

PROPOSED ALTERATIONS TO MAIN ROOF, REVISED FENESTRATION

AND EXTERNAL APPEARANCE

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in accordance with the CAGE Guide to design and access statements, and broadly uses their suggested subsections for the assessment of the design, as detailed below.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The original house which stood on this Site was a three-storey house, built in about 1860, to house the local blacksmith where his forge comprised a number of out-buildings, including stables and the forge itself, all of which are shown on the attached Drawing Ref. 1678/010. This information has been taken from a combination of aerial photographs, old maps, and a photo of the original house which was on the Site until 1959.
- 1.2 The old map records show that the original forge building was demolished in about 1959, and a bungalow was erected in its' place, in 1960.
- 1.3 The 1960 bungalow was then extended, and the roof was raised by 2m following the Planning Consent of January 2007, and that is the house which stands on that Site today.
- 1.4 The problem with the current house, is that the first-floor bedrooms cannot be used properly, because only a small proportion of those are high enough to accommodate wardrobes and bathrooms etc, due to the pitch of the roof. The floor extends out to the eaves, but at that point the head height is only about 300mm, meaning that any furniture has to be brought in around 0.5m from the edge of the rooms, to fit under the roof.
- 1.5 The pitch of the roof is however some 43 degrees, and currently supports plain tiles, so the apex of the main roof and the gable facing the street, are substantially higher than is necessary for the rooms on the first floor contained within it.
- 1.6 With the knowledge that the original house which stood on the site was three-storeys high, we previously prepared a Pre-App, submitted in October 2017, which showed the roof raised to a level some 2m above the current ridge, yet still substantially lower than the original house built in 1860. This Proposal however was opposed by Mr Myers, the Assessing Officer, on the grounds that it did not comply with Green Belt Policy, even though it complied with the explanatory note to the NPPF.
- 1.7 Mr Myers' explanation for the Council's unwillingness to comply with the NPPF was unconvincing, but we took the view that it would be better to re-design the house to comply with the Councils' preferences, than to fight a rejection at Appeal.
- 1.8 We have therefore re-designed the house with a much-reduced roof pitch, so that the apex of the proposed ridge, is no higher than the current ridge level.

- 1.9 This has the effect of changing the appearance of the building radically, but with modern detailing, the house can still be made to look well designed and well-proportioned, while providing sufficient height under the eaves of the house, to accommodate full height bedrooms 2.35m high throughout the first floor, being the same height as the rooms downstairs.
- 1.10 The result of this, is a two-storey house of modern appearance, which is no higher than that which exists at present.
- 1.11 As Welwyn & Hatfield have no moratorium on houses of modern appearance, and have approved several such houses locally, this approach would seem to be eminently acceptable.
- 1.12 There are no houses nearby on this side of the street. Of the houses on the opposite side of the street, there is no particular style which needs to be followed. Those houses are a mixture of two-storey and three-storey houses, and chalet bungalows, but only two of those are within eyesight of No. 5, so there should be no objection on the grounds of style or external appearance.
- 1.13 Of the two buildings opposite, one is a chalet bungalow set on much lower ground, but that is situated behind brick walls and two thick lines of vegetation, so the one house cannot reasonably be seen from the other.
- 1.14 The only house within eyesight, is the two-storey Victorian House on the corner of Bell Lane and Bulls Lane, which is higher than No. 5, even though it stands on slightly lower ground.

2 **The Design Process**

- 2.1 Having ascertained that Mr Myers was not prepared to entertain any substantial rise in the ridge height of the ridge of the building, and that he would resist the idea of the two-storey rear extension, we set about re-designing the house to accommodate the Clients' requirements, while still falling within the parameters which Mr Myers had set out in our Pre-App meeting.
- 2.2 Given the clients' requirements that the first floor was to be usable throughout, to provide space for five bedrooms, all with en-suite facilities, and ceiling heights similar to those on the ground floor, we worked out that the roof pitch would need to be 20 degrees, in order to retain the current ridge height, whilst providing first floor ceiling heights which were not compromised in any way.
- 2.3 Clearly, the existing appearance was not compatible, as little dormers do not work with such low-pitched roofs, so we designed a building which would complement the low pitched roof, and that has resulted in the more modern appearance which forms our current Proposal.
- 2.4 The existing plan form of the building comprises three elements, the main roof being that over the long low building facing the street, where the roof pitch was 43 degrees, the gable facing the street on the northern end of the building which is somewhat narrower, and the rear extension in the centre of the house which is narrower still.

- 2.5 This configuration did not lend itself to the conventional roofs of equal pitch, so we have designed mono-pitches for the smaller spans, so that these complement each other. Meanwhile, the mono-pitch on the front elevation acts as a stop-end for the long ridge of the building. This has the advantage that the mono-pitch facing the front of the house is on average slightly lower than the current gable, with the result that the building will appear smaller and less obtrusive than is currently the case, which results in a small improvement to the openness of the Green Belt.
- 2.6 Having thus determined the proportions of the major elements of the building, we have designed new windows to suit, and provided lean-to porch roofs through the front and rear of the building, in order to provide shelter over the entrance doors, and secondary elements to the appearance of the building. These elements are intended to act as a foil in the appearance, and to draw the building together in a unified design, as well as having a practical use.

3 Use

- 3.1 The use of the building remains residential, for single family occupancy.
- 3.2 The intention is that the family move out while the works are carried out, the building is completely re-modelled, inside and out. Then the family move back into the re-modelled building, when all the works have been completed.
- 3.3 Once the roof has been re-configured, and the first floor footprint made fully usable, there will be ample room for the 5 bedrooms that the Client requires, and space within those rooms to put beds and wardrobes in sensible places, along with bathrooms to suit the number of rooms provided.
- 3.4 No changes are envisaged to the use of the Summer House, or the various sheds and storage buildings elsewhere on the site.
- 3.5 The terracing, whilst reasonably generous at present, is compromised slightly by the re-entrant retaining walls, so that has been extended to a sensible shape, to accommodate the current use.
- 3.6 Whilst the drive is sometimes congested, there is ample space for parking the cars which the family and their visitors use, so vehicles do not need to be parked in the street.
- 3.7 No other changes are envisaged to the layout of the external areas.

4 Amount

- 4.1 There are several measures of the “amount of building” which exists at present, for comparison with our new proposals, not least in terms of footprint, floor area, volume, and overall height.
- 4.2 In the current design, the footprint of the building is unchanged from that which exists at the moment. (Albeit that this is 20% less than existed in 1948).

- 4.3 Likewise, the ground floor area is unchanged from the existing, save for the addition of the canopies, which do not form part of the interior of the building. (The floor area being 10% less than existed in 1948).
- 4.4 On the first floor, the actual floor plate is the same as existing, but in these proposals, all of that is usable, whereas previously the outer half metre of the space was lost.
- 4.5 In our floor area calculations attached, we have shown the adjustment for the useable space, but we have allowed for the fact that the loft stores could previously have been usable space.
- 4.6 In terms of the floor area of the whole building, our current Proposal is only 5% more than was permitted in 2007, and almost the same as existed in 1948.
- 4.7 In terms of volume, our current Proposal is 6% greater than was Approved in 2007, but 17% less than that which existed in 1948.
- 4.8 And as to the height of the proposed building, that is equal to that Approved in 2007, but 3m lower, than existed in 1948.
- 4.9 So, by the worst of these measures, the building we are proposing is only marginally increased above that which was Approved in 2007, whilst being substantially smaller than existed in 1948.
- 4.10 We find it inconsistent that Mr Myers chose to ignore what existed in 1948, in spite of the fact that the NPPF says that the 1948 structure should be taken as the benchmark.
- 4.11 Even if one considers the floor area of the 1960 building as the benchmark, the Council would normally agree to an increase in floor area of up to 50%, whereas we are currently proposing an increase over the area in 1960, of 42%.
- 4.12 Mr Myers was most concerned about the overall height of the building, which in our Pre-App was 2m higher than currently exists, but in our current Scheme, is the same as currently exists.
- 4.13 Mr Myers was also concerned that the building would appear as a two-storey building, rather than as a Chalet Bungalow, but given that only the apex of the roof can be seen from the street, or from the adjacent properties, that must be immaterial.
- 4.14 Given that the majority of the houses in the street are two-storey, and some are three-storey, there should be no objection to a compact two-storey building here.

5 Scale and Detailed Design

- 5.1 The change in the appearance from 1960s chalet bungalow to 1990s modern is intentional, as that is the only way the new low-pitched roof can be reconciled with the plan form and use of the building.
- 5.2 The fact that the building is transformed from its previous appearance is of course intentional, as all of the elements need to balance, and the fenestration needs to match the more modern design.

- 5.3 The more modern appearance is continued through the use of ‘stone-wold’ interlocking roof tiles, above white painted rendered walls, with an element of louvred shading to the western elevation, intended to reduce the likely heat gain through the larger windows being proposed.
- 5.4 The windows themselves are designed to be tilt-and-turn windows, which do not require mullions or transoms, and those are to be finished in dark grey upvc, in order to complement the remainder of the design.
- 5.5 Whilst the chimney on the south end of the building is a bit of an anachronism, that provides a feature in the ground floor living room, and the effect on the elevational appearance is not so great as to disrupt the composition of the building.
- 5.6 The sliding-folding doors to give access from the living areas at the rear of the building to the garden further compliment the design, and these are to be finished in grey powder coated aluminium, to match elsewhere.

6 **Landscaping**

- 6.1 There is to be no change to the soft landscaping whatsoever.
- 6.2 The only slight amendment, is to the rear patio, where the shape of the rear terrace is to be made more user friendly, by straightening out some of the re-entrant retaining walls.
- 6.3 The large conifer on the front drive, is to be retained, and the shingle surfacing of the drive, likewise is to be retained.
- 6.4 At the front of the building, the boundary is a formed by a substantial brick wall with tall evergreen shrubs, that obscure 90% of the façade of the building from the street. (Except when the entrance gate is open).
- 6.5 The result of this is that the building is almost entirely hidden from the street, so that the street scene will, in principle, be unchanged by these proposals.
- 6.6 From the point of view of No. 8 opposite, that is situated behind a further dense tree screen, so they are not able to see No. 5, except through dense branches in Winter. Interestingly, the only part of No. 5 that might be seen from the house opposite, is the current front gable, which is being reduced somewhat in the current proposals.

7 **Appearance**

- 7.1 In this Scheme, the transformation of the house from 1960s chalet bungalow to a clean modern building, is complete. However, the proposed appearance forms a balanced design, where all of the building elements complement each other, and the proportions relate well to each other.
- 7.2 The introduction of the mono-pitch roofs helps the proportion of the rear elevation particularly, as had those elements been conventionally pitched, they would have been too small and too weak to match the strong ridge line of the main building.

- 7.3 The mono-pitch facing the street has the advantage of putting a stop to the end of the long ridge line, whilst handling the detail well, in a way which looks logical, and which can be adequately waterproofed with conventional flashings.
- 7.4 The reduction in mass of the front gable which currently faces the street will help to make the building less obtrusive than it is at present, as the mono-pitch reduces the apparent bulk of the building, to some extent.
- 7.5 Given the strong lines of the ridge, and the mono-pitches, finishing the walls in white painted render, will complement the more modern appearance, which in turn will be enhanced with the grey powder coated windows, and grey louvred sunshades.
- 7.6 Having said this, the bulk of the front elevation cannot be seen from the street, so the appearance of the front elevation is effectively private, and that which can be seen from the street will effectively be unchanged.

8 **Access**

- 8.1 There is no change to the access to the building, nor the siting of it.
- 8.2 There is however a slight improvement to the front entrance, where the canopy will shield people approaching the building from the elements, and the front entrance path which is to be ramped up to the front door, to provide disabled access beneath a protective canopy.

9 **Conclusion**

- 9.1 In re-designing the building, we have complied with everything that Mr Myers has asked for, and we have removed everything to which he had objected.
- 9.2 Welwyn & Hatfield do not seem to have any objection to modern buildings per-say, and this one is mild-mannered and out of the public view, due to the screening at the front of the building.
- 9.3 The small area of the front elevation which can still be seen from the street, is being reduced from that which currently exists, so effectively the openness of the Green Belt is being enhanced, so these should proposals should be welcomed .
- 9.4 We therefore trust that the Council will agree that this Proposal is an improvement in all respects, and grant Consent for this Application.
