a pre-app or formal application could be submitted along these lines, this may still not be supported in conservation terms.
- 4.9 Glazing bars are not shown on the existing windows as drawn in elevation which in drawn form denudes them of their contribution they make to the building's aesthetic appeal and architectural interest.

- 4.10 There was a proposal to replace 13no. windows with timber framed, double-glazed windows under application ref: 14/00405/1LB but this was withdrawn. One such window was window 11 on the submitted photos and whilst I have not been to site for the current application, the internal photos offered with that application illustrate the type of windows we are dealing with here. An internal view of Window 8 was not submitted with the 2014 application but it is assumed that it would be very similar to Window 9 (see below).



Window 7

Window 9

Window 11



- 4.11 Finally, I find the internal alteration to reduce the bathroom at first floor and enlarging the third bedroom to be unobjectionable. This leaves the potential to maybe offer a Split Decision on the LBC application only as follows:

- **GRANT - Development A:** Internal alterations at first floor to reduce family bathroom and to enlarge Bedroom 3.
- **REFUSE - Development B:** Two storey rear extension with solar roof panels, following demolition of existing conservatory, existing single storey rear extension and two rear dormer windows.

Mark Simmons
Senior Conservation Officer