

Case Officer: Lisa Fisher
Planning Department
Gravesham Borough Council
Civic Centre
Windmill Street
Gravesend
Kent
DA12 1AU

15.06.24

Comments re. application: 20240390
173 Singlewell Road, Gravesend, Kent DA11 7QA

Dear Mrs Fisher

Upon inspection of the 'revised' online documents, chance meeting with the developer and architect in 2021, regarding the proposed developments at 173 Singlewell Road, we wish to make our comments known regarding this application.

Erection of an attached dwelling house. Erection of a single storey rear extension with two roof lights to existing dwelling house. Erection of double garage to rear of site.

Object

The 'reduced scale' plans submitted which now show the double garage being rotated 90 degrees, removal two dormer windows from rear elevation of the existing house, increasing the distance between the flank wall of the proposed dwelling Dennis road from 3ft to 4ft and reducing the rear extension to a 'modest 3m', does not change the facts of why this proposed development is completely wrong for the corner of Dennis Road and Singlewell Road.

The following factors still remain, as to why this application should not be permitted.

- The title deeds to the property have a restrictive covenant on them stating there should only be one dwelling on this plot. (The owner / developer is aware of this as I sent DAC Architects a copy in 2021.)
- The 2021 application showed plans of the flank wall and the Dennis Road boundary of only 2ft. (700mm). ***As the Title Deeds state, there should be a 20ft gap from the existing property and Dennis Road, and this is how it should remain.*** Page 3 of Design & Access statement 2024 - *"The width of new dwelling has been reduced to increase the space between the flank wall of the dwelling & the footpath. The distance now varies from a minimum of 1m (3 feet 3 inches) to a maximum of 1.33m (4 feet 4 inches)."* By reducing the width in this application by only one foot, is hardly sufficient.
- In April 2023, an application to build a new gym / games room, a garden office, a garden store / workshop, a garage for domestic vehicles, a garden shed for gardening equipment, and a bin store practically covering the whole of the garden was refused. How do we know that the proposed 'Double garage' at a height of 4.5m at it's apex, won't be used for these facilities?
- This oversized double garage would block out the light to [REDACTED] garden area. It would also have a detrimental affect on the aesthetics of Dennis Road at this end.
- The new garage position is now [REDACTED] boundary fence, twice as high as the existing one, and twice the width. And why is the applicant proposing a pitched roof when all other garage roofs in the area are flat?

- The corner of Singlewell Road and Dennis Road are an accident black spot. So much so, that since the applicant's 2021 submission, double yellow lines have been placed around the whole of this corner. How would construction vehicles be able to stop and unload on this already dangerous corner?
- The large garden is a haven for wildlife and acts as a 'natural sponge' when it rains. The case for bio-diversity within planning has got stronger recently. How is the applicant going to attain the 10% net gain of soft landscaping and protect the natural diversity of the garden if he wants to turn it into a building site and build a double garage?
- The garden is currently 75sqm, and the new proposal would give the garden an area of 60sqm, therefore losing 15sqm of open green space.
- There IS a WW2 air raid shelter in the garden. Not an 'assumed' one as labelled on the architect's plans. I have seen the entrance with my own eyes.

Objection reasons in more detail

Our reasons are the following:

1. Traffic / Pedestrian Safety

Residing at 1 Dennis Road, we are aware that the corner of Dennis and Singlewell roads is an accident black spot. We often hear car horns bibbing, and there have been numerous accidents where ambulances have been in attendance.

There are various reasons for this - cars speeding and not being able to let cars exit Dennis Road safely, and the obscured vision of traffic caused by cars parked on the corner of Singlewell Road (by no.175 upwards).

[REDACTED]
on this corner every morning, which in the best of times is like running a gauntlet. If there are numerous construction vehicles outside a new dwelling, at no.173, this corner will become even more dangerous.

Note; Since the last (refused) 2021 application, double yellow lines have been placed around no. 173. How would construction vehicles and lorries stop here on a daily, weekly, monthly basis?



School children crossing the busy road / corner.



Accident Black Spot (crashmap.co.uk)



Current west to east view of Dennis Road, showing the 'openness' of the road.



Proposed dwelling on the corner of Dennis Road / Singlewell Road - jutting out into what was the open space, looking out of place / intrusive. This would change the 'design' of Dennis Road and have a negative visual impact on our property at 1 Dennis Road.*



Worst Case scenario, if a new precedent is set and the owner of 175 Singlewell Road follows suite, Dennis Road succumbs to the 'Corridor effect' and the setting of the road changed forever.**

* These visuals were computer generated by myself by utilising the architects drawings and my photos. I have created them to the best scale and proportion based on visual reference that I have, but are not bonafide 100% accurate drawings.

Street scene

173 Singlewell Road

Current construction of residential home



Please note that the 'open corner' of Central Ave and Ascot Road has been lost to the new development currently under construction. The scale and bulk of this development now adds to the 'corridor effect' and if a dwelling was placed on this 'open corner' of Dennis Road and Singlewell, the whole street scene(s) / town planning would be changed and feel less 'open' and more enclosed.

173 Singlewell Road (existing)



173 Singlewell Road (proposed)



The illustration on the right shows how the above open space / corner would be lost. And would the house on the right (No.171) now become an 'end of terrace' property rather than a 'semi detached'?

View from 1 Dennis Road (existing)



View from 1 Dennis Road (proposed)

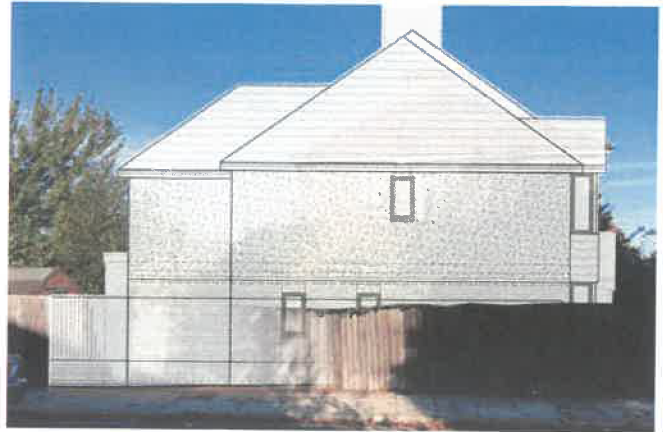


Street scene

Side view from Dennis Road (proposed)



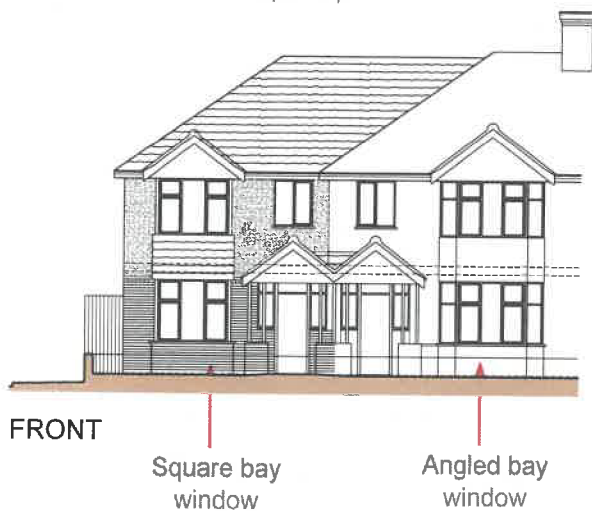
Side view from Dennis Road (proposed)



Visual Impact of the side view of proposed dwelling from Dennis Road.

Quote from p3 of the Design & Access Statement: "The width of new dwelling has been reduced to increase the space between the flank wall of the dwelling & the footpath. The distance now varies from a minimum of 1m (3 feet 3 inches) to a maximum of 1.33m (4 feet 4 inches)."

So the applicant has only increased the minimum space of the new flank wall and Dennis Road boundary by only a foot? Now to 3ft 3" ? in the previous application it was 2ft. In my opinion that's a miniscule amount, as the property will still visually be right up to the boundary of Dennis Road. Currently the space is 20ft of open space.



Previously (in 2021) the applicant has stated that "The pair of semi-detached nearest to The Fairway feature a large two storey extension with a bay window and the new house has been designed to mirror this."

Despite some architectural similarities, they can't really be compared as this one in an 'extension' that leaves a lot more than 3ft 3" to the boundary line, and the other (no. 173) would be a 'separate dwelling' on a larger footprint that does leave a minimum of 3ft 3" to the boundary line (of Dennis Rd).

Street scene existing symmetry



Note how the opposite house to 173 Singlewell Road is a sympathetic mirror image, with the bay windows at the side, to maximise the light that comes into the property.

This property still has 'space' before the boundary wall on Ascot Road.

These dwellings currently look in keeping and compliment each other.

Street scene existing symmetry



Double gates at rear of 173 Singlewell Road



Double gates at rear of 175 Singlewell Road

These double gates are directly opposite each other on Dennis Road

The symmetry in design even comes down to where the existing double gates, and side pedestrian gates are situated at the rear of 173 and 175 Singlewell Road, situated opposite each other on Dennis Road.

They were planned to be like this when these street scenes were designed nearly a century ago, and have remained aesthetically pleasing ever since. There is no reference of a side gate being kept on the plans for no. 173, and introducing a huge double garage which would be viewed from Dennis Road would disrupt this symmetry and the street scene.



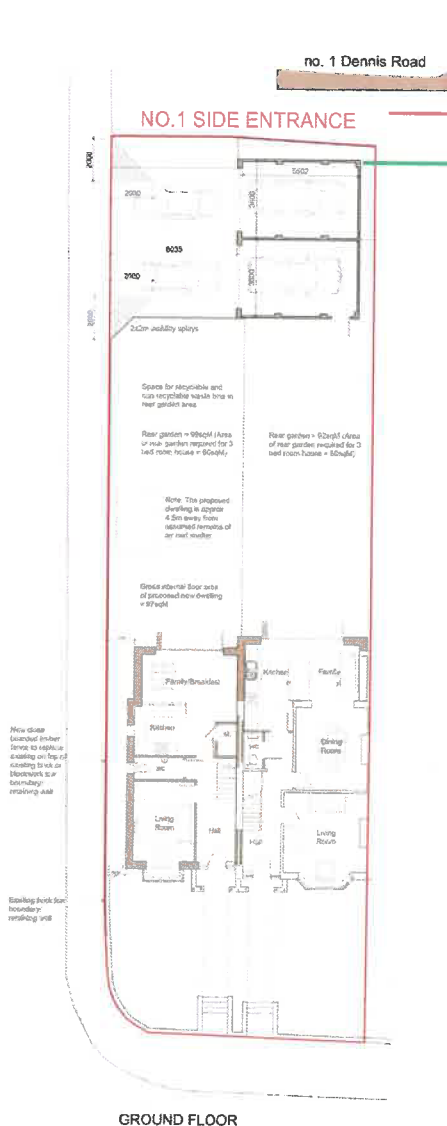
Single side gate at rear of 173 Singlewell Road



Single side gate at rear rear of 175 Singlewell Road

These single side pedestrian gates are directly opposite each other on Dennis Road

3. Double Garage



1 Dennis Road boundary fence, with proposed double garage, car access and parking area directly on other side.

We have been informed by the developer (in person), that if there is to be a new dwelling erected, it will need to have it's own off road parking, hence the application to have a new double garage. Despite the double garage plans now being rotated by 90 degrees, we are dissappointed to see that this building is now a lot closer to [REDACTED] area than the on previous plans.

This double garage / parking area is literally the [REDACTED] fence. [REDACTED] is an integral part of [REDACTED] garden in which we frequently sit, particularly in the summer months. It's a concern to us that we may now have the effect of running engines, noise and pollution from cars (if the new dwelling goes ahead), whilst enjoying our garden [REDACTED]

We feel that the height of the garage at 4.5m is far too high, and would block out our light as this is where we catch the sun for half a day in the summer months.

There is currently a single garage erected close to [REDACTED] property, but this has just been for one car. The new plans show up to four cars could now be accommodated in this area, with access where the existing gate is.



Double Garage

This would now mean that the size of the double gate **entrance would now be twice the size** in width if it is to accomodate two garages, rather than one?

There is nothing on the plans to say that the developer would be erecting two sets of gates, so we are led to believe that due to the scale, and visibility of vehicles driving on and off of the 'drive' in front of the garages, that this area would be left open... with a drop kerb.

This would drastically change the street scene (and symmetry). Properties on Dennis Road 'start' with our house at [REDACTED] at the rear of the house on Singlewell Road's garden. It is the same for the property oppisite [REDACTED] at no.2. To the left of this house, is the rear garden of 175 Singlewell Road.

If the double garage was built right next to [REDACTED] facing out on to Dennis Road, it would give the impression that this is a 'bungalow' due to the scale of it, and the 4.5m pitched roof. By having cars parked in front of it on the new 'drive(s)' this would give the instant impression that the garage is a residential property, thus dramatically altering the appearance of our property and this end of Dennis Road.

Page 2 of Design & Access statement

"The application also covers the construction of a new garage on an existing parking area to the rear to provide off street parking for both dwellings."

Comment - the new propoal is twice the size, if not bigger than the existing parking area.

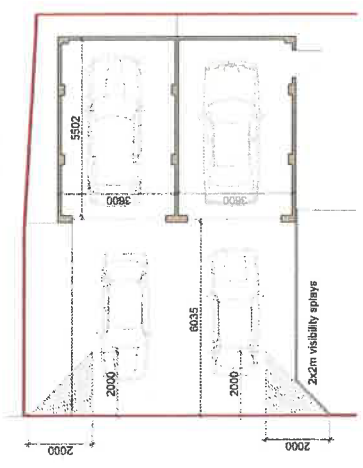
1 Dennis Road

173 Singlewell Road



Existing single flat roofed garage. (no. 173)
Approx 2.5m high

The proposed double garage would be 4.5m high
(as informed by GBC Planning dept.)



Double Garage

The huge double garage would be right up to [REDACTED] boundary, blocking out light to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] changing the appearance of [REDACTED] property.

If the existing flat roofed single garage was to be replaced like-for-like, in the same position, that would be sufficient for us. But not a double garage with a pitched roof.

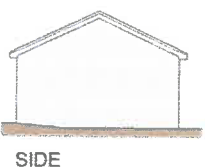
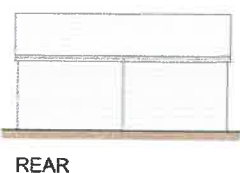
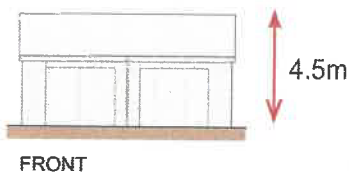


Existing single garage with access from the side double gates on Dennis Road.

Garage Height

We are particularly concerned about the height of the proposed double garage at 4.5m and why it needs a pitched roof?

The other garage roofs in the area are all flat. Why does this one need a pitched roof, which would make the structure even higher? Surely its purpose is to accommodate a car, not a van/ lorry as the diagram shows? Or does the applicant intend to use the double garages as a garden room or gym as they applied for in 2023 (and got rejected)?



Only one garage side door?

This implies that only the people residing in the original no. 173 house can access the garage this way. Why is this?

1 Dennis Road flat roofed garage



1 Dennis Road
flat roof

173 Singlewell Road
flat roof



Garage Height

155a Singlewell Road and the corner of The Fairway, (next road down from Dennis Road) Possibly, the highest double garage in the area, on which the application for no.173 is being based upon.

A pitched roof structure similar to this would also dominate the Dennis Road and our property.



175 Singlewell Road. Flat roofed garage set back and behind a double gate.



Views from the back of 1 Dennis Road showing flat roofed garages



Garages and outbuildings with flat roofs in close proximity to 173 Singlewell Road.

The outbuildings to the left of the image were erected in 2013, by the owners of 3 and 5 Dennis Road. The reason the windows are so close to the roof line, is because upon construction GBC Council Planners told the builders to lower the structure by about one foot. Residents from The Fairway bought this to GBC's attention (that it may be higher than regulations), so the council came to inspect it and the structure was lowered.

How is it that the new proposed garage only inches from our boundary could be higher than this with a pitched roof? Much bigger than this outbuilding? And all surrounding garages are of a similar lower height and flat roofed?



1 Dennis Road. Shed and flat roofed garage no higher than 2.5m.

4. Character of the area

The houses on the left corner of The Fairway and left corner of Hillingdon Road (Viewing from Singlewell Road) have extended their properties. We are aware that the end of terrace house, 155 Singlewell Road, has had an additional dwelling built right next to it, on a small patch of land. It's very close to the perimeter fence along The Fairway. The double garage is prominent in the rear garden, and the whole of this corner is now dominated by the new dwelling and its garage that has now replaced an 'open' corner.

We have been told by the architect (who designed The Fairway corner property (155a) and the proposals for 173 Singlewell Road) that 155a Singlewell Road was not originally granted planning permission due to concerns regarding open space and the character of the road. This is definitely a concern for us here on Dennis Road too. He also brought to our attention, that him and the developer appealed and won, and now feel as if a precedent has been set for them to be given carte-blanche to build something similar at 173 Singlewell Road. They insinuated that the no.173 development *would* be going ahead, as if it came to it, they would win on appeal - again.



Just because this has already been done, and the house on the corner of The Fairway/Singlewell Road is complete, doesn't mean this needs to set an example of how roads like Hillingdon Road, The Fairway and Dennis Road should look (enclosing on their 'open' corners with no greenery). Just because 155a Singlewell Road is now there, and had been granted planning permission, doesn't mean it's 'Right'.



Images showing the corner of nearby Hillingdon Road, with its 'open corner', to create a sense of space.

We strongly believe that these roads, Dennis Road in particular, were built and designed to have spaces around the corner to create a feeling of openness and space as they are entered. 1930s houses were purposely designed to have 'space' at the heart of them, and this goes for the area they sit in too. By building smaller dwellings, stuck on corners, ruins the fabric of Dennis Road and Singlewell Road. This 'sought after' residential area, could become a carbuncle of dwellings that look out of place to their original setting.



Character of the area



'Open / Funnel' appearance of Dennis Road.



'Corridor' appearance of The Fairway due to extra dwelling on the right and extension (albeit only millimeters from the boundary fence).



Images showing how the 'semi-detached' form of no.173 differs to the 'end of terrace' form of no.155a. The properties shouldn't be compared as the same style of houses and be entitled to have extra dwellings built on small patches of land right next to them. No.s 171 and 173 were designed to, and remain as be semi-detached houses.

155a was built on the end of a terraced row of houses on Singlewell Road. 173a intends to be built on the end of two semi-detached houses on Singlewell Road. **Therefore, there is no precedent set here for proposed developments like this application to build on the land next to no.173.**

Building on the end of a terrace is completely different to building on the end of a semi-detached property. It would totally change the symmetry of these two houses, and would lead to 171 Singlewell Road becoming an 'end of terrace' rather than a 'semi-detached' which could alter the sale value of this property.

5. The garden / open Space

The proposed new double garage is a concern for us as it means more cars closer in proximity to our frequently [REDACTED] and unfortunately would mean the existing garden at 173 Singlewell Road being obliterated by this huge double garage structure.

We know that our view from [REDACTED] side window doesn't make a difference in planning laws, but we are concerned regarding the open space and wildlife haven that this has become. There has been a foxes den in the garden for years.

How will these be protected if this application goes ahead? There may also be an array of biodiversity here too which will need to be looked into.

Also, the garden acts as a 'sponge' when it rains. In times where our weather has now become more unpredictable, if the lawn is to be dug up, tarmac put down and the double garage erected, this would be a hindrance to the environment. We know the garden needs some maintenance, but ideally it should stay as a garden of which humans and wildlife could benefit from.



Unfortunately, now in 2024, the owner / applicant has let the garden grow out of control. But it's clear to see from these images how the garden at 173 Singlewell has potential to be one large family garden and open space again.

6. WW2 Air Raid Shelter

There is no mention of this in the application, so we are bringing this to your attention now. It is common knowledge that Air Raid Shelters are protected, and I have spoken with 'Historic England' who have also told me that these can also be 'listed' if a member(s) of the public applies for it.

Therefore, it is important that the Conservation Officer at GBC is aware of the Air Raid Shelter and carries out a site visit. The entrance sits by the side of the south fence (Dennis Road side). It is obscured by bushes, so is not that easy to spot at first glance. Historic England have informed me that this part of Gravesend does not fall under a Conservation Area (which we are aware of), but the Air Raid shelter should be protected by GBC as an important part of our social and local history. We feel it should not be demolished as part of the proposed developments at the rear of the property.

Shelter entrance behind the trees



Underground Air raid shelter

Images of the corner of the property now



The current occupiers of no. 173 have tried their best to keep the main part of the garden tidy and well kept, but they have no way of tackling these large bushes that are oulling the fence down.

We feel that the owner / applicant is purposely allowing this to become and look delapidated, to lead GBC planning dept into thinking that this area needs to be passed so the look of this fence and garden can be improved.

We suggest that the applicant tidies this up and installs a new fence, as it is ruining the look of Dennis Road, and is just getting worse.



Conclusion

An extra dwelling built on a small patch of land on the end of two semi-detached houses, with the loss of the mature garden and erection of a large double garage, would have a detrimental effect on the aesthetics of the residential area and our property.

We have outlined our main concerns (in no particular order) as our objections to the additional dwelling at 173 Singlewell Road and the accompanying double garage.

1. Traffic / Pedestrian Safety 2. WW2 Air Raid Shelter 3. Character of the area 4. Double Garage & Garden

- Just because there is a 'gap' next to no.173, doesn't mean it needs to be built on. There has been so much development (not necessarily for the better) on the upper part of Singlewell Road, and if it continues, the integrity and character of the existing sought after and well maintained properties will be lost forever.
- **The reason No.1 Dennis road is in its existing location (like 2 The Fairway & 2 Hillingdon Road) is that they were designed in the planning process, over 80 years ago, to have SPACE around them, albeit in the way of Singlewell Road's back gardens as OPEN SPACES. This could all now be stamped over with an additional 3 bedroom house and huge double garage.**
- Our property has a 'gap' around it, because it's RIGHT. Gaps are there in residential areas to create a sense of space and not to make our [REDACTED] by a double garage and additional dwelling.
- **With the construction of the 400+ new builds 'Watermans Wharf' (Coldharbour Road), and the proposed four new dwellings approximately five houses up at the Golf Club, in close proximity to the west end of Dennis Road, and now an extra dwelling at the end of the east end, it's all too much. More cramming of more houses into small spaces.**
- If there is no extra dwelling, there wont be a need for a huge 4.5m high double garage.

The main house does need updating, and we would support a small extension and any internal works. It would be nice to have a family in the house and for it to be loved as the long term previous owners did. However, we can not support the notion to build the extra house or the double garage.



Please take our concerns into account, when determining this application.

