# April Newsletter

It used to be thought that in the Spring a young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love. It seems that in the current climate, the thoughts of both men and women, and young and not so young, turn to building extensions and, in some cases, the building of completely new dwellings.

If you find yourself inclined to object to your neighbour's planning application, this is your democratic right, and this is now very easy to do via the [NHDC Planning Portal](http://pa.north-herts.gov.uk/online-applications/search.do?action=simple&searchType=Application)

You should register your objection with NHDC, via the website or by emailing [[planningpolicy@north-herts.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@north-herts.gov.uk)](mailto:planningpolicy@north-herts.gov.uk). Please make sure you quote the reference number if you email your comments. If you need to speak to the planning officer you can find this under the entry for the application (under 'Details', then tab 'Further Information').

Note that it is the officer's job is to assess the application against planning policy.  
In this he will have to examine it in terms of:

* [the National Planning Policy Framework](http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/policy/),
* [Planning Practice Guidance](http://planningguidance.communities.gov.uk/blog/guidance/),
* [the current North Herts Local Plan](http://www.north-herts.gov.uk/home/planning/planning-policy/local-plan-current-policy), (which including all policies which make it up, such as the Design Supplementary Planning Document, which has a section on the character of Knebworth).

Specifically, assessment of the weight of opinion locally for and against the proposal plays no role in the officer's recommendations.

Note that an potential applicant may obtain pre-planning guidance from the officers for the payment of a modest fee. This will help to avoid the wasteful situation in which a resident has gone to the expense of drawing up plans for an application that is unlikely to get permission.

The Parish Council is a 'statutory consultee' and examines all planning applications within the parish (and on the parish boundary). If you are an applicant, or wish to object, it is well worth going to the PC meeting where the application is considered.

If I am persuaded that there are valid planning grounds to object to an application that it needs to be reviewed by the NHDC Planning Control Committee, then I will 'call it in'. I am unlikely to do this if the Parish Council has no objections to it.

Applications which are not called in are decided by the Planning Control officer under delegated authority.

My guess would be that there may be an argument in terms of over-development of the plot, and in terms of the new dwelling being out of character with the area.

I have to warn you though, that you neighbour will have paid his architect to design a new dwelling in such a way that it complies with relevant planning laws. The District Council has no option but to grant an application which is compliant.