

DARLINGTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE

COMMITTEE DATE: 1 July 2009

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APPLICATION REF. NO:	09/00276/FUL
STATUTORY DECISION DATE:	23 June 2009
WARD/PARISH:	COLLEGE
LOCATION:	34 Stanhope Road South
DESCRIPTION:	Demolition and reconstruction of chimney stack to rear extension, lowering to original height, demolition of existing external staircase and erection of replacement external staircase and creation of hardstanding to front and side (additional plans and information, amended design and access statement received 18 May 2009)
APPLICANT:	Ms E Alexander

APPLICATION AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The application property is a semi-detached, three-storey property located on the west side of Stanhope Road South, within the Stanhope Road/Grange Road Conservation Area. The property is separated into three flats.

Planning permission is sought for a number of alterations to the property to include the demolition of an existing chimney to the side of the property and its partial rebuilding; the erection of a replacement external staircase following demolition of the existing external staircase and the creation of a hardstanding area to the front and side of the property to provide three off-street car parking spaces.

A structural survey has been submitted with the application to demonstrate that the chimney is structurally unsafe and the application proposes that it will be rebuilt to its original height, 13 courses less than its current height. The proposed replacement external staircase will replace an existing brick built staircase, which gives access to a first floor flat. The replacement staircase will be constructed with facing brick walls with precast concrete steps, to match the form and appearance of the existing staircase. The existing masonry handrail will be replaced with a conservation style painted steel balustrade and handrail.

The creation of an area of hardstanding to the front and side of the property will allow the provision of three off-street car parking spaces to the front of the property. There is already a dropped kerb to the front of the property, which allows vehicular access to an existing driveway. The hardstanding is to be created using permeable block pavements, incorporating a permeable

aggregate sub base. Surface water will be allowed to run off into surrounding planted verges without the requirement for underground surface water drainage. The hardstanding will extend to the side of the property to allow access to the separate entrances to the property.

A Design and Access Statement has also been submitted with the application.

PLANNING HISTORY

Planning permission was granted in 1968 for the conversion of the first and second floors of the property into two flats. There is however no recent planning history.

PLANNING POLICY BACKGROUND

The following policies of the Borough of Darlington Local Plan 1997 are relevant to consideration of the application:

E29 – The Setting of New Development

The following national policy guidance is also relevant:

PPG 15 ‘Planning and the Historic Environment’ 1995 is also relevant to the application.

RESULTS OF CONSULTATION AND PUBLICITY

One letter of objection has been received which raises the following issues:

- *Would like to know if the mature tree and the mature privet hedges at the front and side of the property are to remain?*
- *The property is located in a conservation area. If permission is granted to turn the front area into a hardstanding car park then I feel this would be the start of an open invitation to the whole area to apply for consent to turn their gardens into car park and as a result would greatly affect the look and aspect of the conservation area.*
- *There is residents parking for the area, the property already has off-street parking for one car and there are two garages to the rear of the property, so I don't understand the need to make the whole area hard standing.*
- *Particularly concerned that the current plans show one of the car parking spaces facing directly in towards my front bay window.*

PLANNING ISSUES

The main planning issues to be considered in the determination of the application are:

- Impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Stanhope Road/Grange Road Conservation Area.
- Impact on Residential Amenity
- Highway Safety

Impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the Stanhope Road/Grange Road Conservation Area

PPG 15 'Planning and the Historic Environment' requires that in accordance with Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 the desirability of preserving or enhancing a conservation area should be a material consideration in the determination of a planning application for development within such areas. Policy E29 (The Setting of New Development) also requires that new development, including alterations and extensions to existing buildings, will be required to respect the intrinsic character of its townscape setting in terms of its siting, design, materials and landscaping.

The chimney to the side elevation of the property is an attractive feature of the application property and is considered to contribute to the character and appearance of this part of the conservation area. A structural survey has been submitted with the application, which concludes that the chimney is structurally unsound, does not comply with current Building Regulations and should be demolished. It is proposed to rebuild the chimney back to its original height that is minus the top 13 courses of brick, which have been added at a later date. The chimney has been demolished prior to consideration of the application as it was deemed unsafe.

The proposed replacement external staircase will replace an existing brick built staircase, which gives access to a first floor flat. The existing staircase is an incongruous addition to the property, however given that the property is set back from the road and the relatively close spacing between properties on this part of Stanhope Road South, it is not a particularly prominent feature in street scene terms. Nevertheless the proposed replacement staircase is considered to be an improvement over the existing staircase, particularly in view of the replacement of the existing solid masonry handrail with painted steel balustrade and handrail, which will allow light through the plain fanlight to the ground floor entrance door.

The proposed area of hardstanding will replace a partially lawned front garden. The existing hedgerows to the front and side of the property and two mature trees in the front garden of the property will be retained. While the loss of the lawned area is regrettable, the proposed hardstanding will be largely obscured by the existing hedgerow and mature trees to the front of the property such that it will preserve the character and appearance of this part of the Stanhope Road/Grange Road Conservation Area.

The Councils' Conservation Officer has commented on the application and raises no objection to any of the three elements of the application, subject to the imposition of planning conditions regarding the use of materials for the rebuilding of the chimneystack and the replacement external staircase.

Impact on Residential Amenity

Concern has been expressed regarding the potential for disturbance arising from the use of the front garden for the parking of vehicles. There is an existing verge crossing which allows for vehicles to park within the curtilage of the property. While the proposed layout of the parking spaces will bring vehicles closer to the common boundary, the existing hedge between the two properties will be retained, which will lessen the impact on the neighbouring properties to a degree. However vehicles can presently park on the grassed area to the front of the property and as such it is not considered that the proposed parking spaces will adversely impact upon the amenities of the adjoining property in terms of noise, nuisance and disturbance so as to warrant refusal of the application on this basis.

The proposed replacement staircase will not result in any loss of amenity to the occupants of the neighbouring property to the north given that it will replace an existing staircase of the same form and in the same position.

Highway Safety

There is an existing dropped kerb serving the property, which will be widened slightly. The Council's Highway Engineer has considered the application and advises that the widening of the existing access will improve visibility at the crossing point and on this basis he raises no highway objection. Works will be required to widen the existing vehicle crossing on the footway and as this has not been indicated on the proposed plans, a planning condition is attached at the request of the Highway Engineer.

SECTION 17 OF THE CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

The proposed development has been considered in the context of the requirements placed on the Council by Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998, namely, the duty on the Council to exercise its functions with due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on, and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent, crime and disorder in its area. The proposed development does not give rise to crime and disorder issues.

CONCLUSION

It is considered that the demolition and partial rebuilding of the chimney stack on the north elevation of the property, the erection of a replacement external staircase and the proposed hardstanding to the front and side of the property, by reason of their design, scale and appearance preserve the character and appearance of this part of the Stanhope Road/Grange Road Conservation Area. Neither the proposed replacement chimneystack nor the replacement external staircase would give rise to any issues of residential amenity. Although concern has been expressed regarding the potential for noise, nuisance and disturbance arising from the proposed parking spaces on the occupants of the adjoining property, vehicles can currently park to the front of the property and as such it is not considered that the proposed parking spaces will adversely impact upon the amenities of the adjoining property in terms of noise, nuisance and disturbance so as to warrant refusal of the application on this basis. The proposal raises no issues of highway safety or crime prevention. The proposal is considered acceptable in the light of the relevant policies of the development plan as listed below:

E29 – The Setting of New Development
PPG 15 'Planning and The Historic Environment' 1994

RECOMMENDATION

THAT PLANNING PERMISSION BE GRANTED SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING CONDITIONS:

1. A3
2. Notwithstanding any details of the proposed replacement chimney submitted as part of the application, the chimney on the north elevation must be rebuilt reusing the existing bricks and chimney pot, to match the existing chimney minus the top 13 courses, within 6 months of this permission.
REASON – In order that the Local Planning Authority may be satisfied as to the details of the development in the interests of the visual amenity of the area.
3. The replacement staircase shall be constructed from bricks to match the house, reclaimed if an exact match cannot be found and the steel balustrade and handrails shall be painted black, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
REASON – In order that the Local Planning Authority may be satisfied as to the details of the development in the interests of the visual amenity of the area.

4. Prior to the car parking spaces hereby approved first being brought into use the existing vehicle crossing shall be widened to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.
REASON – In the interests of road safety.
5. The existing trees and hedges on the site shall be retained and shall not be pruned, lopped or felled without the prior written agreement of the Local Planning Authority.
REASON – In the interests of the visual amenities of the area.

SUGGESTED REASONS FOR GRANTING OF PLANNING PERMISSION

It is considered that the demolition and partial rebuilding of the chimney stack on the north elevation of the property, the erection of a replacement external staircase and the proposed hardstanding to the front and side of the property, by reason of their design, scale and appearance and are considered to preserve the character and appearance of this part of the Stanhope Road/Grange Road Conservation Area. Neither the proposed replacement chimneystack nor the replacement external staircase would give rise to any issues of residential amenity. Although concern has been expressed regarding the potential for noise, nuisance and disturbance arising from the proposed parking spaces on the occupants of the adjoining property, vehicles can currently park to the front of the property and as such it is not considered that the proposed parking spaces will adversely impact upon the amenities of the adjoining property in terms of noise, nuisance and disturbance so as to warrant refusal of the application on this basis. The proposal raises no issues of highway safety or crime prevention. The proposal is considered acceptable in the light of the relevant policies of the development plan as listed below:

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INFORMATIVE

The applicant is advised that works are required within the public highway, to widen existing vehicle crossing and contact must be made with the Assistant Director: Highways and Engineering (Mr A Ward 01325 388743) to arrange for the works to be carried out or to obtain authority under Section 184 of the Highways Act 1980 to execute the works.