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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
&
PLANNING STATEMENT

for

19 The Mount
Reading
RG1 5HL

The main driver behind the redesign of the house is to increase access to natural light, sunlight and solar gain, to reduce the dependence on artificial lighting and heating, and thereby reduce energy use and the impact on the environment and climate change. The increase in natural light and sunlight also has the added benefit of impacting positively on the residents' mental health and happiness, which is extremely important in a home, not just as we have seen during the pandemic, but also going forward now that many people are continuing to spend much more time at home due to flexible hours or full time working from home. This is the case in this house, where a home office has been built in as part of the proposed plans, with a south facing window and large rooflights over the space. Exposure to natural light helps our bodies produce Vitamin D, improves our circadian rhythms and sleep patterns, helps us to focus, enables us to get more done, and even makes us happier. Ensuring we get enough of this vital resource is key to our physical and psychological wellbeing[i].

The existing house is in the north west corner of a large corner plot, with large gardens around the south facing front and east facing side of the house, which is ideal for providing access to natural light and sunlight throughout the day. Unfortunately, in the existing house, almost every habitable room faces north, and into a very narrow and dark alley which is surrounded by very tall trees and shrubs, the result of which is that these rooms are extremely dark all day and need to rely on artificial lighting at almost all times.

The south side of both the ground and first floor of the house, is almost entirely taken up by corridor and circulation space. The only exception is the living room which will remain as it is. The dining room faces east but it is a very narrow and deep room and the glazed doors are blocked by an excessively large proportion of plastic to glazing. The doors and windows are very narrow, so much of the space is taken up with thick UPVC stiles and rails. Further light is blocked out by faux glazing bars which have been made with thick plastic strips within the

windows and doors. The result is a very dark room which also needs to rely on artificial light and increased energy use.

One of the bedrooms faces west but it is beside the garage roof and a tall neighbouring house, both of which block out a lot of light, so it too has to rely on artificial light most of the time.

The main driver of the design was therefore to shift the habitable rooms to the front of the house, so they are south facing, and to increase the size and amount of windows on this side at first floor level where there is currently only one small dormer, which is too short to stand under or look straight out of if you are tall, and no window at either end of this south elevation. The increased dormer on the first floor has been added to bring access to south facing light and as much natural light as possible since these rooms currently are extremely dark even on the sunniest days. The design reuses existing windows to reduce construction waste and reduce the impact on the environment while retaining the original style of the dormer. By extending the existing first floor dormer in height and width, it allows access to natural light and sunshine to two bedrooms. Spaces which will be in use a lot most days since they are also the children's work/desk and reading areas.

The master bedroom is moved from the front of the house where there is no window, to the current dressing room which has an east facing window. The proposed plan drops the cill of the high level window and replaces the aperture with a glazed French door to give the room much more access to morning sunlight and natural light all day, with more access to nature and fresh air via a small balcony. Adding windows to the south facing gable end where the master bedroom was located was too detrimental to the details of the existing building, so instead it is no longer a room used very often during the day. Instead 4 large rooflights have been added to ensure the dressing room area has sufficient natural light when it is in use during the day.

The existing office has been opened up to the front corridor on the ground floor to create a large south facing junk modelling room which is a room that really needs the south light to avoid using artificial lighting.

To be able to shift the habitable rooms to the south facing front of the house, the circulation and stairs needed to be moved to the back. The proposed plan therefore extends to the rear (north) of the house, into a narrow and disused alleyway behind the house which is already hardscaped. It is quite dark and without sunlight for most of the day, so it mainly gets used for unsightly storage of garden equipment, and remains very damp and attracts moss and the

like in the winter. This circulation hub extension relocates all hallways and the stairs to this area, the darkest part of the house and garden, and all of the rooms are shifted towards the south and east, so they have access to the brightest part of the house, natural light and sunlight all day.

The rear extension circulation hub will be lit by a number of large rooflights overhead and glazed doors at each end. There is a flat rather than sloped roof above it so that the rooflights are facing the sky rather than the trees behind the house, which would block most of the light. Reducing reliance on artificial light and energy use is a huge driver of the redevelopment and a sloped roof would undermine this hugely.
There is a large 3m x 1m rooflight over the stairs to bring light not just to the first floor hallway but down to the ground floor as well. There are internal windows in the kitchen directly beside the stair to benefit from this light. Rooflights are the most efficient way to bring the most natural light into the space so these feature around the house. The junk modelling room (former office) will retain the internal rear window so that it can access dual access light from not just the south facing front window but also from back of the room where the floor above this window will be glass in order to bring light down towards this window. There will also be a large rooflight directly beside it in the extended link between the house and garage structure to bring in more light still.

The now south facing habitable rooms will get ample natural light throughout the day which will greatly reduce the current need for artificial light but also ensure they are naturally warmer due to the solar gains from facing the sun all day everyday.

The existing garage space to be extended to match the original garage. Internally the space is to be opened up to roof level, and with 7 large rooflights to bring natural light to each room in this section of the house so this area too can reduce reliance on artificial light.

This aspect of the design, reducing the reliance on artificial lighting and heating, responds to the RBC Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted, March 2021) and The Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019), specifically: CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction and CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change.

Protecting the environment and climate change is a key focus of the design:

- The proposed plan has been designed to reduce construction waste as there is almost no demolition in the project. The tiles removed from the rear roof are to be reused on the extended garage roof. The existing walls of the house have been retained as much as possible internally and externally. Internally, most of the internal walls are remaining where they are currently with only small changes which will again reduce construction waste and as much need for new materials. This can be seen via the hatching showing existing and proposed walls on the proposed plans. The external walls of the house which will be become internal in the new plans will remain in place and visible as such so the original shape, details and outline of the house will remain visible internally as well as externally. We will try to salvage and reuse the removed bricks from under the existing dressing room window to reuse. The removed windows in the existing dressing room and office are being reused in the extended dormer window at the front of the house again to cut down on construction waste and new building materials.
- In relation to reducing energy use – as mentioned initially, the main driver of the design was to reorient the house so it can access natural light and sunlight. The many

areas that this has been done are highlighted on the proposed drawings in addition to the details above.

- A large garden gate has been added to ensure it is of a size to easily bring bikes in and out throughout the day to cut down on car journeys and promote zero carbon travel. By enclosing the garden in the design, bikes can be stored in the garden area and the new large gate means that bicycles can more easily be accessed and brought in and out frequently throughout the day. The entire family cycles and this will ensure that cycling will be the quickest form of transport to access.
- There is a green roof on the front extension will prevent water run off and promote biodiversity. Green roofs can provide replacement habitats for flora and fauna. Wild bees, butterflies and ground beetles find food and shelter there. The green roof will offset the front extension in terms of replacing permeable surfaces and biodiversity.
- The extended driveway area will be permeable which will reduce rain water run off, as this area is currently predominantly impermeable concrete.
- New trees and plantings are to be added on all boundaries of the site to increase biodiversity and potential habitats.
- The design has tried to future proof the house, by making many of the rooms mutli-use to reduce the need for it to be redeveloped at a later date to cut down on future construction waste and materials. For example, by building in a home office with access to natural light and an en-suite shower room it can be adapted to a bedroom when needed, it can respond to the need for flexible living. With the addition of a new side entrance adjacent to this room, it could become an annex for someone less mobile at a future date, for a future owner who has this need. The junk modelling room on the ground floor could be a guestroom or bedroom for someone disabled who cannot access the first floor. The front entrance hall could become a party room or children's sleepover space etc. The rooms are designed so they can be used in a multitude of different ways so the design can be adapted in the future by people in numerous different demographics, rather than having to be rebuilt.

These design features respond to The Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019), specifically:

- CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change, "*All developments will demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. The following measures shall be incorporated into development: • Wherever possible, new buildings shall be orientated to maximise the opportunities for both natural heating and ventilation….Proposals involving both new and existing buildings shall demonstrate how they have been designed to maximise resistance and resilience to climate change for example by including measures such as… green and brown roofs…Use of trees and other planting, where appropriate as part of a landscape scheme, to help to connect habitat, designed with native plants that are carefully selected, managed and adaptable to meet the predicted changed climatic conditions; and, All development shall minimise the impact of surface water runoff from the development"*
- Section 6.3.1 or the RBC Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted, March 2021) *"The natural environment can have a significant impact on all types of extension proposals. Consideration needs to be given to the situation of trees, existing hedges and habitats. The Green Network is a network of habitats, open spaces and existing or potential vegetation features, which*

could include such things as lines of trees or bushes within back gardens. Proposals should seek to enhance or maintain the quality of the Green Network."

- And, section 4.0 Climate change

Great care has been taken to ensure that the size and scale of the proposals are not harmful to the character or appearance of the existing dwelling as section 6.1.1 of the RBC Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted, March 2021) and that they do not cause a loss of light, overshadowing or be considered overbearing to neighbours as section 6.2.2.

One of the main design principals that has driven this development is that original form of the house can be seen distinctly from the new extensions. Having been in conservation for so long it is very important to me that the form of the original form of a building is not distorted. The new extensions are therefore in a contrasting material in keeping with conservation theory such as that expounded by the Society for the protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB). I know that this is not a Grade I listed building but keeping the house form and shape clear is still important. On all elevations of the house, the original outline and form of the existing house is clear. The rear extension has been set back on both sides from the original house and the roof is lower than the existing ridge line of the house to ensure that it is subservient to the existing house and the original outline, shape and details of the existing house remain clear and protected on all sides. It will not be seen from the majority of the surrounding properties. Even internally, the original house will be clearly seen within the new spaces.

On the extended dormer, which is on the main house, existing house windows will be reused and the style and detailing will match the existing dormer in keeping with the original house. The existing dormer window does not line up vertically with either the front door or the window below it. It is currently to the right of the window below. By extending the dormer width wise, the two new windows will frame the window below. In relation to Section 6.4.1 Fenestration, the existing house does not follow any pattern of the street. It is quite different from the bungalows running the length of the street in front of it, the one off two story house beside it, or the historic buildings of The Mount. The dormer proposal is respectful of the original house form and in keeping with the scale and detailing or the original house, while ensuring it is improved to bring natural light and sunlight into the first floor usable rooms which are currently blocked from it.

In relation to section 6.4.2 of the RBC Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (Materials and detailing) it is noted that *"To complement the existing dwelling and street scene, matching materials and detailing is encouraged where appropriate, unless quality design is achieved through the use of other materials."* I feel that it is appropriate to match materials on the dormer so that the existing house remains much as it is now. I feel that the other extensions need to be differentiated through different materials to protect the form of the original house, and to reflect the time in which the extensions were built. The unpainted vertical timber siding will also help the extension to blend into the natural environment surrounding them, namely the trees beside the rear extension and the large gardens around the house.

The garage is being converted to a bedroom, so the proposed extension siding (unpainted vertical timber cladding) is being applied to this area to denote the change. There are however two horizontal strips on the front façade of the garage to reflect the double stringcourse that runs around the historic buildings on The Mount at the same height. The shape of the garage

is remaining untouched, as there are a number of similar garages around The Mount varying in style and age. We are also keeping the set back to the garage door and the four glazed windows. The roofing materials and details of the garage will remain the same. The extended garage roof will keep the same format as the existing and use the removed tiles from the rear house roof to ensure they match the existing. The aim is to enhance the Conservation Area. The garage and link are extensions to the original house and they were not constructed in a particularly beautiful or high quality way and we aim to address that. It is not appropriate to copy the historic garages as neither this site nor the garage is historic. We are therefore proposing to clad it with high quality modern timber siding to reflect the current era but with reference to the original typology and style of the building and reference to the historic stringcourse. I feel this addresses the point brought up in section *6.4.*3 of the RBC Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document which states that *"Development that enhances the street scene through high quality design will be considered favourably. High quality design should not be discounted purely on the basis that it does not fit in with a street scene. High quality design that enhances the street scene may still be acceptable where it provides a visual difference to the existing character and appearance of the surrounding area… Development proposed within a conservation area will be expected to protect or enhance the character and appearance of the historic environment."* This latter point is an important one as this garage is the one area of the house that is on display to The Mount and the clients feel that the existing garage really lets side down as the materials are not in keeping with the history of the area or of a very high quality or finish. By keeping the typology of the garage, the set back door and the windows, the reference to the original typology is retained, but the materials can improve the street scene and add another layer to the history of the conservation area, a current one.

The location of the extensions has been particularly chosen to ensure they don't impact on outdoor amenity spaces as section 6.1.2 of the RBC Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted, March 2021). The north alleyway behind the house currently provides no amenity space at all and is quite a source of irritation to look at. Filling it in provides a huge amount of storage space desperately needed in the house so the objects piled behind the house can be put away but without losing any of the usable garden.

The area where the front entrance hall extension is located is an area where a high level fence is urgently needed regardless for privacy and security. At the moment, people are walking straight into the private garden area and even into open garden doors of the house. It is currently not safe for this reason, particularly with children and pets in the family. A high level fence will be erected in this location regardless so it is an idea place to hide an extension with minimal impact on the garden, outdoor amenity space or the appearance externally. In the plans, a new extension has been designed in place of a fence but with the appearance of a new fence. Even the front door is disguised by being clad with the same siding as the surround elevation. This extension has been set back into the garden so it is predominantly hidden from view from the street and the surrounding houses. The roof will be a green living roof to increase biodiversity and so that the building blends into the lawn and garden beyond if seen from high level. As the doors of this extension can open fully on the garden side, the area can still form part of the external amenity space.

Great care has also been taken to ensure that the proposed extensions do not impact on the surrounding neighbouring plots in line with CC8: Safeguarding Amenity and section 6.2.2 of

the RBC Design Guide to House Extensions Supplementary Planning Document (Adopted, March 2021). Shadows from the front extension will fall within the plot itself and will not be much more than would be cast by the required high level fence. It will be disguised much like a fence for anyone facing the front of it, and from the other side, it is able to be viewed by only one neighbour and there are a number of trees and shrubs between the extension and that property.

To the north of the house, where the rear extension predominantly faces, this elevation will be blocked out substantially by existing trees. This extension will do very little to change the amount of shadowing to the north because it is lower than the existing house and because of the existing trees. The block of flats in this direction is some distance from the rear extension.

The front extension will not create much more shadow than a fence which needs to be erected in the same location. The shading will not reach any neighbouring properties due to its orientation and the surrounding trees.

In line with section 7.1.1, there are no windows on the east side of the rear extension which is relatively close to a neighbouring property, there is only one small window on the rear elevation and it will be at a high level, above a wc and it will use translucent glazing to prevent overlooking, although the view is to a communal garden. The only window on the West elevation of the rear extension is 23 metres from the next garden, which is hidden from view with fencing and trees. The window is also at a high level and in a shower so will not be in use the majority of the time. The small balcony proposed outside the new master bedroom, does not overlook the garden behind because it is blocked by a high fence. It is proposed that shrubs and trees to be added between the garden and the property to the right to prevent overlooking in that direction. Shadows from these plantings would land almost entirely within the plot of this house.

Access

The car access to the property remains very much as existing. The dropped curb, piers to either side of the drive will remain as exactly as they are. The only change will be the size of the driveway which will be increased, as it is currently extremely small. This will prevent any further on street parking in an area where there isn't a lot already to be had.

Access for bicycles has been added to the property in the form of a large hidden gate of a size to easily bring bikes in and out of the property so zero carbon travel can be as easier than getting into a car and out of the drive.

New side doors to the property, from the street and the garden, have been added to ensure that there are "messy" entrances to the house which will not be affected by dirt and the like as they are designed to be messy boot room type spaces, to encourage getting outside and muddy in the garden, on a bike, or on foot for physical and mental health as well as zero carbon travel and activities.

Tree Survey and Protection Plan

We have been asked to carry out a tree survey for the site. We have commissioned and submitted this survey, but also an impact assessment, protection plan and method statement, to ensure a thorough plan is in place for all of the trees on the site.

Our aim had always been to keep all possible trees and shrubs as we recognise how important they are in so many ways. One of the nicest features of the site is that it is surrounded by greenery.

It is also crucial that architecture is built to last, with high quality materials and a maintenance plan to keep the building usable for as long as possible. Working in conservation, I like to plan for buildings to last hundreds of years, not just a number of decades as so often happens. Having to tear down buildings because a plan was not made to ensure they could last, erodes a sense of place over time and it has an extremely high environmental impact and cost, via construction waste and the impact of production and delivery of new building materials and supplies.

In order to build architecture that is made to last, future planning must happen from the start to ensure that nothing will start to erode the building– and most especially the foundations. With this in mind, of all of the many trees and shrubs that surround The Mount, there is one tree that is very likely to cause problems. The roots are likely to be in the area of the rear extension, but even if they are not there yet, they will spread to this area and start to affect the foundations at some point. The canopy will also cause issues for the roofing in terms of damage due to branches breaking the roofing material or the lifespan of the materials being broken down by decomposing leaves. If this resulted in leaks, internal materials would be affected as well. The canopy of the tree will also block out a lot of natural light to the house, which would result in an increase in energy use. The tree also blocks out a lot of light to the block of flats (and its garden) behind the house. All of this has a very high environmental cost when the entire scheme is trying to reduce energy use year upon year.

The tree in question is one of a number of sycamore trees. The survey notes that it *"is not considered high quality"* We are proposing to replace this tree with a number of other trees and shrubs. These are to be a variety of species to considerably increase the biodiversity of the site. At the moment the majority of the trees are the same species. By introducing a number of new species, a variety of trees and shrubs, new habitats can be created and biodiversity can be increased. These new plantings will also help to increase privacy between the gardens, any overlooking, and they can be species that don't cut out the sunlight and access to light for the garden behind as much as the existing tree does.

We are very loathe to remove any trees or plantings in any architectural projects but feel that the environmental cost of not removing the one tree detailed above, is too high. By removing it, it will be possible to drastically reduce the annual carbon footprint of 19 The Mount (as detailed above), ensure that the house will not be damaged in the near future, that it can be maintained indefinitely and that the neighbouring block of flats to the north of the site can also reduce energy use via the reduction in shading and the increased access to light and sunlight, without the removal of any privacy.

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[i] https://www.cantifix.co.uk/blog/what-are-the-benefits-of-natural-light/#:~:text=Exposure%20to%20natural%20light%20helps,our%20physical%20and%20psychological%20well being.