

BREIF DESIGN STATEMENT No: DS.25.02.01 FOR PROPOSED SIDE EXTENSION
AT
10 SHEPHERDS AVENUE, EARLEY, RG6 1AY, BERKSHIRE

1. Introduction and Established Need

- 1.1. Principally the proposal arises as part of specialist works to provide more amenable ground floor sleeping accommodation and wet room facilities for the elderly parents, respective mothers, of the Applicant - the property owners. Both elders have infirm conditions and are now unable to negotiate stair access to upper floor accommodate. Medical evidence supporting these needs is available, subject to data protection Act rights. The site enjoys a large plot area in a fairly spaciouly laid out residential neighbourhood. It will service an essential family need and yet maintain a low impact design in the locality. They procured the property about two years ago.
- 1.2. Pre-application, advice in the following publications has been examined and relied upon for the design approach:
 1. *Wokingham Local Development Framework Adopted Core Strategy -, Adopted Jan. 2010.*
 2. *Managing Development Delivery Local Plan (MDD). 2014 (valid until 2026)*
 3. *Supplementary Planning Documents as applicable to Residential Extensions*
 4. *The Emerging Wokingham Borough Local Plan Update 2023-2040*
 5. *The MHC&LG Permitted Development rights for householders Technical Guidance Sept. 2019.*
- 1.3. It is considered all that pertinent advice, and discretion allowance, has been adopted for the extension proposal as drawn - by the overall design approach. Its scale and form are all is in keeping with the policy guidance, respecting the original dwelling format, the plot curtilage and the vicinity. The footprint has been minimised as best as practical.
- 1.4. Although the site is a large spacious plot, the existing property is essentially only a modest sized detached dwelling with two bedrooms - plus a box room. As per Block Plan, the plot size, shape, location and the *proposal setting* are all in keeping with the neighbourhood without material adverse impact on the street scene or adjoining plots. There is extensive landscaping as well as good vegetation screening all around, including the boundary with 8 Shepherd Avenue. These matters, together with requisite medical and social services consultations, have been incorporated / adapted into the design generation.

2. Existing Plan Layout:

- 2.1. Generally, the site rises quite steeply north-east wards at a gradient of about one in twelve. This has resulted in a challenging, rather unsafe and a restrictive access / layout of the existing dwelling. It has necessitated an uphill forecourt approach to the 900 mm. terraced stepped brickwork access stairway to the front entrance. Several other factors have also led to a general degree of inconvenience and discomfort in its use for modern standards. All the rooms are rather a modest, almost cramped, size.
- 2.2. The split-level ground floor only accommodates a modest lounge / diner arrangement with a longish narrow side kitchen. The lack of adequate internal space, combined with split levels has necessitated a very inconvenient and awkward utility room / downstairs washroom arrangement only accessible from the outside, through a side door opening. These are unsuitable and impracticable for family use even just for the nuclear family needs especially during inclement weather The existing internal staircase is also too narrow and steep for any practical use by an elderly person and an impossibility for frailty with infirm health conditions
- 2.3. The first floor has two average sized two bedrooms, a box room and a family bathroom all accessed via a narrow steep staircase - a very tight stairwell arrangement – as afore noted.

3. *Proposed Plan Layout:*

- 3.1. The proposal design approach combines the LPA guidance and criteria in the afore-listed documents. It is a spacious plot with ample off-street, forecourt parking space for the family cars, including invalid mobility needs. The proposal itself is not a generic traffic generator.
- 3.2. The plan layout aims to sit well, and be suitably practical for the elderly relatives' health and nuclear family's general needs. It aims to present a sensitive aesthetic appearance within the context of public planning guidance, the plot enclosures as well as the vicinity generally. Accordingly it aims to retain and respect all existing vegetation, boundary treatments and fence screening. Thus the existing façade arrangement remains intact with large areas of the proposal extension obscured from direct street view.
- 3.3. It has aimed at generating the minimum requisite footprint for the much needed facilities. The proposed layout will have serviceable and fully integrated utility and wash room needs contrary to the present situation. For the specific senior family members' accommodation - a core objective has been to build-in social inclusivity and care of the frail relatives to a full modern quality of life and appropriately befitting housing standards.
- 3.4. In line with practical access needs a low level lift provision is included for the mothers' critical independence enhancement, dignity, general comfort and respect. It is also considered to, creatively, overcome cramped and impractical layout conditions without harm to facility or surroundings
- 3.5. The extension is designed to be an integral part of the main dwelling and not appear an oddity. It is going to service essential urgent medical and care needs of two family members and is designed as such. It is a single storey addition only and the attractive surrounding gardens, are all retained as is the frontage landscape. It's largely obscure from direct neighbourhood views. No adverse impact should imparted as such
- 3.6. The extension is essentially proposed for the emerging family needs. All design features do and will service amenity needs by the extended accommodation.

4. *Elevations & Roof Layout*

- 4.1. *North Side:* The complete roofing arrangement and mini-hipped slopes all-round are set to complement and be *subservient* to existing roof and eaves heights even in the single storey context. This helps minimise the massing height of the extension and also avoids blocking of the first floor *northern* bathroom window, important for internal air circulation and moisture control. Given all that and the following detail, it is considered the presented design makes the proposal complementary to the original structure and amenable in the vicinity layout. The window sizes in the north wall are minimised in size for thermal efficiency and optimum internal light comfort There is a large span lawn garden, some 16 metres net width, to the north beyond which is a protected woodland (discussed in Report Section 5) – all to be retained intact,
- 4.2. *West Side:* For the west facing frontage, a new front porched double door entrance is approached via a sloped non slip ramp for wheelchair access. The existing lean-to pitched roof arrangement for the ground floor format is retained. This enables (a) a minimalist change for a *subservient* face similar to the existing store/garage, (b) the pitch to matching existing, and (c) a “naturally integrated montage” over the main existing frontage as well as a backdrop. All eaves are maintained at a single level. The triple tall arched fanlight windows, under a soldier course arc, which all help a good west-sun shine penetration into the porch interior as well as break the brick massing.
- 4.3. *South Side:* In the south side view, only a five square meter area of new brick walling to the porch side shall be visible. This is no different, in visual context or degree, to the existing garage/store side wall. Indeed it is not only fenestrated with a double glazed window aperture, but as a whole is quite dwarfed by the towering embankment and oak woodland as backdrop. The side view of the lean-to roofing, over the new porch and existing lounge bay, remains materially unaltered.
- 4.4. *East Side:* The rear, east face wall features a suitably sized patio door, providing rear garden access with a good degree of light and healthy morning sunshine. It is in keeping with the existing elevation / fenestration all adopted for aesthetic effect as well as keeping the new subservient to existing. There is

zero impact on adjoining plots beyond the 25+ metre long rear garden. All material specifications and design, including maintained landscaping, are aimed a high quality finish.

- 4.5. Given the single storey height, the proposed window arrangement, the “blind” side extension location and the distances to the adjoining or opposite plots no overlooking impact is envisaged to any aspect. The whole is considered to be a cosy, lowest impact setting with a flat and mini-hip pitched tile roofing, all to complement existing.
- 4.6. LPA Guidelines indicate designs will be considered in context of site assessments for plot size layout, curtilage, and screening / obscurity levels. All these criteria are well respected as per drawn details, particularly including the block plan. Indeed, the west wall will be, for the most part, obscured from the front view by virtue of the boundary treatments – including a 1.8 m high, full length timber panel fencing, shrubbery and the, increasingly encouraged, denser shrubbery beds/vegetation north and westwards.

5. *Protected Woodland:*

- 5.1. The Applicants procured the property some two years ago with the landscape status quo. The purchase also included a parcel of a Tree Preservation Order (TPO), protected woodland, discussed here. The site is a residential plot at the end of a cul-de-sac, backing onto similar properties. To its north is a rising embankment, with protected, dense woodland of Oak and other broad leaved trees primarily. This is shown on the site location & block plans. At approx 60 m. further north, the land falls to a railway cutting beyond.
- 5.2. The proposed extension, at 16 plus metres distance from the nearest trees shall have no impact on any of the protected status, and it is considered, at that separation distance, the extension works shall be outside any root protection zones too. The woodland itself is fenced off against trespass
- 5.3. Although the proposal has no impact on any greenery, apart from a nominal 27 Sqm lawn patch; under the footprint, the wood trees have nevertheless been visually scanned, from ground level. They have all appeared healthy and in good order during the survey. It is therefore considered no further or specialist work is necessary on this aspect, given the separation distances available.
- 5.4. Currently, the protected woodland has no formal or specialist management plan in place. However, it is registered to the property owners and its “enjoyment” is guided by its protected status. It thrives in wildlife, with an excellent ecological regime of rich species diversity. It was purchased by the previous owners from the Railway Authorities and passed to the present owners explained. They are *determined* to care for it as *protected*. The dense tree cover provides a useful sound barrier to the dwelling (and neighbours) from the busy railway. As the trees continue to thrive, a programme for their healthy management will be necessary in time. It is without question, a valued amenity within the local & wider Shepherds Avenue vicinity, an environmental asset for neighbourhood richness. All of that will remain protected from impact.
- 5.5. To reinforce tree protection, guidance in Para. 76 of the old DOE circular 36/78 'Trees & Forestry' has been and will be, followed for absolute assurance during construction phase too. Tree will be protected against any chance of harm from construction activity especially over any the root protection zones. A chicken wire protective fence, in accordance with BS 5837, already exists as shown on Block Plan ensuring no trespass. The clear 16 m spacing clearly helps.
- 5.6. To back-up the protection objective, working drawings / contract conditions shall stipulate specialist consultations for precautions & method statements. Such stipulations would normally include access restrictions on construction plant or operative traffic, with special attention to root protection area (RPA). The complete “tree protection plan” (TPP) will detail location of barriers, protection matting and the like. For wheeled or tracked plant, proprietary protection shall be engineer designed.
- 5.7. To fully complete the protection regime contract documents will stipulate factors like: No fires lit on site, no fuels, oils or substances damaging to any tree shall be spilled or poured on site. no storage of any such materials on any soft ground, no work to be carried out within any root protection zone, no embankment changes to occur within the RPA – all to be pre-agreed on site.

6. *Bat Survey*

- 6.1. A professional ecologist's report, *Reference R3075_PRA_a*, by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy is included with the application as per standard Wokingham Borough Council requirements for Planning Applications in the Earley Area.
- 6.2. It is a comprehensive study report complete in it self requiring little further comment. For brevity and Planning consideration para. 1.1.4 of the Executive Summary of that report is quoted here.:
- 6.3. “ *1.1.4 The development proposals are considered highly unlikely to result in the death, injury or disturbance of bats; the damage or destruction of a bat roost; or the obstruction of access to a bat roost. As such, a European Protected Species (EPS) mitigation licence would not be required for the planned works to go ahead lawfully. In the unlikely event that bats are encountered during the construction activities, the works must stop immediately and a licensed ecologist should be called to site to attend to the bat and provide advice on how to proceed.*”
- 6.4. The proposal is thereby deemed compliant with ecological standards for Planning Consent.

7. *Boundary treatments & landscaping:*

- 7.1. All boundary treatments are well established and afford a high level of screening to the existing property as well as the new extension. They include a mix of hedges, panel and / or chicken wire fencing with vegetation, up to 2 m height. Generally the proposal is designed to be in keeping with the majesty of the site and an aesthetic appeal for view. Only nominal lawn area within the extension footprint is affected, otherwise all major greenery shall be retained intact.

8. *Conclusion*

- 8.1. From the considered perspectives, it is believed the proposal blends well with the current pattern and the original character of the dwelling & the area of Shepherd Avenue generally. It also services an essential need as described in this statement, with a sensitive design for an improved practical quality family house.
- 8.2. The proposal application is made in consideration of all the factors in this statement and in the light of detailed pre-application guidance in the Documented LPA Guidance. The design, developed through processes described in this statement is presented in the accompanying drawing(s) and documents for approval request.
- 8.3. The Applicants are open to a site consultation with the Local Planning Authority. All works are modestly scaled for the existing plot size, minimum necessary footprint, and to serve essential family needs, It is considered a high quality proposal has evolved all with well scaled set back / back ups from respective curtilage boundaries and without material impact beyond those.
- 8.4. A visual survey of the vicinity shows the proposal will have no significant material impact in the local street scene.
- 8.5. Consultations of the afore-listed LPA and MHC&LG documents also acknowledge that for all practical purposes the proposal is within a “*de-minimis*” realm.