

Two storey rear extension. Internal and external alterations. Link extension and replacement garage.

Banksfoot North
43a Church Road
Caversham

Combined Design, Access & Planning
Statement

By

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I. Introduction

Following the receipt of positive pre-application advice in May 2020 Emmetts Architecture has now been instructed to submit a householder application on behalf of the owners of 43a Church Road to extend this property, remodel the interior and erect a replacement garage that is linked to the house.

My client wishes to construct a two-storey rear extension to create additional bedrooms and a bathroom. The associated internal alterations are very limited in their nature and extent.

My Client has engaged a skilled and experienced design team to produce a high-quality proposal that is sensitive to this Grade II listed building and the setting of this part of the St Peters Conservation Area (SPCA) and nearby listed buildings. Importantly, my client's proposals have been informed by a heritage consultant and also been the subject of pre-application advice. Indeed, the Planning Officer concluded that:

"In summary, the development is in general terms considered to be an acceptable design response that would conserve and enhance the appearance of the conservation area, and the setting of the adjoining listed building. Although an alternative design response to the linking element should be considered to appear more congruous with the proposed modern extension."

In the matter of the link extension the Officer stated:

"The small link building with the slate roof has the potential to look incongruous especially in contrast to the extension with the vertical timber cladding and a living roof and zinc roof to the rear. Overall, it is not considered that the proposal would significantly harm the LB setting or the CA but the design with respect to the link structure, could be improved. It is suggested that the link structure and its roof are made less visible, or designed in such a way that it would be clearly viewed as part of the new building and constructed with lightweight materials."



The Planning Officer also commented upon the need for clarification of the boundary treatment.

In response to the pre-application advice my client has now:

- Amended the design of the link between the original house and the new extension
- Clarified the boundary treatment to protect residential amenity.
- Appointed an Arboriculturalist to undertake a tree survey and prepare a Method Statement.
- Undertaken a Bat Survey

This statement contains a detailed consideration of the impacts of the proposal and concludes that it would preserve the character and appearance of this part of the SPCA and protect the special architectural and historic interest of this listed building.

2. The Site

The application relates to a Grade II listed property, Banksfoot North. The planning history and previous analysis of the building suggests that it has evolved around the central two storey element of the property which is believed to have been built in the early 18th Century. It appears that the property was thought to have originally been an administrative building, subsequently forming part of a dairy supplying Caversham Court. The single storey element joining the property to its neighbour, Banksfoot, was believed to be constructed in the 19th Century, combining the two properties into one. It has been further suggested that the two properties were not internally subdivided until late 1950s/early 1960s. However, the history of the building is now examined in significant detail for the very first time and this is set out in the accompanying Heritage Assessment.

The property also sits within St Peters Conservation Area, opposite the Listed Buildings of Caversham Court (Grade II) and St Peter's Church (Grade II*). The Reading Borough Council St Peters Conservation Area Appraisal states that there is an architectural and historical unity to this part of Church Road/St Peters Hill, which has a spacious village feel to it. In particular, it states that



“The properties on the north side of Church Road/St Peters Hill have been subject to some redevelopment. Redevelopment within the conservation area has however respected and preserved the character and appearance of the conservation area by the use of compatible building scales and materials, and the retention of important linking features such as boundary walls and tree cover. In this way, the spacious, verdant feel of the area has been maintained.”

The Conservation Area Appraisal goes on to identify those features that make positive and negative contributions to the character and appearance of the CA. This has informed the final design solution.

The property is constructed from painted brick to the ground floor with a rendered timber frame and slate roof above. Cement render to the first floors level of the property and the impermeable masonry paint to all external elevations of the dwelling have recently been replaced with lime render and mineral paint finish.

The windows have also been restored, with unsympathetic painted UPVC guttering removed in favour of cast iron rain water goods that are more in keeping with the property's heritage.

3. Planning History

The proposals were subject to positive pre-application advice in May 2020. Prior to that there is not a great deal of recent planning history of specific relevance to Banksfoot North, other than the 2017 Listed Building Consent for the *“removal of cement render to first floor level and impermeable masonry paint to all external elevations and replacement with lime render and mineral paint finish.”*. Permission was granted under reference 170503/LBC.

Two earlier pieces of planning history have been identified, namely:

- 12-01771-PREAPP - Removal of plywood debris plate and replacement with the fire retardant alternative and installation of new wood burning stove together with flexible stainless steel line. Reinstatement of chimney pot externally. (advised LBC not need due to minor nature of works)



- 92-00513-LBC - To change external colour scheme from white walls/white windows and blue window frames to 'cream' walls or white windows and frames. Permitted 01/10/1992

4. Planning Policy

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

The most up to date national policy is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) published in February 2019. At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development and for decision taking this means approving development that accords with an up to date development plan and where there are no relevant policies or they are out of date.

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Paragraph 10 states that at the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019 is the “*presumption in favour of sustainable development*”, which remains the ‘golden thread’ running through plan-making and decision taking. Importantly Paragraph 11(d) of the Framework sets out how the presumption in favour of sustainable development should be applied and indicates that planning permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the Framework as a whole.

The NPPF also sets out the overall strategy for development and at Paragraph 8 sets out 3 key objectives one of which is to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment.



Paragraph 124 of the NPPF identifies that the Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment, and states that *"Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development..."*.

Paragraph 127 states also that planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- are visually attractive as a result of good design
- are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change
- establish or maintain a strong sense of place
- optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development

In the matter of conserving the historic environment Paragraph 192 states that:

"In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;*
- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and*
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness."*

Paragraph 193 goes on to state that:

“When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”

Paragraph 196 explains the test to be applied in decision taking when considering potential impacts upon designated heritage assets and states that:

“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”

Paragraph 200 addresses opportunities for the enhancement of heritage assets and states:

“Local planning authorities should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.”

At the local level, it is the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 that is relevant, and in particular policies EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment), EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) and H9 (House extensions and ancillary accommodation). Policy H9 sets out a design “checklist”, which has informed design decisions about character, appearance, scale, location, materials, design and neighbourliness. Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) also provides a neighbourliness “checklist” and identifies a series of tests that new development should be considered against.

These local policies are up to date and reflect the guidance in the NPPF 2019. As such they are material to the determination of this application and carry significant weight.



5. Planning Considerations

In our opinion there are two main issues in the consideration of this proposal, namely:

- Heritage Impact
- Neighbour impact

It is proposed to deal with each matter in turn.

(a) Heritage Impact

Given that the extension and alteration of a dwellinghouse is acceptable in principle the key issue in the determination of this application is the heritage impact of the extension and alterations to this listed cottage and its wider setting in the Conservation Area.

My client has taken on board the pre-application advice from the Council and taken further advice from a Heritage Consultant, and this has informed the final design solution. In particular, the design of the link has been fundamentally revised to clearly read as part of the extension.

It is not intended to repeat the analysis, findings and recommendations of the Heritage Assessment, which accompanies this application, other than to refer to the conclusions that state:

“The revised design has responded positively to pre-application comments. The conclusion of this Heritage Statement is that the proposed internal and external alterations would impact on early 1920s fabric of low heritage value. The proposed extension is considered to be sympathetic to the established scale of the host building. Similar to the works of refurbishment carried out in the early 1920s, this phase of the building’s historic development has been designed in a contemporary or ‘modern’ style. As such, the proposed development is very much in keeping with the dynamic history of the house. The low profile, the use of contemporary materials that reference the existing palette, the position and scale of the proposed extension is considered to be sympathetic to the host building. The



contrasting design complements the host building while not directly imitating it and preserves the legibility of the earlier phases of 43A Church Road.

This report demonstrates that the proposed development would have some impacts on 20th century fabric of low significance. The proposals would also extend the property in a sympathetic manner that preserves the significance of the listed building. The replacement garage would enhance the setting of the listed building and the character and appearance of the conservation area. As such, it is considered that the proposals would not have an adverse impact on the significance of the listed building and would include enhancements within its setting with the replacement of the existing garage. The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with the NPPF and the Reading Borough Local Plan Policy EN1”

The extension has effectively been designed to incorporate the rear walled terrace garden within the internal living space. The dramatic change in levels and the relationship of the house with the garden has also been a guiding factor in the design of the extension.

We acknowledge that the design of extensions and works to Listed Buildings need very careful consideration. This can be done provided that new development is carefully designed to respect its setting, follow fundamental architectural principles of scale, height, massing and alignment, and the use of appropriate materials. However, this does not mean that extensions have to copy their older neighbours in detail. Indeed, some of the most interesting buildings in our historic Towns and Villages include a variety of building styles, materials, and forms of construction, of many different periods, but together forming a harmonious group/composition.

In this case, a conscious design decision has been taken to introduce a contemporary design solution. The proposed design is clearly of its time, does not “blur” the history or appearance of the building through pastiche and is good design in its own right. Furthermore, the proposed design of the extension is flat roofed, which serves to reinforce its subservience.

In our opinion, an appropriately designed “low slung” extension of contemporary design, which has strong “green credentials” would sit most comfortably adjacent to this Listed Building. The appearance of this two storey building is largely concealed in private views to the rear of the dwelling by the dramatic slope of the land, whilst a modern interpretation of traditional



materials could not be said to detract from the character and appearance of the locality, in fact quite the reverse. Indeed, the materials have been carefully selected to reinforce local distinctiveness and include engineered timber boarding, a modern interpretation of traditional weather boarding. Furthermore, the roof is finished with zinc sheets, that is reminiscent of natural slate and weathered thatch tones. As such the extension is visually and physically integrated with the character, appearance and the topography of the site.

Importantly the design of the link extension has been fundamentally revisited and amended. Whilst it remains of contemporary design, it is constructed in the same palette of materials as the extension. Put another way, the link *“no longer has the potential to look incongruous, especially in contrast to the extension with the vertical timber cladding and zinc roof to the rear”*. Indeed, it is now designed such that its roof and structure are less visible, constructed with lightweight materials and designed in such a way that it is clearly viewed as part of the new building.

It is also proposed to demolish the existing garage and construct a replacement garage. The existing garage was built in 1979 and is of poor quality design. The demolition of the garage would enhance the setting of the listed building character and the character and appearance of the St Peter’s Conservation Area. The proposed replacement garage would be of traditional design with a dual pitched roof finished to match the existing and with brick walls. The proposed replacement garage represents an enhancement to the heritage assets.

Importantly the dwelling retains its original features and there is no significant loss of historic fabric.

(b) Neighbour Impact

Clearly the impact of the development upon the amenity of existing and future residents is a material consideration and their protection is a longstanding objective of both local and national policy. As such particular regard has been had to Policy H9, CC8 (safeguarding amenity) and the Councils Design Guide to House Extensions.



The Planning Officer has previously concluded that:

“The proposed development has been sufficiently set-off the boundary to the adjoining property to negate any possible impacts in terms of outlook. In addition, the orientation would be unlikely to result in a significant loss of daylight/sunlight to the adjoining property. As above, it is not considered that the extension would be overbearing to the adjoining property. The side facing doors for the bedroom at ground floor, would likely be screened from views from the rear garden of the adjoining property by fencing. However, no details have been provided of the existing fencing, and as such should be shown in any future application to ensure this relationship is appropriate in this regard.

The proposed terrace to the rear of the first-floor bedroom (as proposed) would also have the possibility to reduce privacy to adjoining properties, particularly the rear garden and rear facing windows, as well as the privacy of occupants of no.34a with regard to this sitting out area. As such, it is considered that an element of privacy screening be considered and shown on a sectional plan (it appears that some form of structure is shown, however this should be clarified).”

In our opinion the proposal will have a neutral impact upon existing and future residents on account of the following:

- The siting of the extension
- The imaginative use of levels and building design
- The rear facing aspect of new first floor windows, which will be effectively sited at garden level
- The use of a mono-pitch roof that reduces the bulk, height and overall visual impact of the extension.
- The absence of a large blank facade facing toward neighbours.
- The existing boundary treatment, which is clearly shown on the submitted plan, effectively precludes mutual overlooking from the terrace and extension.

The combination of these design decisions all combine to ensure that the proposal safeguards the amenity of neighbours and does not give rise to loss of privacy, loss of sunlight/daylight, an overbearing impact, and a loss of outlook.



6. Design Considerations

Both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Adopted Local Plan require high quality design in new developments, particularly in Conservation Areas.

Amount

- The floor area of the existing dwelling is 113m²
- The floor area of the existing garage, to be demolished, is 16m² respectively.
- The replacement garage has a floor area of 23m².
- The extension creates an additional 80m² of floor space.
- The development creates a net increase in floor area of 87m²

Layout, Scale and Appearance

The 0.07 ha site is formed of a triangular shape with a frontage to Church Road, a main route West from the District Centre of Caversham. The existing building, is a part single storey, part two-storey colourwashed brick building with a detached single storey garage structure to the side. The building is linked with, and connected to the adjacent Grade II listed building (43 Church Road) and is within the St Peters Conservation Area, it is also opposite Caversham Court Registered park and garden.

The proposal consists of the demolition of the existing detached garage, followed by the construction of a two-storey rear extension, replacement garage, attached to the main dwelling by a single storey linking structure.

The proposed extensions would be partially visible from the roadside, but remain subservient to the original dwellinghouse. Furthermore, the change to the garage roof pitch would be an improvement in its appearance.



The design, due to its location, would not introduce large blank facades to public areas, nor would it result in an overbearing impact to adjoining properties. It would also respect the character of the original house, giving a clear separation between historic and new elements to allow visual identification of characterful elements of the building.

Importantly the design of the link extension has been fundamentally revisited and amended. Indeed, it is now designed such that its roof and structure are less visible, constructed with lightweight materials and designed in such a way that it is clearly viewed as part of the new building.

It is not considered that the proposal would result in a significant loss of private amenity space for the existing dwelling and would be acceptable in this regard.

Landscaping

Importantly, the proposals are accompanied by a Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA) and an Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS). These reports demonstrate that the proposed development respects the Root Protection Areas (RPA's), thereby ensuring that existing trees are retained.

It is also anticipated that some new hard and soft landscaping will need to be undertaken following the development. Whilst we have not produced any detailed landscaping plans at this stage (it would have been premature to do so), we consider that it would be appropriate for the Council to impose a planning condition on the grant of any permission.

We consider that the decisions relating to hard and soft landscaping, along with the careful design of the proposals, will protect the rural character and appearance of the rural street scene

7. Access

The access arrangements are not altered by the proposals, including the replacement garage.

Indeed, at the pre-application stage the Council acknowledged that the proposed development did not result in (i) the loss of any on-site car parking, and (ii) any increase the intensity of the use of the property. As such, the proposal was considered acceptable in this regard.

8. Wildlife

Having regard to the pre-application advice my client commissioned a Bat survey.

It is not intended to repeat the content of the Bat Survey other than to confirm that no evidence of roosting bats was recorded during the emergence survey carried out on site. The number and timing of registrations recorded, as well as observations made by surveyors, suggest that bats are roosting locally and are foraging and commuting from the wooded belt to the neighbouring sites to the south. Some foraging activity was also recorded in the garden of the property.

9. Sustainability

Importantly the proposed dwellings will, through compliance with the latest Building Regulation requirements, have strong “green credentials”, namely:

- A fabric first approach of high quality, highly insulated building shell having low air permeability
- Good air quality via mechanical ventilation heat recovery
- Good day lighting improving the quality of life and reducing the need for energy to light the home
- Low energy light fittings
- Internal and external storage for non-recyclable and recyclable household waste

10. Crime and community safety

This proposal raises no new significant issues in this respect, other than that it will provide



secure off street parking and good privacy.

As a relatively small scale development, with generous space for storage of materials etc, site works would be relatively limited and generally be carried out between 07.30 and 17.00 weekdays. With good site management, considerate contractors and sociable working hours there should only be a very limited impact upon the amenity of neighbours during the construction period.

11. Conclusions

In this case, the proposed physical alterations will protect both the special architectural and historic interest of Banksfoot North and the character and appearance of the wider CA. As such the proposal is perfectly in step with Paragraphs 193, 196 and 200 of the NPPF. Furthermore, the design of the extension safeguards the amenity of neighbours.

I have concluded that there would be no sound or justifiable reason for the Council to object to these well considered proposals.

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