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Design Document

129 Whiteknights Road,

Reading, RG6 7BB



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Introduction

Hives Architects have been appointed to act as agents for our client Dr M. Y. Javaid to design and prepare a planning application for 127 Whiteknights Road.

This document explains the proposed alterations, extensions, and landscaping to seek planning approval from the Council. It should be read in conjunction with the drawings, and other documents submitted.

Previous planning application 201525 sought to demolish the house, but since then the client has realised the potential and importance of the existing building, and wishes to retain and improve it. This application seeks to secure the long-term future and use of the building.

Positive pre-application advice was obtained from Mrs Nathalie Weekes (planning officer) and Mr Bruce Edgar (conservation & urban design officer). Since our meeting and receipt of written pre-app, the design has been revised to take into consideration their comments. The proposed extensions have been designed to create further ancillary accommodation as required by our client, whilst respecting and improving the existing building. A large garden surrounds the house, and proposals would only occupy a small area of the plot. The extensions will be largely located behind the house and invisible from the street. Proposals include demolition of a double garage, and a small wing at the rear of the house, a ground floor extension including replacement garage, a first floor extension, and internal alterations.

We trust that the information within this document, together with the associated plans and reports provides sufficient information to determine the application.

Full list of documents submitted with planning application:

- 001 Site Location Plan
- 002 Existing and Demolition Plans
- 003 Existing and Proposed Elevations
- 004 Existing and Proposed Street Elevations
- 005 Proposed Plans
- 006 Existing and Proposed 3D views
- 007 Proposed Block Plan
- 4429 Arboricultural Implications Assessment Report
- 4429 Arboricultural Implications Plan
- 4429 Arboricultural Tree Protection Plan
- RT-MME152004-02 Rev A (PRA) - Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment
- RT-MME152004-01 (PEA) - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal
- RT-MME153229 Rev A - Dusk Emergence and Dawn Re-entry surveys
- 865-LA-P-01 Landscape Strategy Plan
- Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment for Planning

Client Statement

My parents moved to Reading from Barnet when I was a few weeks old (1975) and have been residing on Whiteknights Road since 1983. I have therefore spent much of my formative years in the area which holds very fond and special memories, particularly with the connections to the university. Indeed, I went to Reading School nearby from the age of 11 before leaving Reading to pursue my medical training at Cambridge University. My plan though had always been to ultimately move back to Reading once established in my medical specialty (cardiology).

I have always viewed 129 Whiteknights Road as a unique building on Whiteknights Road. I was fortunate enough to purchase the property in 2015 following the retirement of Reverend Spears whom we knew well as he used to visit frequently for a chat over coffee. We were very aware the property needed a lot of work and were keen to create a property that we (I am married with a full complement of children) would be happy to stay in for the rest of my days. I can't imagine ever wanting to move from the area, particularly as my wife and I are established in our jobs in Reading and my children are settled in local schools. The area holds tremendous sentimental value to me.

I wanted to create a home that offered both space and efficiency, being aware for instance the property does not have cavity walls. Hindsight is a wonderful thing but we clearly made an error in judgement in being persuaded by a developer, recommended to me by a colleague, that to achieve what we wanted, the best course of action would be to replace the existing building with a new dwelling. It was a decision that my wife and I agonised over and had not previously considered and now deeply regret.

Sadly we have not been able to reside in 129 Whiteknights Road since the end of August 2019 due to significant damp issues that had developed, clearly exacerbated by a combination of poor insulation, lack of double glazing and an inadequate heating system, making it an unsuitable environment for a young family. So since August 2019 we have been living at my parents' house which is next door at 127 Whiteknights Road and have been waiting for the property to be redeveloped prior to moving back in. Clearly this has taken a lot longer than anticipated and COVID has not helped, particularly as I'm a front line medical doctor. We have, however, had much more time to reflect on our plans for 129 Whiteknights Road. It took a while but very gradually I started to imagine how we could convert the existing building into a home for my family and also began to increasingly admire and respect the structure. We are delighted to have gone through this journey as we now wish to do our utmost to enhance and protect this building for many generations to come. We are also keen to significantly enhance the energy efficiency aspects of the building

After a lot of searching, I believe I found the ideal architect firm that is also local. The architects share my renewed passion of being sympathetic to the building and both preserving and enhancing its iconic status with the majority of modifications not being visible from the street view. I also wanted to do what I could to enhance the symmetry, original aesthetics and energy efficiency of the building. I very much hope you consider favourably the plans that are being submitted. Perhaps I'm being a little biased but I believe we can create the most aesthetically pleasing home on the street, remaining highly sympathetic to the original structure of the vicarage, as well as creating an interesting contrast to our immediate neighbours who have built in the past few weeks a unique looking and "ultra-modern" 1st floor extension to their property.

Dr M. Y. Javaid

Existing Situation

Property Description

The building, dating from c.1920, is a former Vicarage to nearby St Peter's Church. The building is a 5-bedroom dwelling with reception rooms occupying the ground floor.

Although this house was originally built as a vicarage, the church is not particularly close; the two buildings cannot be seen together.

For a detailed property description, please refer to the Heritage Statement by the Heritage Consultant.

Design

The house is described by the planning officer as "a quality 2-storey Inter-war simplified classical brick building. It is carefully designed, giving an indication to its social importance, but at the same time is not too ostentatious."



Front elevation showing fine brick detailing and simple geometry

The front elevation is set out in a formal way, symmetrical with a central gable and entrance on Whiteknights Road.

At the rear, there is some divergence from symmetry and the style seems more akin to arts and crafts, with wings of different size and height, with a single storey extension to only the west wing, and a non-symmetrical window arrangement.

Consequently, there is a disconnect between the symmetry at the front and rear of the building probably due to the siting of the stairs, which are off centre to allow additional width compared to the central corridor width.



Rear elevation showing a loss of symmetry

This disparity invites the opportunity to design an extension that conforms to the symmetry established on the front façade. There is scope to improve the internal layout and make it relate better to the same line of symmetry, and create a long vista through the centre of the building.

Conservation Area

The site is not within a conservation area. There are a pair of Grade II buildings about 50m to the east, and on the other side of the road. They were the former gatehouse entrance lodges to Erleigh House, and are early 19th Century. They now form an entrance into the University campus.



Grade II Listed gatehouse lodges

Site

The site measures 24.4m wide, 65.4m deep and has an area of 1634m². It is wider, deeper and larger than most of the neighbouring plots along Whiteknights Road.

129 Whiteknights Road is the first of the larger plots along the street bearing East.



Plot sizes along Whiteknights Road including our clients site (red)

Due to the depth and width of the site, further development could be accommodated on without any significant impact on neighbours or the character of the street, whilst retaining a large garden area for outdoor amenity.

Locality

Whiteknights Road forms a boundary between Wokingham Borough Council and Reading Borough Council. 129 Whiteknights Road falls within the district of Reading Borough Council.

The site is opposite a landscaped campus which is part of the University of Reading.

Properties in the vicinity are primarily detached properties with many dating from the 1910- 1930s which are of similar size and scale. The property at 129 is significantly larger and on a wider plot than most of the houses in the street.

Despite the variation in architecture, the character of Whiteknights Road is reinforced by an array of brick faced and partially rendered buildings. Roofs are generally in clay tile.

The area is very well served by various facilities and services, including a local grocery store, petrol station and a parade of independent shops and restaurants nearby.

The site is a short journey by public bus direct into Reading centre with routes 4, 17 and X4 (stops along Wokingham Road). Alternatively, non-direct routes with stops along Whiteknights Road on the 19a, 19b or 19c.

Pre-application response (211084)

Pre-application advice was sought from the Council in July 2021, for a very similar proposal as presented here.

A meeting was conducted on the 27th July 2021 with the planning officer and conservation officer for the Council. Written pre-app advice was received on 24th August 2021.

The pre-app was well received generally, and it was concluded that with minor alterations a planning application could be made.

The following changes were made in response to the advice received:

- The front porch extension has been omitted, and is replaced with a cantilevered canopy as deemed acceptable.
- The existing front door and side screens will be retained, locally repaired as required, and redecorated.
- Replacement windows are to be metal and of a similar style to the existing with triple glazing for improved energy performance.
- Updates to the existing arboricultural reports and ecological reports were made as requested.
- The depth of the extension along the Northern boundary has been reduced, and an additional step introduced in order to reduce impact on the neighbour. Further information has been provided in the report to justify the extension, and the fallback position of PD rights for outbuildings can also be considered in this respect.
- A 'shadow line' gap between the two sides of the garage and main house 300mm wide 100m deep added to provide separation of the design between the 2 buildings.

Planning

Planning History

The council's online database confirms one previous application:

- Application 201525, 129 Whiteknights Road – “Erection of replacement dwelling with integral garage following demolition of existing buildings” – Refused 29th January 2021.

The previous application proposed the complete demolition of the existing building to be replaced with a large 5-bedroom Georgian revival style dwelling.

It was determined by the officers that the demolition would not comply with aims to conserve heritage as the proposal would result in the complete loss of the dwellinghouse.

Secondly, the proposed development, by reason of its scale, particularly width and roof form, would fail to respect the prevailing scale and design of development within Whiteknights Road.

In the process of the application, the building gained the status of a non-designated heritage asset.

Neighbouring applications (relevant approvals)

- Application 200894, 131 Whiteknights Road – “First floor extension” – Approved September 2020. This application is currently under construction and has enlarged the existing bungalow by 134m² to create a 5-bedroom property.
- Application 200957, 111 Whiteknights Road – part two storey and single storey rear extension and new front porch – Approved September 2020.
- Application 191797, 10 Holmes Road – “Proposed two storey side extension and creation of a new end-of-terrace dwelling” – Approved May 2021.

- Application 200259, 11 Holmes Road – “Ground floor and first floor extension, floor plan redesign, installation of solar panels and all associated – Approved February 2021.



131 Whiteknights Road, first floor extension under construction, June 2021

Proposed Development

Description of Proposed Development

Proposed ground floor rear and side extension, first floor rear extension, partial demolition of rear extension and garage, internal alterations, and landscaping.

Use

The house will be used by our client as a single dwelling house.

Design (Massing)

The proposed extensions are subservient by being single storey and/or set behind the existing house.



Existing urban grain (left) and proposed urban grain (right)

The first floor extension is set in from the existing walls, and roofs are set significantly lower than existing.

The replacement garage is located further forward on the site than the existing, but is of a similar width.

The rear extension projects south of the existing house by 11.8m, and retains a 4m gap to the South-East boundary to provide continued access into the garden.

The width of the building along the street is retained as existing, with the proposed ground floor extensions set back from this volume. The ground floor is 20.6m at its widest point. This is less than the refused replacement house which was proposed at 21.9m wide. The width of the proposed first floor is reduced to 13m compared with 21.9m in the refused application.

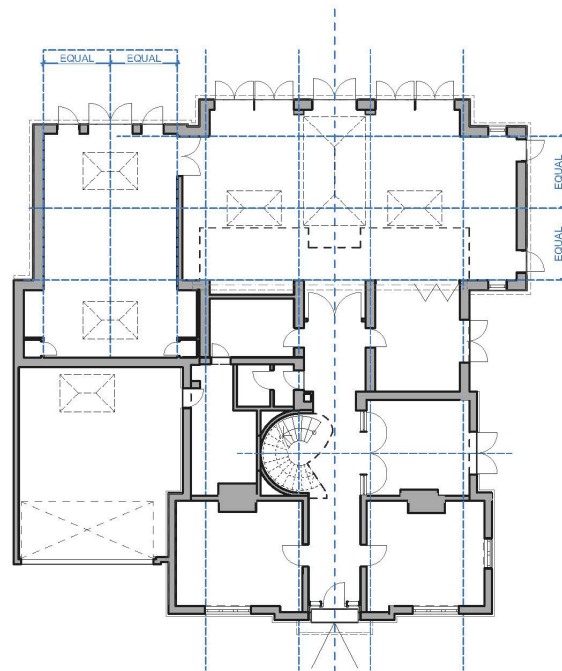
The overall GIA of the proposal is 507.9m² compared to the existing house area of 237m² (including garages).

The overall impact of proposals on the street scene is significantly reduced compared to the refused application as the existing building is retained, and the extensions are set behind and lower than the existing house.

Design (Arrangement)

The pre-app response concluded that “The proposed extension is acceptable in principle, however further consideration should be given to the front porch as this cannot be supported at this time and also the depth of the rear extension...”.

In our proposal we have removed the front porch, and we have re-modelled and justified the depth of the rear extension along the boundary with 127 Whiteknights Road.



— — — Centre Line

Ground floor proposal

Spaces are arranged around a central axis which is extended from the existing hallway. The existing stairs have been removed to provide new spiral stairs which would retain the long vista from front door to rear garden. The proposed arrangement re-enforces the existing symmetry at the front of the house, which was largely lost at the rear of the house.

The proposed rear extension is designed to be subservient to the main building volume.

The façade of the ground floor rear extension is simple and elegant, and expresses the symmetry of the main house, whilst projecting volumes of the snooker room and lounge provide interest. Large full height windows and doors focus on the garden. Whilst walls are to be largely red brick to match original, some new stone features at plinths, coping and windows add interest.



Proposed rear elevation showing the centre grid line and two new gables either side of equal width.

The two new gables on the first floor are set away from existing flank walls, with roofs set well below the existing roof, to ensure subservience to the existing structure; a simple third gable presents as a focal point between the main volumes. The pre-app response concluded that “the rear extension will be partially visible to the right side, but would set at the rear of the existing house and would not distract from the character of the building, with minimal impact on the street scene”.

The height of the ground floor extension is 3.6m including the parapet detail, or 3.1m without the parapet.

Quoins on the proposed first floor gables mirror the character and pattern of the existing building. Windows at first floor follow the same style as the existing windows in the main building.

Street Frontage

Open space is retained either side of the front volume of the house, to retain a sense of the building being set in the centre of the plot, with the garden wrapping around.



Existing street elevation, showing garage clad in exposed aggregate plastered panels, at odds with the brick building.



Proposed street elevation, showing minimal impact to street elevation caused by rear extension and new garage. New garage built in brick of a modern size, but of a shade to match the existing.

The existing hood over the entrance screen, which is set back, will be replaced with a similarly sized, cantilevered canopy to give further emphasis to the front door without impacting on the overall proportions of the façade. It is proposed that the front door and screen are retained, and perhaps thermally upgraded by installation of secondary or double glazing.

The pre-app response read “with exemption of the porch [now omitted] the proposed development is not considered to have a significant impact on the streetscene and character of the area in terms of layout and urban grain.

Design (Materials)

Brick

The proposed rear extensions will be built in bricks of a modern size yet matching the original in colour.

Windows

The existing pegged oak window surrounds are in disrepair. It appears that the single glazed crittal windows have been installed incorrectly within the oak frame leading to deterioration. We propose that the historic frames are restored/locally repaired, and new metal windows with double or triple glazing are set into them.

Design in relation to officer report for Application 201525

In the officers report, it is stated that in principle, there are no objections to carrying out an extension to the rear of the existing house.

We have considered these comments in our design and our proposal retains and respects the original building.

The new ground floor extension is set 4m from the boundary in the South East. In the North West, the garage and snooker room are adjacent to the boundary, reflecting the current situation of a double garage near the boundary.

The garage is not significantly wider than the existing double garage that is replaced, and as a single storey element does not impact on the main volume of the existing house significantly. Furthermore, it is set back behind the gabled volume at the front of the house, and as such is significantly subservient to the existing building.

Other Design Aspects

Arboriculture

All trees shown in the report by Andrew Belson are to be retained.

Bicycle Storage

Bicycle storage will be provided within the oversized garage.

Bin Storage

Bins will be stored within the oversized garage and brought to the property boundary for road-side collection.

Disabled Access

Access to the front door is currently stepped, as is access to the side and rear doors. To improve the building's access for wheelchair users, we propose that level access is provided into the new front door and porch. We also propose that the new rear doors are made level with patios.

Drainage

The roof area is increased, and with new patio areas proposed at the rear there will be some additional hard standing, and rainwater run off to deal with, however, this is reduced by use of permeable paving on drives, paths and patios, so that the overall area for rainwater run off would only be marginally increased. Furthermore green roofs will provide some attenuation on site.

The existing rainwater goods are a mixture of uPVC and cast iron. The uPVC goods will be replaced with cast iron or a suitable alternative to match the original. New rainwater good required for the extension are proposed to be in cast iron or to match.

New soil vent pipes will be fitted throughout to cater for new bathrooms and kitchens. It is proposed that existing svp's and services fixed to the outside of the building would be removed, and brickwork made good locally. Foul drainage would continue to run to public sewers, and there is no significant increase in the overall water consumption and run off to be expected as the property will remain a 5 bed house.

Ecology

In August 2020, Middlemarch Environmental Ltd provided an ecological appraisal for application 201512.

They produced three documents:

- Preliminary ecological appraisal recommended: A preliminary bat roost assessment, Excavations during construction left overnight to be covered or fitted with mammal-traps to ensure they can escape safely, and Vegetation and building clearance to be undertaken outside the nesting bird season.
- Preliminary bat roost assessment report (dated August 2020) identified the main building as one with high bat roosting potential.
- Dusk Emergence and Dawn Re-entry Bat Survey: Two nocturnal emergence surveys and one dawn re-entry survey were carried out between 10th August 2020 and 8th September 2020. No bats were recorded emerging or re-entering from any features associated with the site. Given that no bats emerged from or re-entered the main building and that there was a relatively small amount of bat activity recorded on site, Middlemarch Environmental Ltd concluded that there are no bat roosts present.

The reports have been reviewed and updated by Middlemarch Environmental Ltd as part of this planning application, extending their validity.

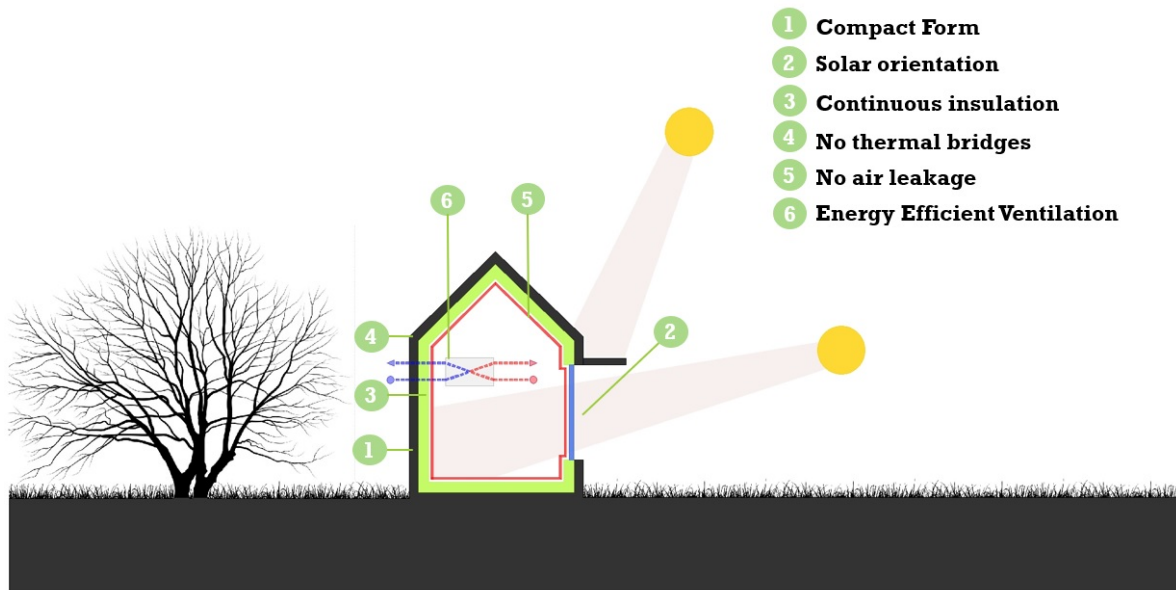
Considering application 201525 proposed the complete demolition of the existing building, the proposed work in the current application is minor by comparison and would therefore have significantly less impact on ecology.

Biodiversity enhancements have been shown on the plans by the landscape architect. Building mounted bat boxes have been shown on the proposed elevations.

Energy

The proposed design is being developed in line with the six main principles of passive low energy design as follows:

Summary of **Passive** principles



1, Compact form. Buildings with simple geometry and compact form have a lower heat loss form factor. This means a reduced area of building envelope when compared with the usable floor area, leading to reduced fabric heat loss. The existing building has a compact form and is relatively simple with some complexity in the roof shape. This existing building form will help in achieving a low energy refurbishment solution.

2, Solar orientation. The front elevation of the house faces Southwest. Solar access to the site is generally good with some overshadowing from 131 Whiteknights Road and the area of trees on the opposite side of the road. It is likely that a glazing solution incorporating triple glazed windows will result in a positive energy balance for the glazing to the Southwest and Southeast facades. This can be tested using energy modelling software at a later stage in the design.

Due to the architectural quality of the existing building and the client brief, the requirement is for a single storey extension to the north of the property. To provide an energy efficient building which effectively utilises the site's solar orientation, improving the thermal performance of the building envelope of the existing building becomes a key to the success of the project.

3, Continuous insulation. The existing building has a high architectural and heritage value and as such it is desirable to retain the current facing brickwork as the elevational material on show. To achieve this, a solution of internal insulation to the existing external walls may be required, or walls in the existing building retained as is. The existing floor will be upgraded with insulation as will the roof. It is our aim to design the new build element of the project to go beyond the building regulations requirement for energy efficiency.

4-6, As the design is developed in further detail, we will continue to follow the principles of passive low energy design including designing out thermal bridges where possible, developing an air tightness strategy to reduce air leakage and providing an energy efficient ventilation solution. To improve internal comfort, alongside energy efficiency it is proposed that a triple glazed window system is used for both the new build and refurbished elements.

We will also review the material specification of the design with a view to minimising the building's embodied carbon. This strategy will help reduce the energy use of the building and reduce its environmental impact.

Parking

The proposed site is located within Zone 3 of the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD. The requirement is for 2 off road parking spaces. Parking is provided within the double garage, with additional parking in front of the garage.

In accordance with these minimum requirements, the double garage is required to be 7m x 5.5m. A garage of 7m x 6.4m is proposed, which would be sufficiently large to also cater for bin and bicycle storage.

Landscape

Please refer to the drawings and documents prepared by the landscape architect.

The front garden has been designed to enrich the existing street scene and give character to the currently badly defined frontage.

The rear garden has been designed to retain as much of the open green space as possible, whilst introducing new plants and other ecological enhancements.

Impact on neighbours

Please refer to drawing 007 Proposed Block Plan which shows the 60 degree and 45 degree lines taken from the centre of the nearest ground floor windows to habitable rooms.

131 Whiteknights Road is not unduly impacted: The ground floor extension is behind the 60 degree line, and the first floor extension is behind the 45 degree line.

127 Whiteknights Road is not unduly impacted: although the extension overlaps the 60 degree line, the existing hedgerow fence will obscure the view of the extension from the ground floor.



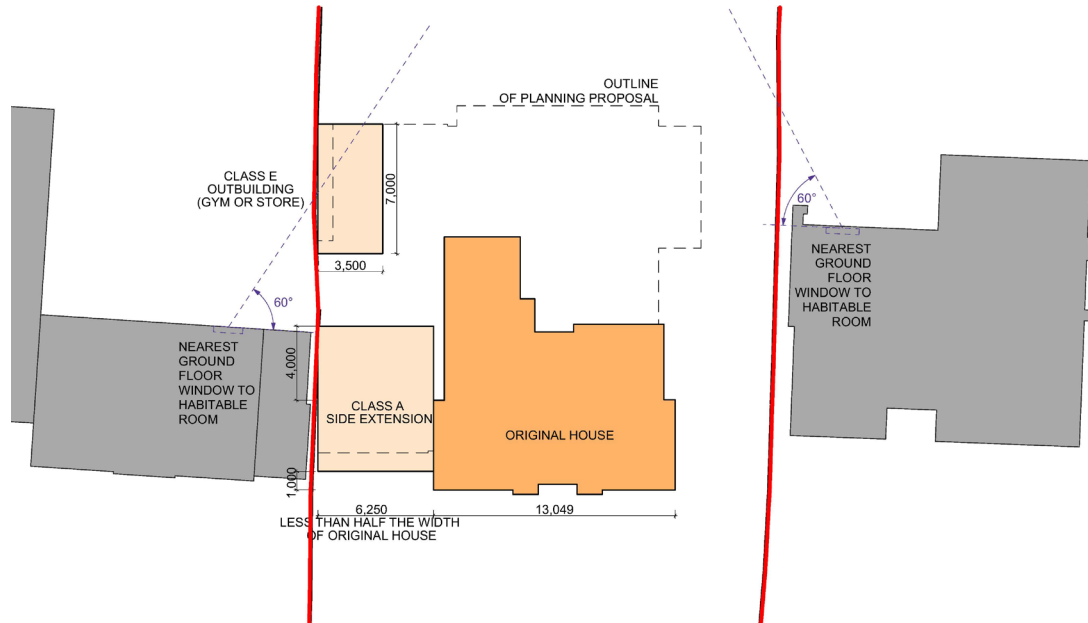
Existing view from 127 Whiteknights Road at the nearest ground floor window to a habitable room, the lounge. The proposal would be located behind the existing vegetation along this boundary. This window is one of two windows to the lounge, thus impacts on daylight and views would be minimal.



127 Whiteknights Road lean-to roof over garage and store. As this space is unheated, evidenced by the uninsulated roof, it could not be considered a habitable room, as confirmed by the owner.

The first floor extension is located behind the 45 degree lines from neighbouring windows, and would therefore not unduly impact on daylight or views.

The owners of 127 Whiteknights Road are the parents of our client. They have confirmed they fully support the extensions as proposed.



In a comparison to the impact made by a proposal under Permitted Development rights (for example, an extension and outbuilding) our proposal has significantly less impact on the neighbours in terms of loss of light and overbearance.

Overlooking from proposed windows on the first-floor extension is negligible as the windows are set well away from side boundaries and are obscure glazed, serving bathrooms largely through existing windows which are replaced in obscure glazing.

Conclusion

Our proposals will provide significant improvements and enlargement of the existing house, and will safeguard the future use and enjoyment, whilst largely retaining the non-designated heritage asset.

The existing building will be largely retained and fabric and performance improved.

Changes will not impact unduly on the street scene or character, or on neighbours.

The proposals represent a marked improvement when compared to the current building, which is somewhat in disrepair, having been vacant for some time.

The council's reasons for refusal of the previous application on the site have been overcome by retention and improvement of the existing building, and by reducing the massing, both width and height, along the street frontage.

Following a positive pre-application, and the current proposal addressing any remaining issues at pre-app stage, we trust that the officer would be able to recommend approval under delegated powers.