The Ridgeway, Reading, Berkshire

Planning, Design, & Access Statement

4232 - 8000 - 00 | August 2025

1.0 Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Gresford Architects to accompany an application for full planning permission for demolition of an existing garage and construction of a new detached dwelling at 7a The Ridgeway, Woodley, Reading.

Applicants: Kevin and Anne McManus

The applicants seek to replace the existing garage, which sits on a site split from no. 7 The Ridgeway, and construct a new house which is a positive contribution to the local built landscape. The new house will be constructed to Passivhaus standards and will be an exemplar of contemporary sustainable design.

2.0 Site Appraisal

2.1 Location

The site lies within the Woodley suburb on the east side of Reading. The Ridgeway is a no-through road accessed via Loddon Bridge Road at its east end. To the South is the A3290, which runs west to the centre of Reading, and East to join the M4.

The Ridgeway is a private road that runs east-west, and is blocked at its west end from vehicle traffic, though not pedestrians. Woodley has several small commercial centres and to its south east is a large commercial estate close to the A3290.

The site is not in a Conservation Area and has no listed buildings nearby. The site is at very low risk of flooding from rivers or surface water. The site has very good access to all utilities and amenities: there is a bus stop on Loddon Bridge Road close to the end of The Ridgeway, providing access to Woodley and Reading Town Centres. Earley railway station is 1 mile away, which can be used to reach Reading and London.

2.0 Site Appraisal

2.2 Contextual Analysis

The surrounding area is primarily residential, located in the eastern part of Reading with easy access to A3290.

The majority of buildings in Woodley are 1-2 storeys. The Ridgeway is made up of an eclectic range of building forms, from the middle of the twentieth century onwards, with a mix of detached and semi-detached properties.

The materials used are mostly brick or render, wih concrete tiled roofs, with some weatherboarding for external cladding.

As a private road, The Ridgeway has no pedestrian footway, with most properties set back generously from the road with off-street parking. Parking on the Ridgeway itself is not resticted.

2.3 Site Description

The site is roughly rectangular in shape and comprises a single storey garage facing The Ridgeway, previously serving no. 7.

The site is largely flat and has SSE/NNW orientation. There is dense and mature vegetation on the neighbouring site to the west and at the south end of the site itself. At the south end of the site are two timber framed and clad outbuildings.

The site is surrounded on 3 sides (S, E, W) by residential units, while the northern boundary is fully open for access from The Ridgeway.

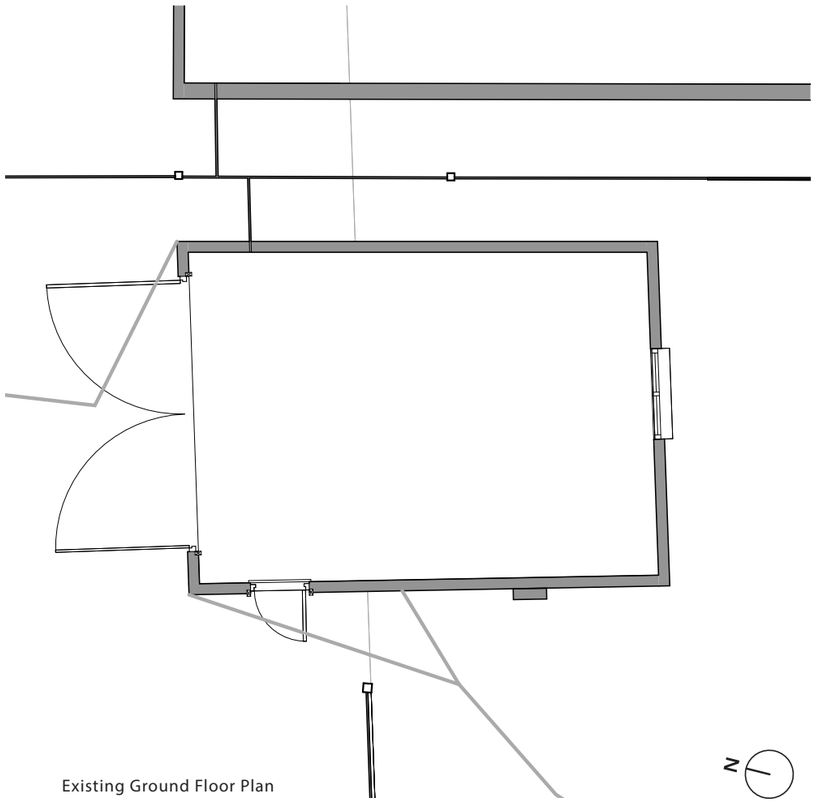
The facade of the existing garage is level with the front of no. 7, and set back slightly behind the front of no. 9. On both sides, the boundary is made up of timber close boarded fence panels between concrete posts.

No 7 to the east is a large detached dwelling with the first floor set within a sloping roof formed of several ridges and gables. No 9 to the west is a two storey semi-detached house with a hipped roof over the second storey, and the ridge is higher than that of no. 7.

2.4 Site Photos

2.5 Built Form

The existing garage is of brick construction with a plain tiled half hipped roof. The garage doors are in timber, and there is a side access door with glazed panel. The rear of the site is currently fenced off from the street by a close boarded timber fence with access gate.



Existing Ground Floor Plan

3.0 Planning Policy Context

3.1 Local Policy

There are some key overriding policies from the Wokingham Borough Development Plan and planning policy constraints that have been considered:

The proposed development is in the green zone for Greater Crested Newt Impact Risk. This means the council would usually only consult NatureSpace in the case of Major Applications.

The proposal is within a bat roost suitability zone that requires no surveys to be undertaken prior to applications. This is supported by the ecologist's recommendations in the below referenced pre-application response letter.

The proposal is within an SSSI impact risk zone, although the nature of the development does not require consultation with Natural England.

The following policies from the Borough's Core Strategy Document are relevant to the proposal:

CP9 - Scale and Location of development proposals

'The scale of development proposals in Wokingham borough must reflect the existing or proposed levels of facilities and services at or in the location, together with their accessibility.'

The proposal is located within the well defined suburb of Woodley, in a clear infill site split off from a much wider single dwelling's site.

CP3 - General Principles for Development

The scale, mass, layout, built form, and character have been consiered carefully, and the efficeint layout attests to the high quality of the design. The use of traditional materials with a modern sensibility ensures the building is contemporary without standing out unduly.

The following policies from Wokingham's adopted MDD have been considered:

TB06 - Development of Private Residential Gardens

'1. The Council will resist inappropriate development of residential gardens where

development would cause harm to the local area.'

The overall design of the proposal has been considered in relation to the pattern of development on the street and in the wider suburb of Woodley, with the scale, siting, and arrangement of openings respecting the character of the adjacent buildings. Amenity space is generous both at the front and rear of the proposal.

CC04 - Sustainable Design and Construction.

'Planning permission will only be granted for proposals that seek to deliver high quality sustainably designed and constructed developments'

It is understood that the requirements of this policy will be controlled by planning conditions, but at any rate the proposal seeks to meet the highest levels of sustainability, as described later in this document.

CC07 - Parking

Two off-street parking spaces are proposed to meet the council's standards.

CC03 - Green Infrastructure, Trees, and Landscaping.

'Protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features'

The proposal does not seek to remove any existing trees or planting, and a proposal for the protection of existing trees will be produced and submitted.

CC10 - Sustainable Drainage

'*All development proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development, including taking into account climate change, is managed in a sustainable manner.'*

A strategy for foul and surface water drainage has been enclosed with this application.

TB23 - Biodiversity and Development

The site is not considered to affect any protected species, and is exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain requirements as a small self build site.

Polocies considered from the Borough Design Guide SPD:

R1 - Residential development should be designed to contribute positively towards the historic or underlying character and quality of the local area. This may be achieved through blending in with a strongly positive existing character, responding where relevant to the positive elements of its historic context or, where the site is large enough to allow for a distinctive identity to be created, by establishing a new character that relates well to the existing.

R14 - Development proposals should provide space for and include well designed hard and soft landscape to create a high quality setting for new housing that is appropriate to the character of the local area.

R15 - Buildings must be designed to providereasonable levels of visual privacy to habitable rooms.

R16 - New housing must allow easy access to some form of amenity space

R17 - All dwellings must provide adequate internal space in an appropriate layout to accommodate a range of lifestyles. Living areas and bedrooms should be large enough to accommodate a range of private and communal activities.

R18 - Dwellings must be designed to provide appropriate levels of daylight and sunlight to new and existing properties.

R23 -
Alterations and extensions to buildings should:

- be well designed;
- respond positively to the original building;
- contribute positively to the local character and
- relate well to neighbouring properties.

3.2 National Planning Policy Framework

Planning policy guidance is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework Relevant sections are highlighted below:

Paragraph 8

"...an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy."

Paragraph 38

"Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible."

Paragraph 126

"The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process."

Paragraph 128

"Design guides and codes provide a local framework for creating beautiful and distinctive places with a consistent and high quality standard of design. Their geographic coverage, level of detail and degree of prescription should be tailored to the circumstances and scale of change in each place, and should allow a suitable degree of variety."

Paragraph 134

"Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:

a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or

b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings."

Paragraph 174

"Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);"

...

"d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;"

3.3 Application History

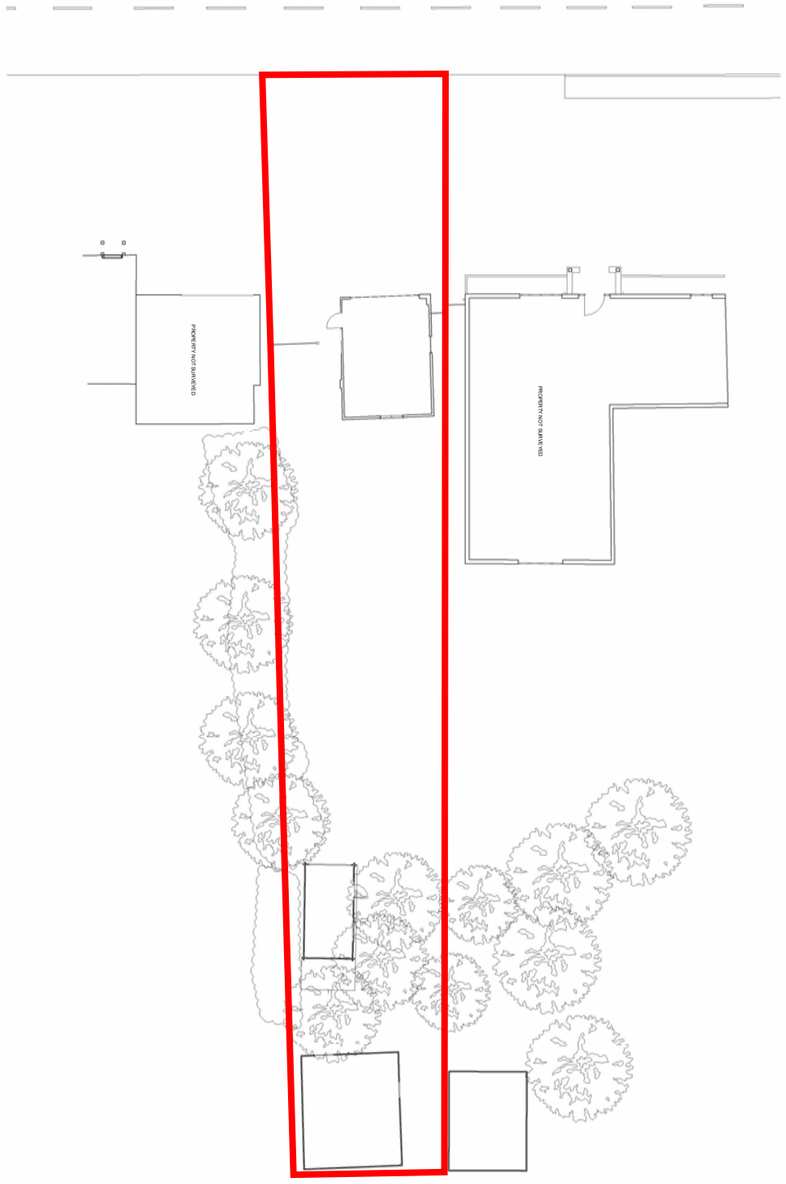
L202450 - 2020 - Approve - (No. 7 The Ridgeway) Householder application for the proposed single storey rear extension, single storey front extension to form porch, plus raising of existing roof to create first floor accommodation with dormer extensions.

L221397 - 2022 - Refused - Full application for the proposed subdivision of the site and erectionof a 4 no. bedroom detached dwelling with associated access and parking, following demolition of the existing detached garage.

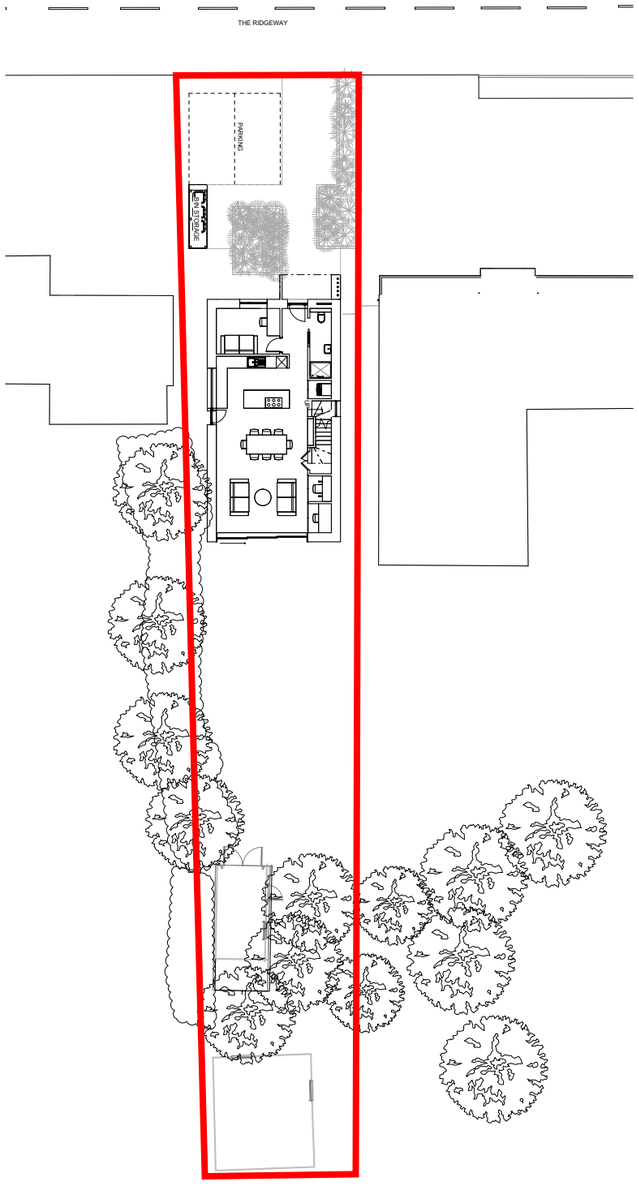
L223007 - 2022 - Approve - Full application for the proposed subdivision of the site and erectionof a 3 no. bedroom detached dwelling with associated access and parking, following demolition of the existing detached garage.

250315 - 1 April 2025 - Pre-application Advice for the proposed erection of a detached three bedroom dwelling with associated access and parking, following demolition of the existing detached garage.

Existing Site Plan



Proposed New-build Dwelling



4.0 Proposal

4.1 Design

Use

A single residential dwelling is proposed to replace the current garage.

Amount

The proposals are for a 2 storey 3 bedroom dwelling.

Layout

The proposed building is aligned with the orientation of the site due to the constraints of the site's width and length. The building is set to be flush with the facade of its closest neighbour, no, 7, so as to maintain the character of development along the street. The rear facade does not protrude past the rear of no. 7, and avoids encroaching on the 45 degree line drawn from the closest first floor window of no. 9, as illustrated on the enclosed drawings.

As per Wokingham Borough Council guidance, a distance of 1m between the new dwelling's external walls and the site boundary has been maintained on both sides.

The access is retained as existing, with a generous driveway providing two car parking spaces, and space for refuse storage and EVC. The side access allows for cycles to be wheeled through and stored within outbuildings in the rear garden.

Scale

The building has been designed with two storeys, blending in with the existing architectural landscape of the street. The footprint of the house is 77.39m2 which is approximately 75% of the proposed footprint of the scheme submitted for pre-application advice.

The ridge has been set at a height to mediate between the ridges of nos 7 and 9, as illustrated on the enclosed street elevation.

Landscaping

The existing garden will be retained as lawned areas. A planting bed is proposed to the front driveway, to help indicate the route to the front door and the space for parking. A refuse storage area has been designed to be sympathetic with the design of the house itself. No change is proposed to the current boundary treatments.

Appearance

The overall form of the building is kept as a simple gabled volume in order to maximise the thermal and spatial efficiency on the constrained site. The material palette has been selected to compliment the character of the area and to express the spatial layout of the building. The front study/guest room and the eastern service/circulation 'spine' are expressed as brickwork volumes, presenting a robust and hard wearing interface with the street and the ground. These volumes support a lighter box clad in vertical timber boards, which will be left to weather naturally.

Access

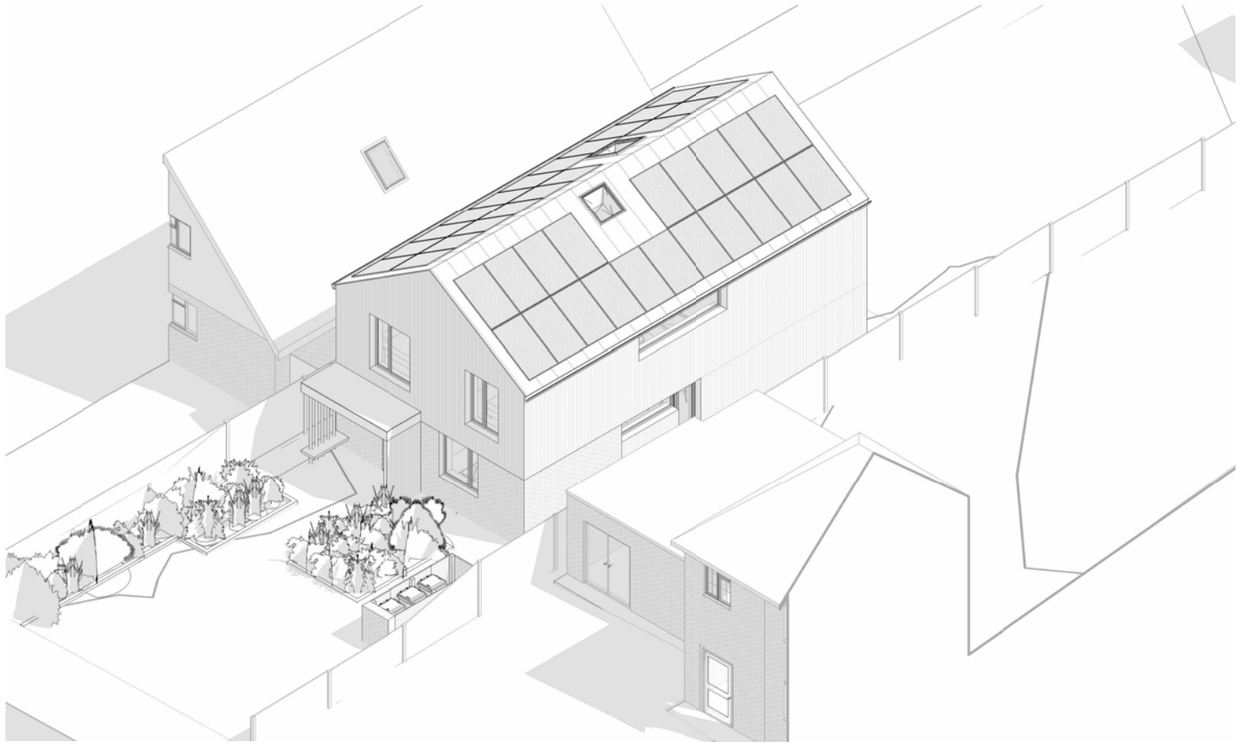
There are no changes proposed to the highway access and the dwelling will meet M4(1) requirements for visitable dwellings

Refuse Collection and Servicing

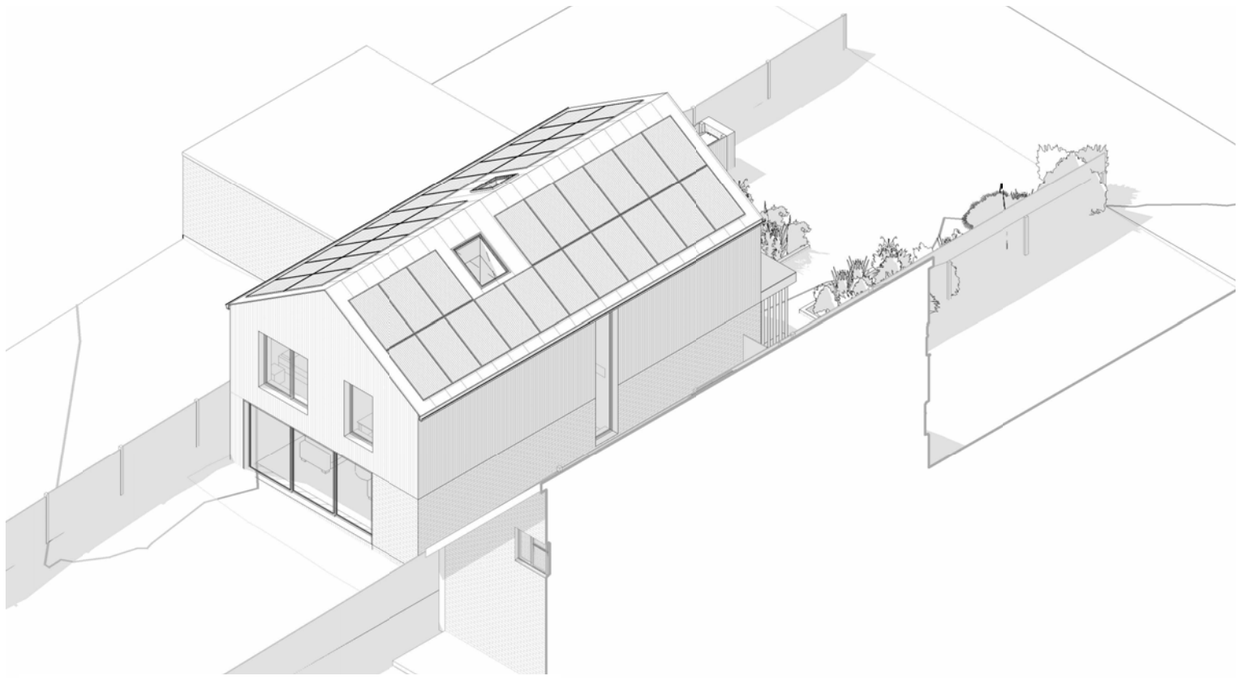
No changes to the existing collection strategy are required.

Cycle Storage

Covered secure cycle storage will be provided in the rear garden.



PROPOSED BIRDS EYE VIEW FRONT



PROPOSED BIRDS EYE VIEW REAR

4.2 Materials

The materials are traditional in their robustness, longevity, and natural finish, but expressed with modern restraint that reflects the pared back, efficient design. There is a loose asymmetry to the fenestration on the front and rear elevations that reflects this sensibility as well.

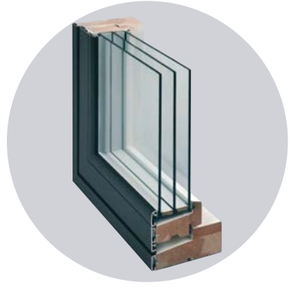
The arrangement of materials on the facade displays a structural logic, with the heavier brick elements providing a robust interface with the street and ground, and the lighter timber cladding supported on the brickwork volumes.

The house will generate its own electricity via an in-roof PV array, designed to sit flush with the surface of the metal edges of the roof.

1. Standing seam metal roof

2. Vertical half-lap cedar cladding

3. Red stock brickwork

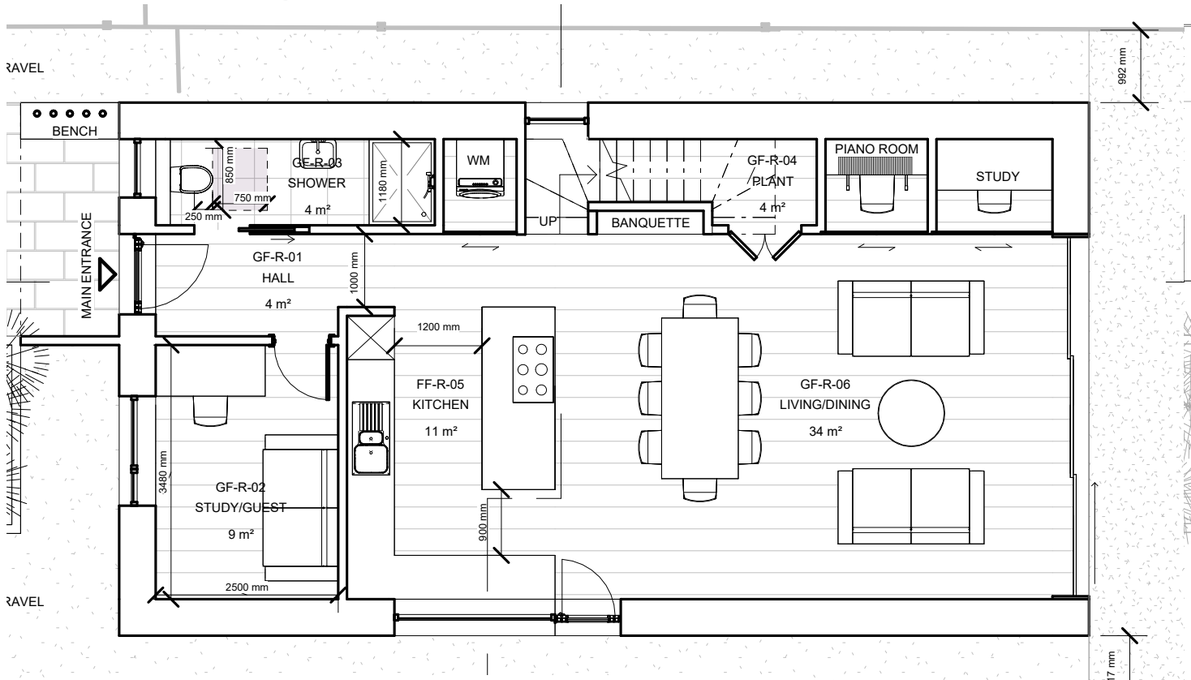


4. Triple glazed composite timber/ aluminium door/window systems

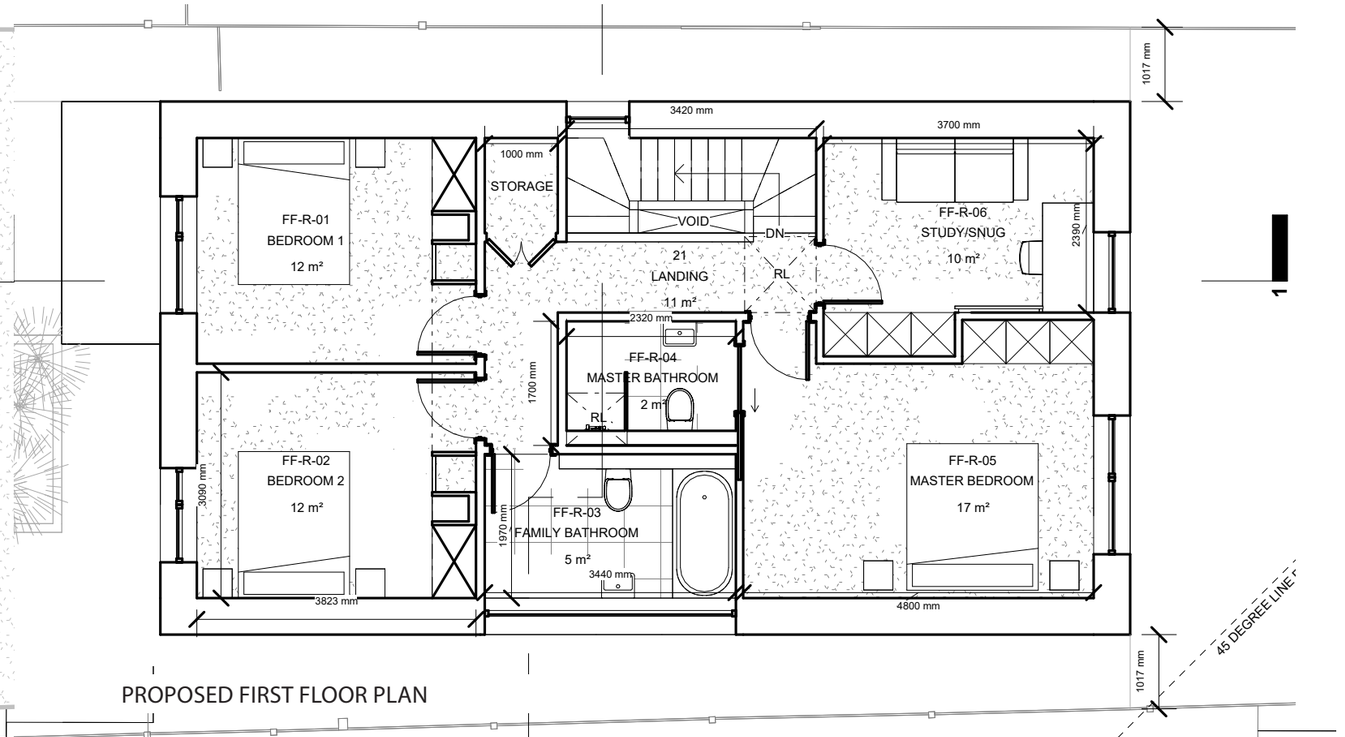
5. Galvanised steel rainwater goods

PROPOSED NORTH (FRONT) ELEVATION

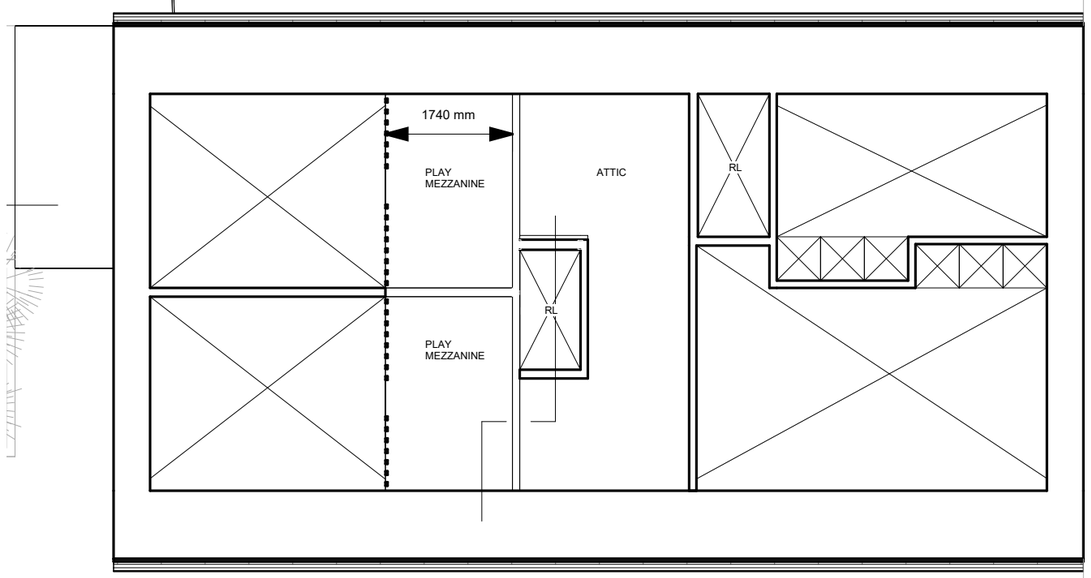
4.3 Layout - House



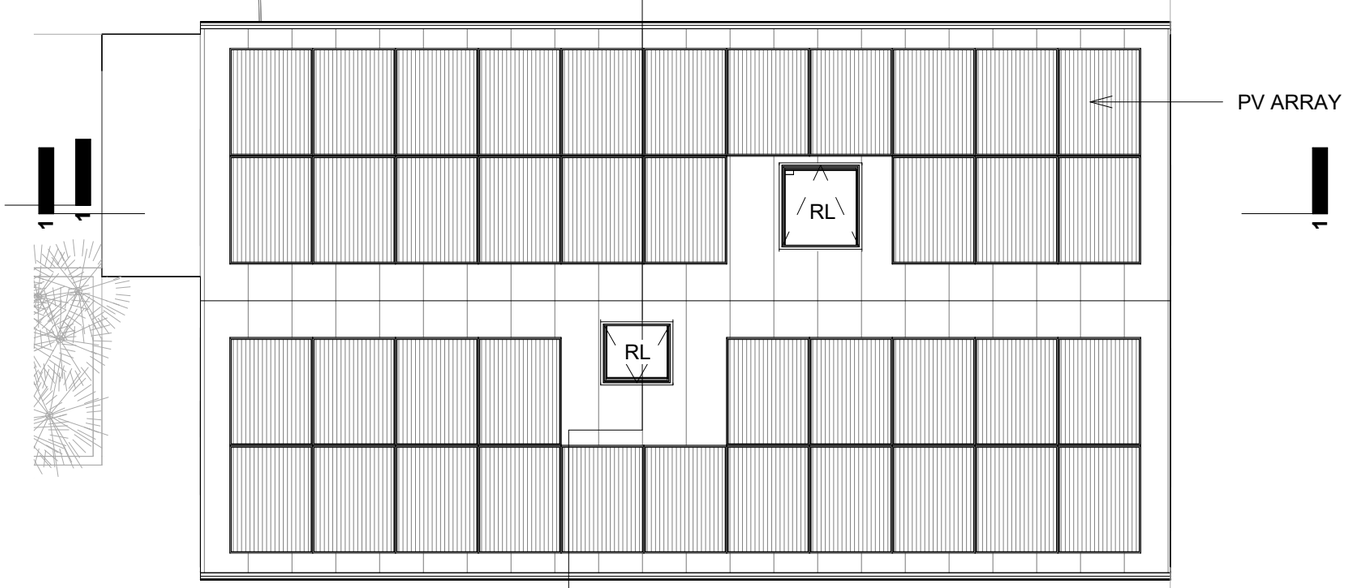
PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN



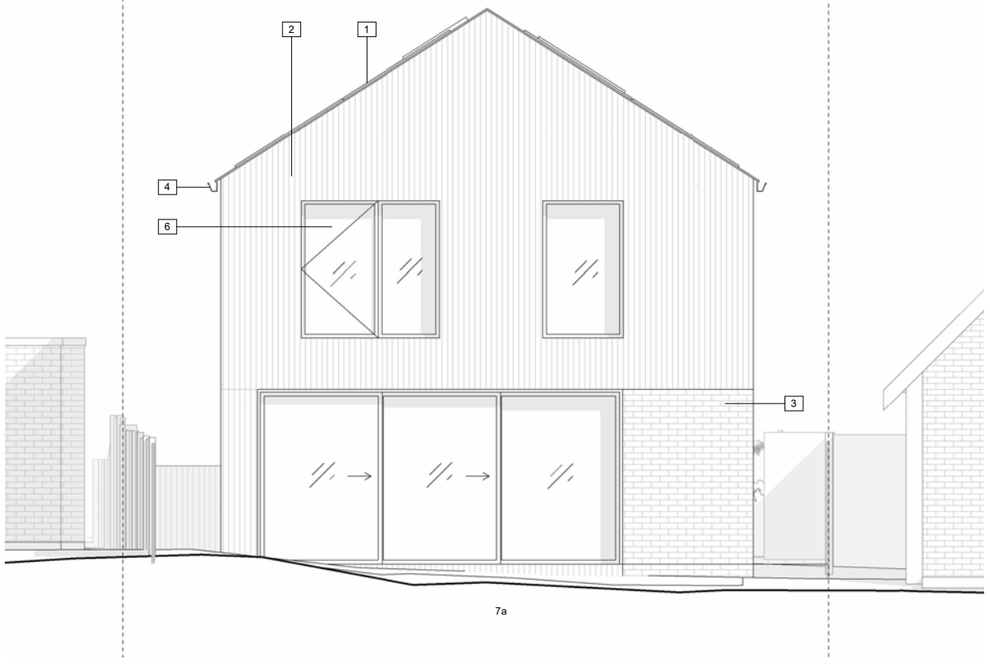
PROPOSED FIRST FLOOR PLAN



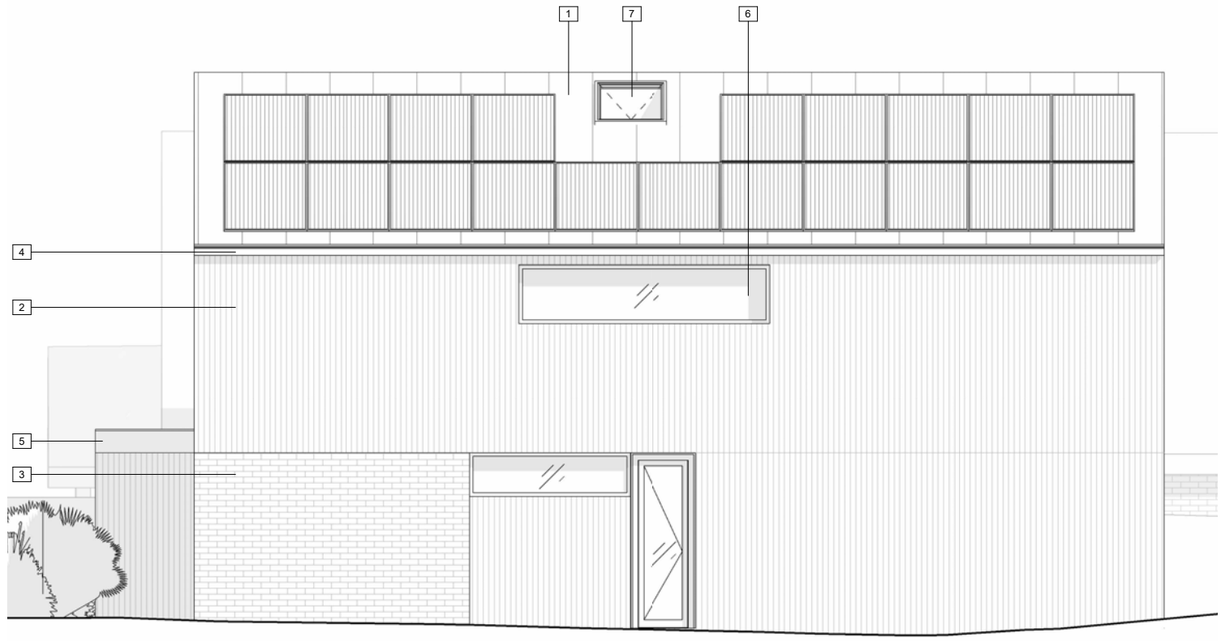
PROPOSED MEZZANINE PLAN



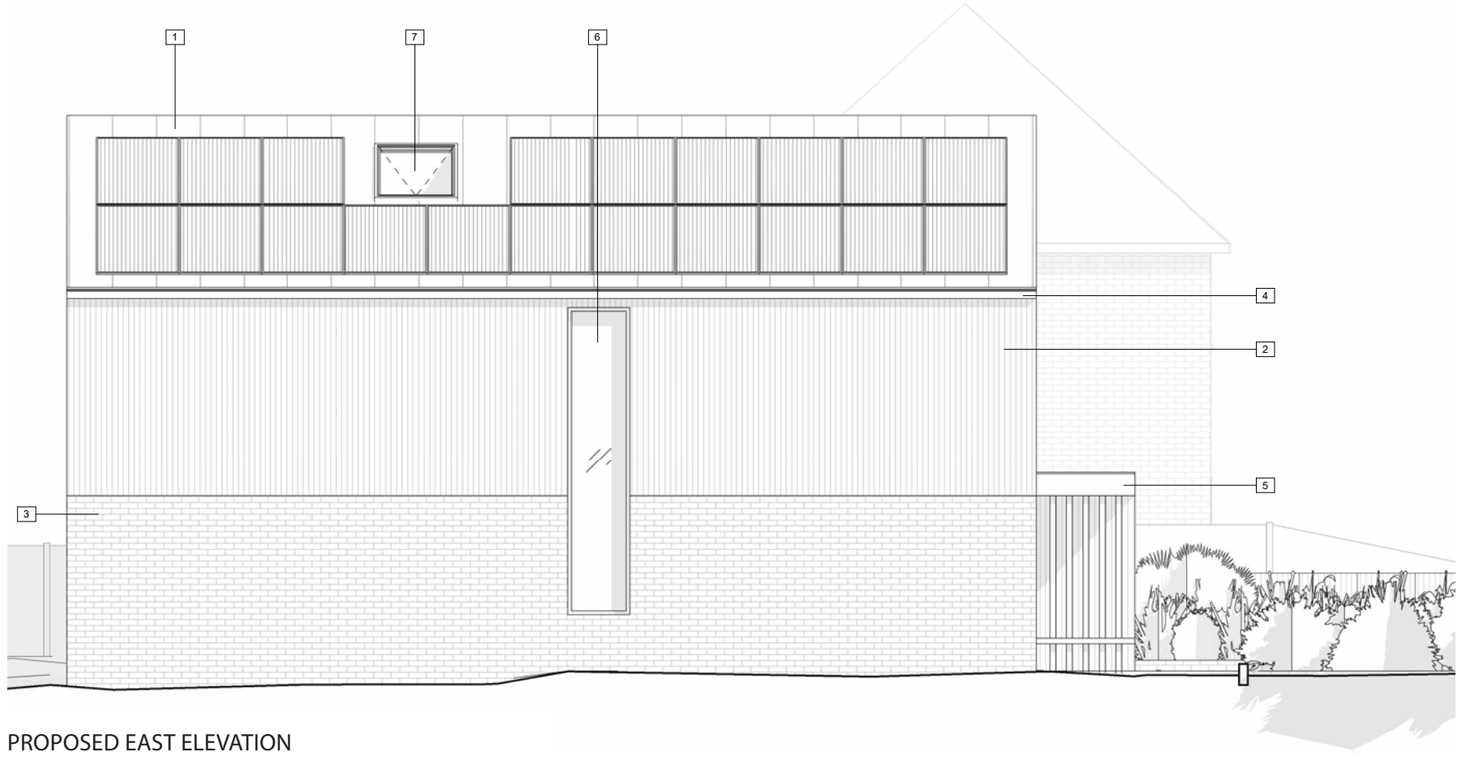
PROPOSED ROOF PLAN



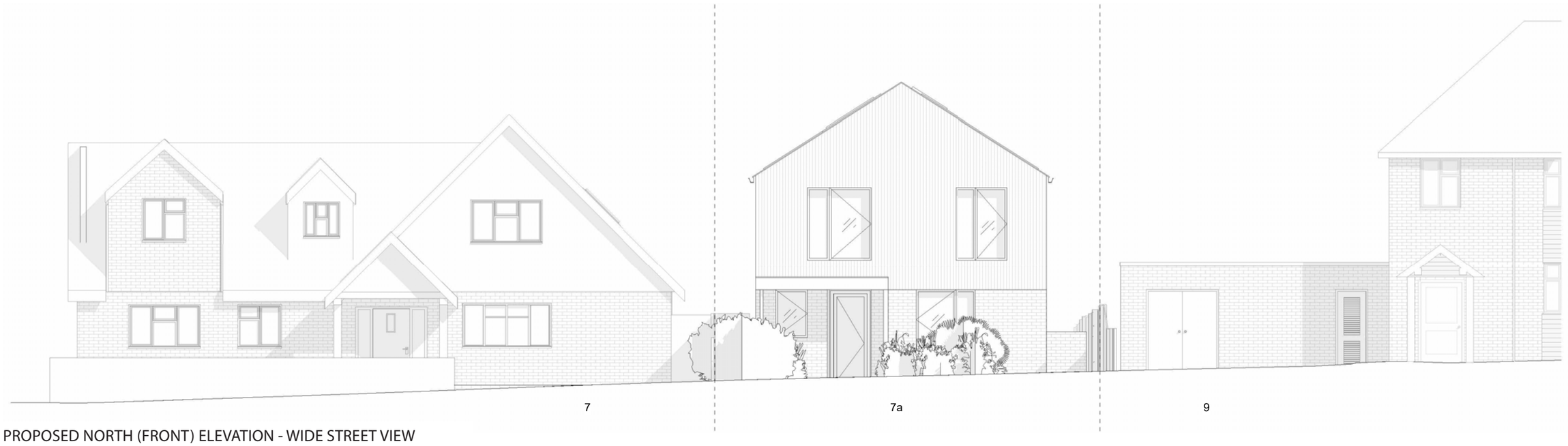
PROPOSED SOUTH (REAR) ELEVATION



PROPOSED WEST ELEVATION



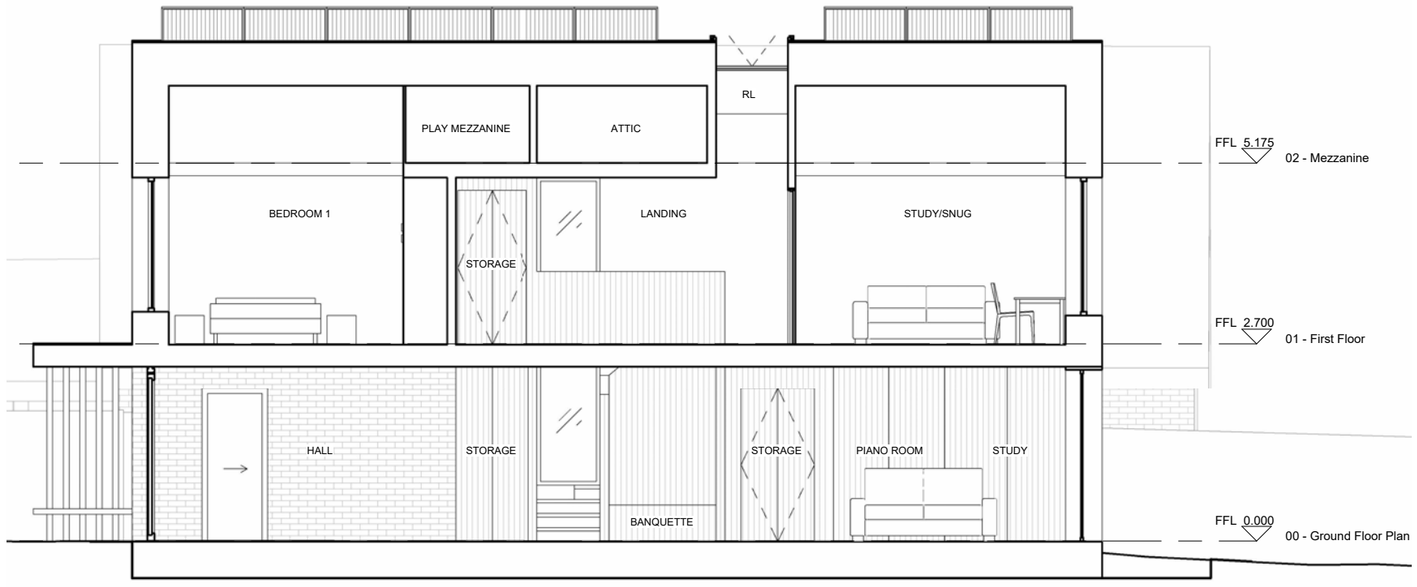
PROPOSED EAST ELEVATION



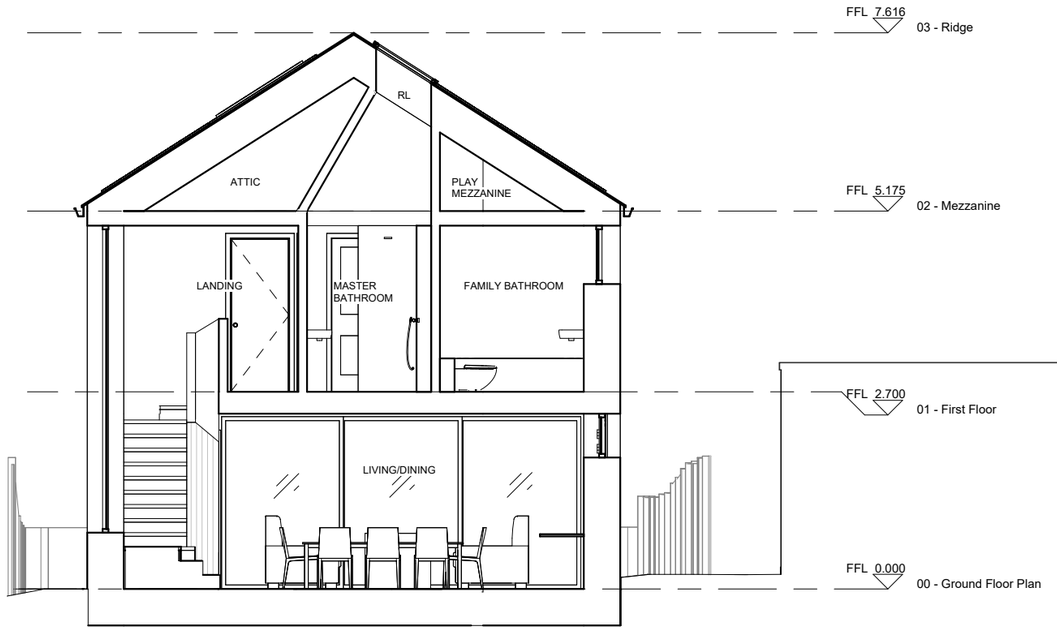
PROPOSED NORTH (FRONT) ELEVATION - WIDE STREET VIEW

PROPOSED SOUTH (REAR) PERSPECTIVE VIEW

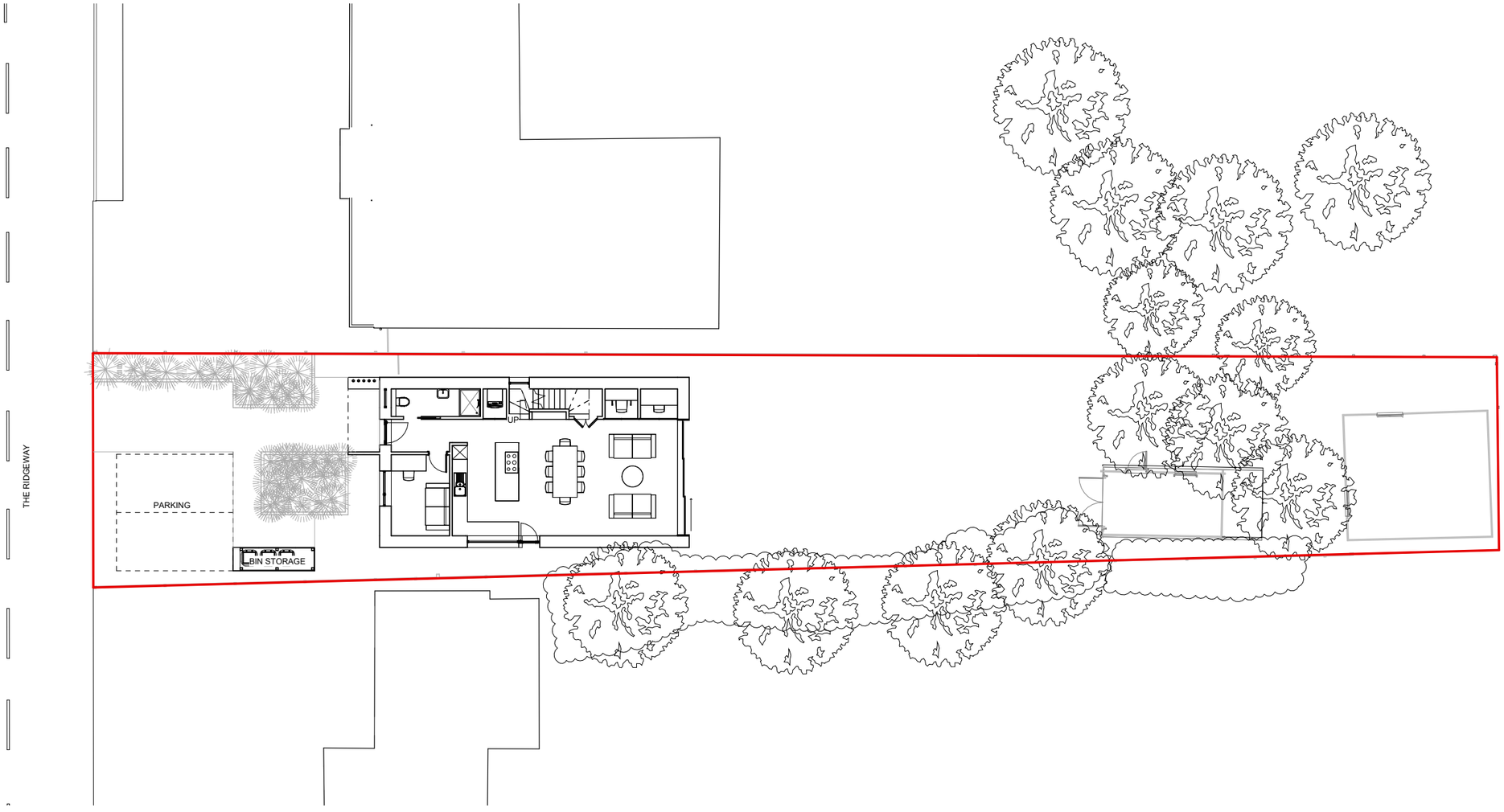
PROPOSED NORTH (FRONT) PERSPECTIVE VIEW



PROPOSED LONG SECTION



PROPOSED SHORT SECTION



PROPOSED SITE PLAN

4.5 Sustainability

Preamble

Our approach to designing any new house is to take a “fabric first” approach to sustainability, and the new house at 7a The Ridgeway is being built to the Passivhaus Standard. We know, and it has been widely demonstrated and documented, that the key to sustainable, low carbon living, is a building that is designed to minimise its energy use. Domestic heating accounts for about 37% of the UK’s Carbon Emissions, when accounting for associated industrial processes, so reducing the amount of energy required to heat a home, is a design priority. Secondary to this is then how any energy the house uses is produced, and the that consideration, as discussed below, has also been a fundamental design driver.

Passivhaus

The Passivhaus Standard is the most widely recognised, globally adopted, low energy building standard. Founded on the basic tenet of the “fabric first” approach mentioned above, it focuses on five objectively measurable building elements - thermal performance (measured by ultra low U-values), triple glazed, high performance windows, the use of an MVHR to control ventilation, thermal bridge free design and finally levels of airtightness that are almost 10 times higher than required by Building Regulations.

Although the orientation and narrow width of the site predetermine a certain layout, the plan has been made as compact as possible to maintain a positive Form Heat Loss Factor and ensure the best possible balance between solar gains and heat losses through the external windows and doors. External shading, in the form of retractable concealed external blinds, will be employed on the south elevation to minimise the risk of overheating.

Renewables

A PV array is proposed to take up as much of the roof as possible, and the relatively shallow pitch will ensure maximum efficiency across the array, despite the lack of a south facing roof plane. These arrays will be supported by a battery, which will provide on site storage.

An air to water heat pump, also supplemented by the solar panels, will provide all the domestic hot water required by the house. Heating will be supplied by electric means - either infra red panels, radiators, or underfloor heating.

Ventilation

As mentioned above a Mechanical Ventilation and Heat Recovery system (MVHR) will remove the requirement for passive ventilation and control the ingress and egress of air from the building. The system is designed around an extract that sucks hot stale air from kitchens, bathrooms and other utility spaces and, via a heat exchanger, warms up the fresh air it draws in and distributes to the rest of the house. The MVHR is powered by the solar panels on the roof of the house.

Energy Efficient Services

In line with the overall ethos of the house, the efficiency of all services, from highly efficient lighting systems and controls to domestic appliances will ensure that energy demand is reduced as much as possible. Natural day lighting has been carefully considered to limit the need for artificial lighting.

Construction Methodology

The house will be constructed from an off site manufactured timber frame system. This will have multiple benefits, including factory levels of precision in construction, quick and efficient construction times, significantly reduced levels of site waste and disturbance, focus on the use of low carbon materials, such as timber for the frame and recycled cellulose insulation, and, most critically, hugely enhanced thermal performance with ultra low u-values, thermal bridge free and airtight construction being much more easily achievable.

Waste

Dedicated storage space will be provided to cater for recyclable materials generated by the building during occupation in order to encourage high recycling rates.

Energy Statement

The thermal performance of the building has been assessed using the PHPP (Passivhaus Planning Package) modelling methodology. The initial report is enclosed with this application.

5.0 Conclusion

The proposed new dwelling on the site of the existing garage at 7a The Ridgeway is an exciting opportunity for the client to create a new, ultra low energy, environmentally friendly home, as well as an an exemplary home of high architectural quality that will positively impact the local area.

A number of key features demonstrate the ambition and principles on which the design of the house is based;

- it is designed to Passivhaus Standards, which are significantly more demanding than Building Regulations;

- it will be a home that requires almost no external energy input in operation, thus reducing the demand on local infrastructure and grid;

- it is an exemplar of modern low energy design, marrying the highest standards of architecture with the highest levels of energy efficiency;

- it will be timber frame construction with natural insulation, thus significantly improving the carbon footprint of the house in construction;

- it will be clad in site appropriate materials, and its modest scale will ensure it sits comfortably within the site and wider landscape;

By engaging architects and a wider design team committed to sustainability and ecological improvement, the applicants have demonstrated their desire to build a house that is not just a wonderful home but also produces significant wider benefit, and for those reasons we commend this application to the council for approval.

Gresford Architects

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