

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
ESTATE MANAGEMENT SCHEME PANEL – 15 FEBRUARY 2018
REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR (PUBLIC PROTECTION, PLANNING
AND GOVERNANCE)

6/2017/1696/EM

70 WOODHALL LANE, WELWYN GARDEN CITY, AL7 3TF

REPLACEMENT OF FRONT DOOR

APPLICANT: Mr P Frake

(Peartree)

1. Background

- 1.1. This is an appeal against the refusal of Estate Management Consent for a replacement front door. The application (reference:6/2017/1696/EM) was refused on the 17 October 2017 for the following reason:

“The design of the proposed replacement front door is considered to be inappropriate and would form an incongruous addition to the property, failing to respect the visual amenities of the street scene. Accordingly, the proposed development would fail to maintain and enhance the amenities and values of this part of the Garden City and is therefore contrary to Policy EM1 of the Estate Management Scheme.”

2. Site Description

- 2.1. The site contains a mid-terraced two storey dwelling with a pitched roof and forms part of a row of four terrace properties. The dwelling is located on the south west side of Woodhall Lane. The dwellings along Woodhall Lane are generally consistent in character, appearance and design.
- 2.2. A distinct characteristic along Woodhall Lane are the front porch features of neo-Georgian architecture which highlight the front entrances of the properties. This detailing can be viewed from the street and contributes positively to the character and appearance of the terrace of properties and the surrounding area.
- 2.3. The existing front door at the appeal property is white in colour, and hosts two mid-level vertical rectangular panels and a semi-circle glazing feature which is positioned to the top. The feature of the front porch which is white in colour, highlights the front door, which currently appears neutral and simplistic respecting the design and architecture of the host dwelling.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. The proposal seeks consent for the replacement of the existing front door. The proposed door would be finished in pastel green and would include four square glazing panels to the left-hand side and a long handle down the right hand side.

4. Relevant Estate Management History

- 4.1. None

5. Policy

- 5.1. Estate Management Scheme Policies (October 2008)
EM1 – Extensions and Alterations

6. Representations Received

- 6.1. No representations have been received.

7. Discussion

- 7.1. This is an appeal against the refusal of Estate Management Consent. The appellant's letter of appeal is attached at Appendix 1, and the original officer's report for application referenced 6/2017/1696/EM, is attached at Appendix 2.
- 7.2. The key issue in the determination of this appeal is the impact of the proposed door on the values and amenities of the surrounding area. The impact on the residential amenity of adjoining occupiers is considered to be acceptable.
- 7.3. In recognition of the importance of Welwyn Garden City as a unique town and in order to protect the amenities and values of the Garden City, the Estate Management Scheme was set up. The purpose of the Management Scheme and its importance to homeowners is to ensure that homes and street scenes are kept in harmony with the original design and concept of the town.
- 7.4. Policy EM1 of the Estate Management Scheme applies and refers to extensions and alterations and seeks to preserve the unique architectural heritage of the town and its building. It states that extensions and alterations to existing buildings will only be allowed if they are in keeping with the design, appearance, materials and architectural detailing used in the existing building and do not have a detrimental impact on the amenities and values of the surrounding area.
- 7.5. The appeal dwelling hosts neo-Georgian characteristics of a typical Welwyn Garden City dwelling, in terms of materials, Georgian glazing design as well as distinct architectural features including the front porch. The front porches along Woodhall Lane, which include pitch and flat roofs, form part of the uniformity of these properties and therefore are a prominent feature that contribute to the character and appearance of part of this streetscene. These front porches are

white in colour. This feature helps to highlight the front entrance of the properties, which further emphasises the front door colour and design, which are readily visible within the streetscene.

- 7.6. The design and style of front doors vary in Woodhall Lane, although the original style of Georgian style glazing is still apparent within a number of properties within the streetscene. Whilst it is noted that the style and design of front doors vary from the traditional neo-Georgian design, it is noted that there are examples present which are traditional of the Garden City. These include designs with four vertical rectangular panels and two large panel's one above the other. These styles still convey a traditional, simplistic style which complement and relate to the character and architectural detailing of the buildings.
- 7.7. The existing front door at the appeal property is not the original front door, however, it is considered to be in keeping with the streetscene given it is white in colour and with regard to its neutral, traditional and simplistic design. The existing white front door and white front porch are considered to contribute positively to the values and amenities of the area.
- 7.8. The proposed front door at the appeal property would present a contemporary and modern design by virtue of its four vertical glazing squares to the left hand side and the long vertical handle to the right hand side, which would be a significant departure from the architectural style of these buildings. The proposed door would present an inappropriate and incongruous addition to the streetscene, that would fail to match the design and style of others and which would therefore result in harm to the appeal property, the row of properties it is located in and the amenities and values of the Garden City.
- 7.9. A case has been advanced by the appellant in support of the appeal. The appellant outlines that at the time of purchase of the front door, they were unaware of the Estate Management Scheme and therefore are now in a position of financial outlay. Whilst Officers empathise with the appellant, this is not considered to override the harm resulting to the amenities and values of Woodhall Lane and the wider Estate Management Area as a result of the installation of the front door.
- 7.10. The appellant outlined that the Estate Management Scheme stipulates that "*we keep and maintain walls, roofs, doors, windows, fences, hedges and drains in good repair and condition*". Whilst it is acknowledged and agreed that there is a responsibility to ensure properties are maintained and visually aesthetic, like for like replacements and repairs are not subject to Estate Management approval which allows home owners to carry out this work as and when required. The appellant has not presented a case addressing why a similar design to that existing, which is more in keeping with the streetscene, could not be installed at the host property. The requirement to replace the door provides no weight in favour of the proposal.

- 7.11. Furthermore, the appellant highlights that on the Woodhall Side of the Garden City that “*with so many examples of either the colour of style already installed across streets defined within the Estate Management Scheme...a precedent has been set*”. This statement is supported by a number of photographs.
- 7.12. The photographs highlight a number of examples of more contemporary design of front doors. The appellant has not presented any addresses along with these examples, although mentions they are in the Woodside Area. There is no estate management history of consent for such front doors in Woodhall Lane, which the appeal property is located in. In addition, whilst Woodhall Lane is located within the Estate Management Scheme, it is noted there are streets in close proximity to this site which fall outside of this area and as such it is not known whether the photographs provided are examples that fall within the Estate Management Area and whether consent would have been required. Regardless, every application is considered on its own merits, and as mentioned above, no estate management history of consent can be found for such doors in Woodhall Lane and therefore limited weight is given.
- 7.13. With regard to the colour of the front door, the preferred colour would be white, as this is the traditional colour of front doors within the Garden City. However, given the variety of colours, it is considered that a pastel green colour, on balance, would not be objectionable. Whilst objections are not raised with regard to the colour of the front door, this does not outweigh the harm identified by the design.
- 7.14. As a result of the design alone, the proposed door would result in an incongruous addition to the street scene, and as a result would cause harm to the amenities and values of the area.
- 7.15. A compelling case has therefore not been made by the appellant to demonstrate why the circumstances advanced by the appellants of this particular property, when considered in its context should override the wider values and amenities of Woodhall Lane. Accordingly, the proposal fails to reflect the character and appearance of the appeal property, the row terrace properties to which it is located and the streetscene of Woodhall Lane. The proposed development therefore fails to maintain the amenities and values of the Estate Management Area.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1. The proposed design of the new front door, in a prominent location of Woodhall Lane, would be result in an inappropriate and incongruous addition which would be unacceptable and have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the appeal property, the row of terrace properties in which it is located and the surrounding street scene. No additional evidence or information has been put forward by the appellant which adds to or would alter officer’s recommendation. Therefore the proposed design of the door would cause harm to the values and amenities of the area and the proposal fails to accord with Policy EM1 of the Welwyn Garden City Estate Management Scheme.

9. Recommendation

9.1. That the Members uphold the delegated decision and dismiss the appeal.

Lucy Hale (Development Management Officer)

Date: 17 January 2018

Background papers:

Appendix 1: Appellants grounds of appeal

Appendix 2: Original delegated officer's report