

ITEM 4.18 - 9 THE CHENIES, PETTS WOOD

COMMENTS FROM COUNCILLOR DOUGLAS AULD, PETTS WOOD AND KNOLL WARD

You will already have either heard or read the comments of my Ward colleague, Councillor Simon Fawthrop and of the Chairman of The Chenies Road Association , Mr Eric Nash. I will try not to repeat too many of the points which they've already made but it is unavoidable I shall have to touch on some.

This application is in a Conservation Area for which an Article 4 Direction is already in being to preserve the appearance of the frontages. It is for a single storey side/rear extension and part conversion of existing garage to habitable accommodation with flue at rear and replacement roof to existing garage and existing rear extension. The officer's report recommends approval. With the support of both Councillor Fawthrop mentioned above and the third Ward Councillor, Tony Owen I will be opposing the officer's recommendation and proposing at the conclusion of my comments that the application be refused.

The Advisory Panel for Conservation Areas has raised objections to the proposal and the Panel's comments are shown under Comments from Consultees near the top of page 104 of the officer's report. In brief they state that existing garages in conservation areas should be retained as an essential part of the designated character. In answer to this at the top of page 105, line 5, the officer merely states 'Whilst the concerns raised by APCA are noted....'.

The Chenies in Petts Wood **IS** the Conservation Area. The road consists of just twenty-nine large and distinctive houses which remain virtually unaltered since they were built about eighty years ago. It is arguably one of the most attractive roads in the whole Borough. Although there are a number of variations in the architecture of the dwellings, there is a style and a balance which is common to all. Twenty-eight of the twenty-nine houses have either an integral garage or an original 1930s small detached garage to the side, some of which are set back into the garden. In appearance, having been built at the same time as the houses, these garages are very much in accord with the host dwellings and are a part of the street scene.

In turning to this application, I would first of all agree with Councillor Fawthrop that the proposed rear extension in isolation is acceptable in that it would not be visible from the road and would not result in loss of amenity to neighbours. However the proposed side extension and alteration or indeed possible removal of the small detached garage to the side would have negative effects on the Conservation Area in general and on the dwelling at no.9 itself. In respect of this part of the application, Councillor Fawthrop posed the question 'would the proposal enhance or preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area?' I believe it would do neither and in fact would detract from the street scene. Bear in mind there are no similar extensions in the whole road.

Were this application to success, it would set a precedent which others in the future may follow and this eventually could result in a diminishing of the attractiveness of this Conservation Area.

The flue or chimney at the rear of the existing garage to serve a wood burning stove is a further worrying element. Obviously wood smoke would emit from it and should the wind be blowing in the wrong direction, this would result in a loss of amenity to neighbour(s). Again, there are no similar flues in existence in the road.

I have visited the venue, read fully the officer's report and the comments made by Mr Nash and Councillor Fawthrop. If we can't protect our conservation areas what can we protect? I believe the application should be refused and so propose, giving as grounds for refusal:-

Contrary to:

BE1 (v) - loss of amenity, disturbance through possible smoke emissions.

BE11 (i) - would not respect the layout, scale and form of existing buildings.

(ii) - does not respect and incorporate in the design features that contribute to the character and appearance of the area.

Thank you Madam Chairman

Douglas Auld
Councillor Petts Wood & Knoll Ward

COMMENTS FROM COUNCILLOR SIMON FAWTHROP, PETTS WOOD AND KNOLL WARD

I'm sorry I can't be present at the meeting due to another commitment. However, I'd be most grateful if the Committee would take these observations into account.

For anyone that has not visited The Chenies, I would urge them to do so prior to the meeting. On a visit you will see that this Conservation Area is probably in the top five Areas within the Borough. The Area is not just a classic 1930s suburban development, as described in the UDP, but of such quality that when considering the frontages and street scene it is very hard to improve upon the design, outlook and general character of the area. This road is a Conservation Area in its own right and not just as part of a wider scheme as often happens. This small road has been singled as being of an exceptionally high standard.

When looking at the application before you, the main policy considerations that need to be taken into account are policies BE1, BE11, BE12 and H8. When considering BE11 the policy is as follows:-

'In order to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of conservation areas, a proposal for new development, alteration or extension to a building within a conservation area WILL be expected to:-

- (i) respect or complement the layout, scale, form and materials of existing buildings and spaces.
- (ii) respect and incorporate in the design existing landscape or other features that contribute to the character, appearance and historic value of the area; and
- (iii) ensure that the level of activity.....'

This application is for a single storey side/rear extension and conversion of the existing garage to a habitable room. In terms of the rear extension, this on balance, would appear to be acceptable as it is not visible from the street scene and would be neutral in terms of this very important conservation area. However, when it comes to the side extension, this stretch of the conservation area is characterised by detached garages which stand out as part of the design of the buildings in the Conservation Area. The application in respect of this element of the proposal falls woefully short of enhancing or preserving the appearance of the conservation area. Throughout the report before you, there is not one sentence that identifies that this application either enhances or preserves the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Clearly Members will be aware that it does not preserve the conservation area as it is making a change and therefore the question that Members need to address is: does it enhance the conservation area? My view is that it does not because the detracting of the rhythm of housing in the street scene is broken by this proposal and furthermore, the proposed flue goes against the Article 4 Direction which was to preserve the appearance of the frontages. This will be visible from the street scene and will be detrimental to the whole conservation area and cannot be said to enhance the conservation area. There are no other such flues anywhere in the conservation area.

The final point I would make is that the submission from APCA (The Advisory Panel for Conservation Areas) should be given due weight and taken very seriously in your deliberations as it is unusual a) for APCA to respond and b) to raise objections. This underlines the importance of the Chenies Conservation Area not only to the locality but to the Borough as a whole.

I would therefore urge Members to refuse this application or at the very least defer the application to remove the side extension and keep the garage as an integral part of the conservation area.

COMMENTS FROM MR ERIC NASH, CHAIRMAN OF THE CHENIES ROAD ASSOCIATION

Very regretfully I will be unable to attend on Thursday when I understand the Committee will be considering this application. My son's graduation ceremony is taking place on the same day in Peterborough.

I understand that the planning department have already recommended approval for this application to the Committee to discuss. Unfortunately, I cannot agree to this recommendation and without sounding rude or disrespectful, have the planning department representatives visited the Chenies before arriving at their decision? The existing detached garage with gable end visible to the road will certainly not look or resemble anything like the original if allowed to proceed; in actual fact, I can only describe it as looking like a Swiss chalet roof and looking totally unbalanced and out of character. The other point that I wish to mention is that within the comments made regarding the flue, in that planning only seem to have considered its proximity not as being a feature of the street scene. My concerns are that this chimney will only be 2 metres from the rear of my ground level living accommodation and with the proposed lowering of the roof pitch, I still feel the prevailing west/south westerly winds we have, the discharge from this flue will play a prominent feature in our lives. Can the flue not be installed in such a way so that the outlet is on the opposite rear corners of the rear garage that would place it approximately 4 metres away.

We in The Chenies are proud to be residents in this beautiful road which the Chenies Road Association maintain to the highest possible standards and are pleased that we are part of the conservation area which we hope is there to protect areas like The Chenies and similar. The current trend within the Chenies at the current time is that as and when a property comes onto the market for sale, it would appear to be the younger generation that are buying but do not appear to have interest or concerns about conservation, they simply seem intent upon modernisation and alterations. If this front garage elevation extension is approved, it will in my opinion then leave the door wide open for future planning applications which would then possibly look to modify the situation even further, challenging the question of conservation and at that stage what would we have left to conserve?

I sincerely hope the Committee give this application a fair and sympathetic consideration.

Regards
Eric Nash