

**COMMENTS ON THE REVISED PLANS FOR A TWO STOREY AND SINGLE STOREY EXTENSIONS
AT 47 HIGHFIELD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY**

Introductory comments

Having examined the revised plans, I find it gratifying that the boundary between number [REDACTED] and my property, number [REDACTED] is now being recognised and adhered to. There were, in the earlier proposals, issues related to the infringement of this boundary between [REDACTED] two properties which made those plans unacceptable.

However, I cannot proceed further with [REDACTED] comments on these new plans without objecting strongly to the architect's annotations on the section of the revision which depicts the "Existing Ground Floor General Arrangement Plan" which are both factually incorrect and an indication of the architect's approach to these proposals. I understand from [REDACTED] neighbour that these annotations were originally present not only in this section but also against the "Proposed Ground Floor General Arrangement" as well. [REDACTED] neighbour states that [REDACTED] disagreed with the annotations and asked for [REDACTED] to be removed from both areas but the architect failed to comply fully with [REDACTED] wishes.

In the course of [REDACTED] consultations with the householder at 47 Highfield, I explained that the wooden fence between [REDACTED] respective properties, present when [REDACTED] moved in to the property, had been erected in about the year 2000 following the original [REDACTED] Highfield house owner, [REDACTED], deciding [REDACTED] wished to remove a tall hedge that ran the length of [REDACTED] garden and which therefore exposed [REDACTED] angle-iron and chain-linked boundary fence which was delapidated and would have to be replaced by [REDACTED]. Far from this being a "new fence line adjacent to historic garden wall", the fence posts were aligned with the angle-iron posts which were to be removed. [REDACTED] personally oversaw this process and expressed [REDACTED] satisfied with the result. This wooden fence had deteriorated by the time the current householder at number [REDACTED] moved in and was replaced with [REDACTED] full knowledge and onto the same alignment as that which was being replaced. Once again, I made a point of ensuring that both [REDACTED] and the householder at [REDACTED] had sufficient access to the space between [REDACTED] respective garages, to provide for maintenance of brickwork, guttering and fascias.

The architect also indicates the boundary line between the two garages as an "arbitrary line to connect reference points". To be charitable to the architect, [REDACTED] can assume [REDACTED] meant "extrapolated line" rather than "arbitrary line". The fact that the fence line does not extend between the garages has already been explained. [REDACTED] have provided the householder (and, incidentally, the Heritage Foundation who also have an inaccurate understanding of the boundary line as it relates to the garages) with the First Garden City Ltd's original plot plan and there should be no confusion on the architect's part as to the positioning of the boundary line. Both plots are 47ft wide at the rear narrowing to 40ft (in the case of [REDACTED] Highfield) and 41ft wide (in the case of [REDACTED] Highfield) at the start of the street footpath.

At the point that the brickwork for the garage at [REDACTED] commences the plot has widened to in excess of 41ft wide and is therefore perfectly able to accommodate the guttering about which the architect erroneously comments on the plan "Note existing guttering overhangs this line".

Components of the proposal

The plans as submitted can be considered as being made up of three elements

- the construction of a two-storey rear extension following the demolition of the existing single-storey kitchen extension and a small conservatory
- the replacement of the double length garage by a storeroom and a study
- the construction of a single-storey rear extension to abut the full width of the house and new side single-storey extension to create a larger kitchen/diner area than permitted simply by the two-storey extension.

The comments which follow will cover each of these elements separately.

Comments on the two storey extension.

Whilst the starting point for any consideration of the merits (or otherwise) of the proposed building works in the modern character area of the Garden City should be the Letchworth Heritage Foundation's published Design Principles, these guidelines make little or no reference to the rear building line which might restrict rear extensions.

However, a cursory examination of the rear building lines down this section of Highfield, show that there has been an acceptance in past planning decisions to limit any extension, whether single or two storey, to an approximate depth equivalence with adjacent properties in the run of houses. Some conservatories have been approved which project further into the garden area but these only affect part of width of the rear of the house and are not in close proximity to the boundary between adjacent properties.

Clearly, the principle of alignment of the two-storey section of the plans with existing rear building lines in adjacent properties has been recognised and followed.

The footprint of the original 1957 house (omitting the kitchen extension and the small conservatory) is small, allowing only for three bedrooms and a very small bathroom. The need to give more bedroom and bathroom space to the property seem fully justified and no issues are raised for neighbouring properties.

Despite the plan to add a bathroom to the garage side of the premises, the plan shows no new drainage, soil or rainwater pipework, or guttering, and therefore it is not possible to judge how these might impact on the boundary issue. Almost certainly the side extension wall at 47 Highfield would require a rainwater gutter running along its length and a downpipe in the rear garden or at the front of the house. ■ see that a rainwater downpipe has been added to the plan at the rear where the valley is created between the new roofs on the extension, which makes it even more anomalous that nothing has been appended to the proposed side elevation. ■ have asked repeatedly for clarification of this matter and was promised clarity after another visit by the architect, but this has yet to emerge.

The replacement of the existing garage

The lack of notation on the plan does not make it clear to the non-specialist observer, but it would appear the intention is to demolish the existing garage. Rather than take the approach used in 1987 when a similar requirement was identified at number ■ Highfield, the plans then seek to replace the demolished garage with a structure of greater height running the full depth of the two-storey house.

If, indeed the garage were to be demolished rather than converted, any new erection should presumably be at least one metre from the boundary line, as it should be treated as a new ground floor extension or a garage, in accordance with pages 9 and 16 of the Design Guidelines.

The addition of a single storey rear extension

The proposals suggest a single-storey structure projecting from the back of the two-storey building and to the rear of the footprint of the existing garage. This pushes the end of the building some 2.5 to 3 metres further into the garden than the rear of the two-storey extension.

This creates what is to all intents and purposes is a full height and width, brick-sided conservatory, supporting a flat-roof containing significant glazing. The protrusion of the brick sides is made even greater in order that a back porch over the fully opened bi-fold doors in the conservatory can be supported.

A traditional conservatory would not normally be approved with its side wall so close to the boundary line but would require a gap of at least a metre. ■ contend that this rear single storey extension should be treated as if it were a conservatory and its width reduced to create less of an intrusion into sightlines from the adjacent properties.

This single storey structure, if approved, would appear to take the total depth of the combined extensions from the original rear wall of the property to over the 5 metres depth specified in the Design Principles.

Post script: Depiction of patio structures and layout

■ am disturbed to see included in the proposals a patio plan with "vertical sleeper feature" and wall of undisclosed height which are also in close proximity to the boundary line. ■ queried this when the earlier plans were submitted, and was assured by ■ neighbour that the patio depiction on the plan had not been asked for by ■ and that this was entirely of the architect's own creation.

The fact that this patio plan has been retained in the revised proposals, and bearing in mind the architect's approach of "pushing the envelope", creates scope for further contention and this element of the plan needs to be expunged from the submission so that no hint of Heritage Foundation approval of garden structures is given when the building work is itself given authorisation.