

Little Berkhamsted Parish Council

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20 March 2008

Mr Michael Chalk
East Herts Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford SG13 8EQ

Dear Mr Chalk

LPA ref 3/08/0328/FP – Rear dormer window; 4 The Boundary, Little Berkhamsted

Thank you for your letter of 28 February 2008 inviting comments on the above application.

The five terraced cottages in The Boundary occupy a prominent position overlooking the Recreation Ground in the centre of the Little Berkhamsted Conservation Area. They were built in 2004/05 (under LPA Ref: 3/04/1173) with the support of the Parish Council after extensive consultation to achieve a design that was sympathetic to their important location and not intrusive to adjacent properties. As part of this process, the Parish Council was consulted by the developers about an amendment to the approved plan whereby Velux conservation roof windows would be installed in the properties to provide natural light to enable the loft spaces to be used. The Council wrote to Andrea Gilmour at the Development Control Office on 9 December 2004 to advise that it did not object to such an amendment, so long as it was confined to a single window in the north elevation of each property, set as high as possible in the roofs to minimize the risk of intrusive views into other properties along Church Road. So far as the Council is aware, this is what was done, so that the roof void is already accessible to and usable by the occupants of the properties in The Boundary.

The Council strongly opposes the application for a rear dormer window at 4 The Boundary as it considers such a window would have a significantly detrimental effect on the carefully considered present character and appearance of the property and the adjoining four dwellings, contrary to Policy ENV5 of the East Hertfordshire Local Plan Second Review. Specifically, the Council considers that the proposed window would be contrary to Policy ENV6(V) which requires dormers to be 'appropriate to the design and character of the original dwelling and its surroundings' and 'generally of limited extent and modest proportions, so as not to dominate the existing roof form'.

The Council also notes that the section of the East Herts Council's House Extensions Guidance Note dealing with dormer windows states that 'there may be instances where the inclusion of any style of dormer window will be unacceptable, such as where there is a long run of dormer-less roofs on terraced properties or properties of a particular character'. In the Council's view, this guidance applies exactly to The Boundary and that for this and the Local Plan Policy reasons noted above, no dormer windows, front or rear, should be permitted.

The Council considers it unfortunate that the planning officer who dealt with a previous refused application for dormer windows at 4 The Boundary wrote to the applicant's agent on 25 October 2007 indicating that a re-submitted application for a rear window was likely to be considered more favourably. This letter did not give sufficient weight to the need to protect the overall appearance of The Boundary, which is a carefully planned Conservation Area development where each property forms an integral part of the whole. If permission is given for a piecemeal alteration to one of the properties, this may well be the thin end of the wedge for future applications which could lead to each of the cottages having a somewhat different appearance. The uniform high quality of design style which distinguishes the development will then have been irrevocably lost.

Accordingly, and notwithstanding the 25 October 2007 officer's letter referred to above, the Council requests that the present application and its wider implications are considered at the most senior level in the Development Control Office and urges that it be refused.

Yours sincerely

Graham Irwin
Clerk to the Parish Council

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28 March 2008

Mr Michael Chalk
East Herts Council
Wallfields
Pegs Lane
Hertford SG13 8EQ

Dear Mr Chalk

LPA ref 3/08/0328/FP – Amended drawings for rear dormer window; 4 The Boundary, Little Berkhamsted

Thank you for your letter of 25 March 2008 enclosing an amended drawing for this application.

For the reasons set out in its letter of 20 March 2008 on the original application, the parish council strongly opposes in principle the addition of dormer windows to any of the cottages in The Boundary, irrespective of the design of the dormer proposed. Accordingly, the objections expressed in the parish council's 20 March letter apply with equal force to the amended application.

Yours sincerely

Graham Irwin
Clerk to the Parish Council