



ABSOLUTE ARCHITECTURE



Design and Access Statement

Project: Willowbrae, The Warren, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7TQ
Replacement Dwelling

Date: 29th November 2021

Authority: Reading Borough Council

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Design & Access Statement has been prepared by Absolute Architecture on behalf of the Applicant to accompany the submission of a Full Planning Application for the demolition of the existing dwelling known as Willowbrae in Caversham and replacement with a detached two-storey family home.
- 1.2 The purpose of this Design & Access Statement is to explain the principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development. A Planning Statement has been prepared by Cameron Jones Planning which details how the proposed development sits against current planning policy.
- 1.3 The existing house does not meet the needs of the owners who seek to create a high quality, purpose-built, sustainable, long-term family home that is light and airy.
- 1.4 Willowbrae was believed to have been constructed in 1978 with 0.2 hectares of land. The property offers fabulous views across the River Thames.
- 1.5 The application proposal is for a replacement dwelling. Taking into consideration the character of the site and context of the area, it will deliver a long-lasting, sustainable and desirable home that is responsive to the setting, making a positive enhancement to the site.
- 1.6 This statement should be read in conjunction with the plans and supporting documents that have been submitted with the planning application.

2 Planning Policy - NPPF

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2021 and provides the Government's framework for delivering sustainable development and facilitating economic growth through the planning process. The NPPF is a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.
- 2.2 The NPPF is underpinned by a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking, and should, unless there are extreme adverse implications to doing so, supersede conflicting or absent Local Plan policies.
- 2.3 In developing the proposals on behalf of the Applicants, we have drawn on the following principles set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):
- *To seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings*
 - *That good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people*
 - *To respond to local character and history and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials*

Planning Policy - Local

2.4 Relevant planning policies from Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019), in particular:

- CC1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- CC2: Sustainable design and construction
- CC3: Adaption to Climate Change
- CC7: Design and the public realm
- CC8: Safeguarding amenity
- EN11: Waterspaces
- EN12: Biodiversity and the green network
- EN13: Major landscape features
- EN14: Trees, hedges and woodland
- EN16: Pollution and water resources
- EN18: Flooding and drainage
- H5: Standard for new housing
- H10: Private and communal outdoor space

Other material considerations are:

- Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document

It is anticipated that the key planning considerations will be:

- The principle of a replacement dwelling
- Design considerations
- The impact on amenity to neighbouring properties.
- Flood risk
- Arboricultural considerations
- Ecological considerations
- Highways and parking



Aerial view of Willowbrae. Source: Google Earth

3 Site and Surrounding Area

- 3.1 Willowbrae is situated in Caversham, Reading, with a river frontage. The application site does not fall within any of Reading Borough Council's conservation areas, is not a listed building and there are no listed buildings in the local vicinity.
- 3.2 The application site contains a detached house with an attached garage on a large plot of 0.2 hectares. The property is accessed via a steep shared access road from The Warren, and enjoys river access from the end of the rear garden. The site is located within the floodplain.
- 3.3 Properties along The Warren are predominantly residential, two and three-storeys of varying architectural styles, set within spacious plots enjoying river access. Creek House to the West is a 5-bedroomed dwelling and Karinga House, a 6-bedroomed property, is to the East. Both neighbouring properties have similar sized plots. The boundaries with neighbouring properties

are lined with trees and hedgerow creating a secluded rear garden. The site slopes from the North to South towards the river edge. A full topographical site survey was carried out by SurveyBase in May 2021 and accompanies this application.

- 3.4 The existing 2-storey dwelling was believed to be constructed in 1978 and comprises 4 bedrooms and attached garage with a total floor area of 305 sqm. The entrance and access to garage is at a split level. Materials are predominantly brick, with tiled hipped roofs and a mix of timber, upvc and aluminium windows. Balconies are on the rear side of the house. The rear garden is predominantly laid to lawn with a mooring at the river edge. Three sheds are positioned within the rear garden. Hardstanding surrounds the house and a lean-to greenhouse is attached to the East side of the house. The front of the property is dominated by the concrete driveway leading to the garage.
- 3.5 The existing house has become dated and not meet the needs for the Applicants as a long-term family home. It does not perform well environmentally, requires extensive maintenance works and offers little architectural merit in relation to the context. A replacement house offers the opportunity to create a high-quality, sustainable home that is responsive to the setting and makes a positive enhancement to the site.
- 3.6 Planning applications related to an extension over the garage were determined in 2001, planning application references: 010891 and 010806. Details of the applications are not available on the RBC Planning website, it is therefore not clear on the details of the applications and whether they have been implemented.



View of the North of Willowbrae (front).



View of the South of Willowbrae (rear).



View of the house from the rear garden.



View of the rear garden from the house.



Aerial view of the property.



View of the property from the river.

4 Planning History

- 4.1 Application reference 010891 and 010806 – First Floor side extension above existing garage.

5 Proposed Layout, Massing & Appearance

- 5.1 Planning permission is sought for the:

‘Demolition of existing dwelling and erection of replacement dwelling with integrated garage associated driveway and landscaping.’

- 5.2 The Applicants seek to create their forever home on this site and as such the proposal aims to be sustainable, accessible and architecturally exemplary in a contemporary yet sympathetic design and also seeks to provide flexibility for changing future needs.
- 5.3 The concept for the house has evolved from a detailed understanding of the site and its constraints, as well as the design aspirations of the Client. The siting of the proposed house is over the footprint of the existing house, with the eastern wing extending further southwards to create screening from the neighbouring property. The proposed house is raised by 890mm in response to the flood risk.
- 5.4 The layout for the proposed house responds to the site. Upon arrival in the Entrance Hall, you will be drawn to the views of the garden beyond. Habitable rooms predominantly face south on the

ground floor, enjoying river views and ancillary spaces are positioned at the front of the house. The entrance hall is positioned centrally with a separate independent access to an annexe for the applicants parent. Four bedrooms and bathrooms are arranged on the first floor and accommodation in the roof will create a home office.

- 5.5 The mass of the house is broken down into a pitch roof volume and a mono-pitch volume separated by the double-height entrance hall and a flat roof volume at the front of the house.
- 5.6 The new house will be constructed from high quality, sustainable materials and will be meticulously detailed. A simple palette of materials is proposed with render to the lower floor and lightweight vertical timber cladding to the upper floor. The pitch roofs will be finished with zinc standing seam roofing and flat roofs will be covered with green roofs to encourage biodiversity, minimise the impact of the 'built' structure and help connect the house with the landscape.
- 5.7 The new house will be vastly more energy efficient than the existing house. By adopting 'fabric first' principles, the proposed house will be constructed to achieve an energy efficient home. The design carefully considers measures that will contribute to the occupant's health and wellbeing such as the quality of the indoor environment and close connection with nature. The following principles are proposed to be followed:
- Low maintenance and low environmental impact materials will be proposed.
 - Off-site construction technologies will be explored such as structurally insulated panels (SIPS).
 - External fabric will be highly insulated with good airtightness and high performing windows to reduce energy consumption.
 - Capture good levels of natural daylight, reducing the reliance on artificial lighting.
 - Overhang and pergola to the south elevation to minimise heat gain from the strong summer sun.
 - Air source heat pump and mechanical ventilation heat recovery system (supplemented with openable windows) to support the control of overheating and energy efficient servicing.
 - An array of photovoltaic panels on the mono-pitch roof will generate renewable energy.
 - A green roof will reduce rainwater run-off, contribute towards a good thermal envelope and encourage natural habitat.
- 5.8 The driveway, hard landscaping and landscaping to the front and rear of the house will be remodelled to suit the new house layout and create a more attractive frontage, refer to the Landscape Strategy and Statement.

Amenity.

The application site is well screened from neighbouring properties by trees and hedging and will be further enhanced with the siting of the proposed house.



View of the West boundary.



View of the East boundary.

7 Landscape Strategy

Willowbrae is one of the last houses on a sloped shared access lane. The landscape design will ensure that adequate drainage is provided to both channel the surface runoff to upgraded gully locations and to minimise additional non permeable surfacing. The frontage will be reconfigured around the proposed pedestrian and vehicular access points with natural stone paving. A wall will frame the front door and provide a level area for feature shrub planting. Access paths will be maintained either side of the house with an upgraded wall along the eastern boundary complete with timber trellising for planting and privacy purposes.

The rear garden is being maintained as lawn with a proposed terrace arrangement providing access from a single access point on the ground floor. The terraces are split into two levels that provide convenient access to the boundary paths and rear lawn with minimal adjustment to the existing levels and disturbance of existing vegetation. Beyond the natural stone paved terraces will be a permeable gravel path to minimise runoff and link lawn to terrace

8 Flood risk & Drainage

The Environment Agency Flood Map identifies the application site as being in Flood zone 2 and 3 according to the Environmental Agency flood maps, categorised as vulnerable to flooding. A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been prepared by TDS Consulting and accompanies this planning application.

The proposed house is sited over the location of the existing house, at the high point of the site. The ground floor level of the proposed house is proposed to be 890mm higher than the existing house. In addition, the property will be eligible for the flood alert system, raising the alarm in the event of a forecast flood and the safe evacuation from the property will not be affected.

The following principles are proposed to support a sustainable drainage strategy:

- Green roof to the flat to minimise run-off water at source, as it is absorbed by vegetation, and to reduce the size of soakaway.
- Permeable surface to the proposed hardstanding.
- Soakaways to control surface water seeping into permeable layers of soil.

9 Ecology

A Preliminary Roost Assessment (PRA) was been undertaken by Syntegra Consulting in May 2021 and is provided with this application. The potential for bat roosting was identified as low potential and as such a further bat survey was recommended. Signs of badger foraging was also identified and as such further surveys were recommended.

A dusk bat activity survey was carried out in July 2021 by Syntegra Consulting. The Bat Activity Survey Report accompanies this planning application. Evidence of active bat roosts was not found and no further surveys have been recommended.

A ground penetration radar survey was conducted by Syntegra in July 2021 to scan for evidence of badger tunnels and setts. The Badger Report accompanies this planning application.

10 Arboriculture

A Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been prepared by GHA Trees and accompanies this planning application. The trees and planting are intrinsic to the quality of site.

Cypress trees (T3 and T4) and the group at the front of the site (G2) are proposed to be removed to enable the construction of the proposed house. New planting is proposed in place on the western boundary. Other trees will be protected during the construction of the development as detailed in the Tree Constraints Plan. New planting around the proposed house further enhance the landscape environment.

11 Access & Highways

The property is accessed via a steep shared access road from The Warren. The approach to the property will be unchanged and the driveway will be remodelled to suit the proposed house, allowing parking for 3no. vehicles and space for vehicle turning. The new garage will be incorporated into the house footprint and will be provided with an electric car charging facility.

Waste and recycling storage will be alongside the house. Arrangements for collection will remain unchanged.

The approach to the main entrance will be level, with a level threshold entrance door. A Part M4(1) compliant toilet will be positioned off the entrance hall.

12 Conclusions

- 12.1 Planning policy has a presumption in favour of the replacement of an existing dwelling. The proposed replacement dwelling on the application site will be of high-quality architectural design that respects the character of the setting, highly sustainable and unlikely to cause any detrimental impact to neighbouring properties, or to the character of the area.
- 12.2 The proposed palette of materials are sympathetic to the existing structures and wider character of the area. A green roof will connect the building to the landscape and provide an important bio-diversity habitat.
- 12.3 Other considerations, including arboriculture, parking and amenity have been given due consideration in the development of proposals.
- 12.4 The proposal provides an opportunity to improve the appearance of the site, raise the standard of architecture, and provide a long-term family home. As such, it is respectfully requested that the application for planning approval is granted.