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SINCE 1934

John Adams House 29 Castle Street Reading RG1 7SB

0118 9587331 admin@hivesarchitects.co.uk

2822 C001P3

Design Document

129 Whiteknights Road,

Reading,

Full list of documents submitted with pre-app:
2822 001 Site Location Plan
2822 002 Existing and Demolition Plans
2822 003 Existing and Proposed Elevations
2822 004 Existing and Proposed Street Elevations
2822 005 Proposed Plans
2822 006 Existing and Proposed 3D views
2822 007 Proposed Block Plan
2822 C002P1 application form for pre-app
Heritage Statement Preapp Issued 210623
865 - 01 Front Garden Concept Plan
Arboricultural Implications Assessment
Tree Protection Plan
RT-MME-152004-02 (PRA)
RT-MME-152004-01 (PEA)
RT-MME-153299

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Hives Architects LLP
29 Castle Street
Reading
RG1 7SB
Tel: 0118 958 7331
www.hivesarchitects.co.uk

RIBA Chartered Practice

Architects Registration Board

Hives Architects Limited Liability Partnership
Registered in England and Wales No. C356830
registered office 29 Castle Street, Reading, RG1 7SB
partners Henk Wieringa MSc Arch (Delft) RIBA

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Introduction – Pre-app request

This design document communicates the proposed alterations, extensions, and landscaping to seek pre-app advice 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 historic building.

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 the garage, and a small wing at the rear of the house, a ground floor extension including replacement garage, a first floor extension, addition of a front porch, and internal alterations.

We trust that the information within this document, together with the associated plans provides sufficient information for the Council to give detailed pre-application advice on the following in particular:

- Design of the proposed rear extensions
- Remodelling and Impact on the heritage asset
- Window replacement options
- Design of the Porch
- Impact on adjacent properties and urban setting
- Use of existing ecology and tree reports to form part of the application
- Other requirements for the planning application

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 was always 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 now that 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 to demolish the existing building. It was a decision that my wife and I agonised over and now deeply regret.

Pre-COVID, we had been living with my parents as 129 is very poorly insulated, has no double glazing and an inadequate heating system. However, COVID forced us to move away from my elderly and vulnerable parents and live in 129 Whiteknights Road as a family. It took a while but very gradually the house started to feel like a home for my family and we 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. After a lot of searching, I believe I found the ideal architect who is also local. The architects share my renewed passion of being sympathetic to the building and both preserving and enhancing its iconic status; most 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 neighbours who have built in the past few weeks a unique looking and ultra-modern 1st floor extension to their property.

Existing Situation

Property Description

The building, dating to 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 from any viewpoint.

Design

The house is very well described by the planning officer as 'is 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 symmetricity 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 Erlegh House, and are early 19th Century. They now form an entrance into the University campus.



Grade II Listed gatehouse lodges

Site

The site is significantly larger than most of the neighbouring plots along Whiteknights Road, indiciating the significance of the vicarage. The site is 1634m^2. 129 Whiteknights Road is the first of the larger plots along the street bearing East.



DIAGRAM EXISTING PLOT SIZES

Further development could be accomodated on the site without significant impact on neighbours or the urban grain, and whilst retaining a large garden area for the outdoor amenity.

Locality

The site is 24.44m wide, 65.41m deep wide and largely level. 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.

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.

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.

Planning

Planning History

The council's online database confirms one previous application:

- Application 201525 for 129 Whiteknights Road – "Erection of replacement dwelling with integral garage following demolition of existing buildings" – Refused 29st 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 the councils 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. As such, the proposal would fail to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the surrounding street scene.

Due to demolition of the existing building, which was considered, the building gained the status of a non-designated heritage asset during the application stage.

Neighbouring applications (relevant approvals since June 2020)

- Application 200894 for 131 Whiteknights Road – "First floor extension" – Approved September 2020

This application is currently under construction and has enlarged the existing bungalow by 134m^2 to create a 5-bedroom property. The building has no side facing windows on the first floor.



131 Whiteknights Road, bungalow before construction of a first floor extension (application 200894)



131 Whiteknights Road, first floor extension above existing bungalow in Jun 2021

- Application 200957 for 111 Whiteknights Road – part two storey and single storey rear extension and new front porch – Approved September 2020

- Application 191797 for 10 Holmes Road – "Proposed two storey side extension and creation of a new end-of-terrace dwelling" – Approved May 2021

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

Proposed Development

Description of Proposed Development

Proposed rear extension and first floor extensions partially replacing existing building elements, addition of a front porch, internal alterations, and landscaping.

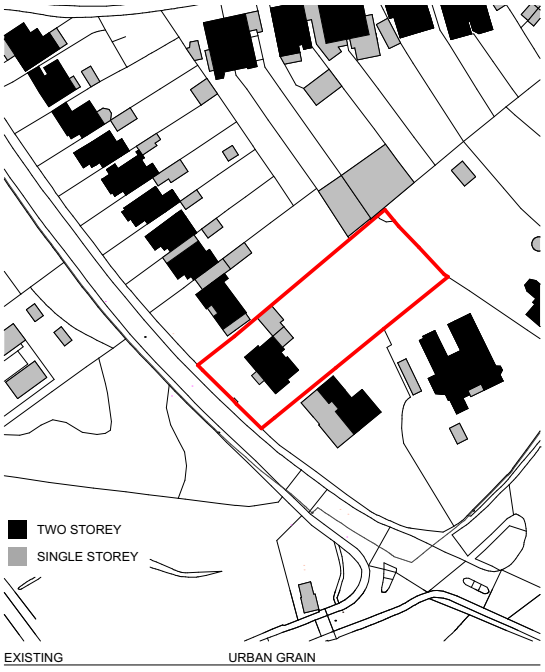
Use

The house is intended to be continued to be used by the client and his family as a single dwelling house.

Design (Massing)

The house is extended to ensure focus and views are retained on the existing volumes, and extensions are subservient by being single storey and/or set behind the existing house.

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





The replacement garage is located further forward on the site than the existing, but is of a similar width, and also fills the existing gap next to the rear part of the house, against the boundary with no. 127.

The rear extension projects south of the existing house by 1.4m, which is not significant and retains a 3.8m gap to the boundary.

The width of the proposed ground floor is 13m, as existing, compared to 21.9m in the refused application.

The width of the proposed first floor is retained at 13m compared with 21.9m in the refused application.

The overall GIA of the current proposal is reduced to 430m^2, compared with 437.4m^2 in the refused replacement dwelling.

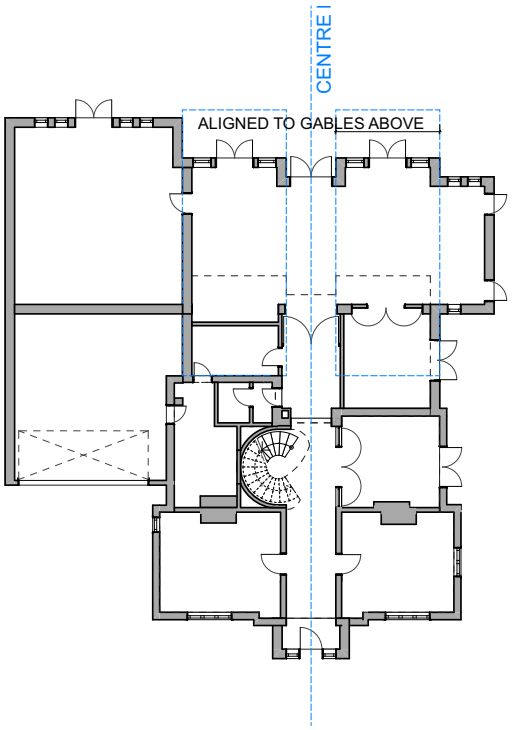


DIAGRAM SYMMETRY IN GROUND FLOOR PLAN

The overall impact of proposals on the street scene is significantly reduced.

Design (Arrangement)

Spaces are arranged around a central axis which is extended from the existing house backwards. 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 two proposed bays at the rear (forming an orangery in appearance) are aligned with the new gables. These new gables are set away from existing flank walls, with roofs set well below the existing roof, to ensure subservience to the existing structure.

The internal layout follows the same line of symmetry, creating a long vista between front door and rear garden.

The proposed central gable at the rear provides a vista from the stairs to the garden.



DIAGRAM REAR ELEVATION SYMMETRY

The height of the extension is 3.6m including the parapet; the centre of the rear extension is 3.2m. The ceiling height is 2.7m throughout to match the existing ceiling height.

Design (Materials)

Brick
The bricks and brick specials arising from the alterations at the back will be re-used at the front to build the new porch. The proposed rear extensions will be built in bricks of a modern size yet matching the original in colour (refer to reference image on drawing 003).

Windows
The existing pegged oak window surrounds have fallen into a state of significant disrepair. It appears that the single glazed crittal windows have been installed incorrectly within the oak frame leading to deterioration. We propose that the windows are removed throughout and replaced with contemporary high performance triple glazed windows. We have specified two alternative options for your comment:

Option A: Heritage uPVC windows
Originally the windows would have been unpainted. To reflect the buildings original design, we could propose a flush sash uPVC window with an English Oak finish. This would provide the required low maintenance, and high insulation values.

Option B: Composite windows
Alternatively, a traditional looking timber window finished externally in aluminium, could be used. This modern alternative would provide a long lasting and low maintenance alternative to a fully timber window.


Option A: uPVC flush sash windows (oak effect)


Option B: Composite window reference image

In both cases we would simplify the fenestration layout by omitting the small fanlights that are present in some of the windows.

We request the council's comment on which window type is deemed most suitable, and request confirmation of the simplified fenestration within the existing building.

Disabled Access

Access to the front door is currently stepped, as is access to the side and rear doors.

To improve the building's suitability 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 new patios.

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. It was also suggested that any new extensions should be set in from the boundaries and not be too wide across the site.

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

The new extension is set in 4.1m from the boundary in the South East.

In the North West, the garage and snooker room are adjacent to the boundary, this reflects the current situation of a double garage and passage up to this boundary. Although officers have stated that any new extensions should be set in, it is necessary to locate the garage and snooker room along the boundary edge to provide a suitably sized garage and snooker room, while preserving symmetry in the central area of the rear extension.

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.

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, showin double garage to left, and dashed outline of refused applciation



Proposed street elevation, showing minimal impact to street elevation caused by rear extension and new garage

The proposed rear extension is offset from the line of the rear gable by the 6.2m. Despite abutting the boundary on one side, the extension appears subtle when compared to the existing street elevation and is a simple addition designed be subservient to the main building volume.

A new porch is proposed to provide a level entrance and more light in the hall. This is designed to re-use existing brick from the rear of the building, and a simple extension of the hood over the currently recessed front door. The draught lobby behind the front door is omitted as it is no longer required thanks to the modern sealed and insulated door, and opening the hall up for ease of access and views.

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.

Drainage

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

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.

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 signifcant increase in the overall water consumption and run off to be expected as the property will remain a 5 bed house.

Bin Storage

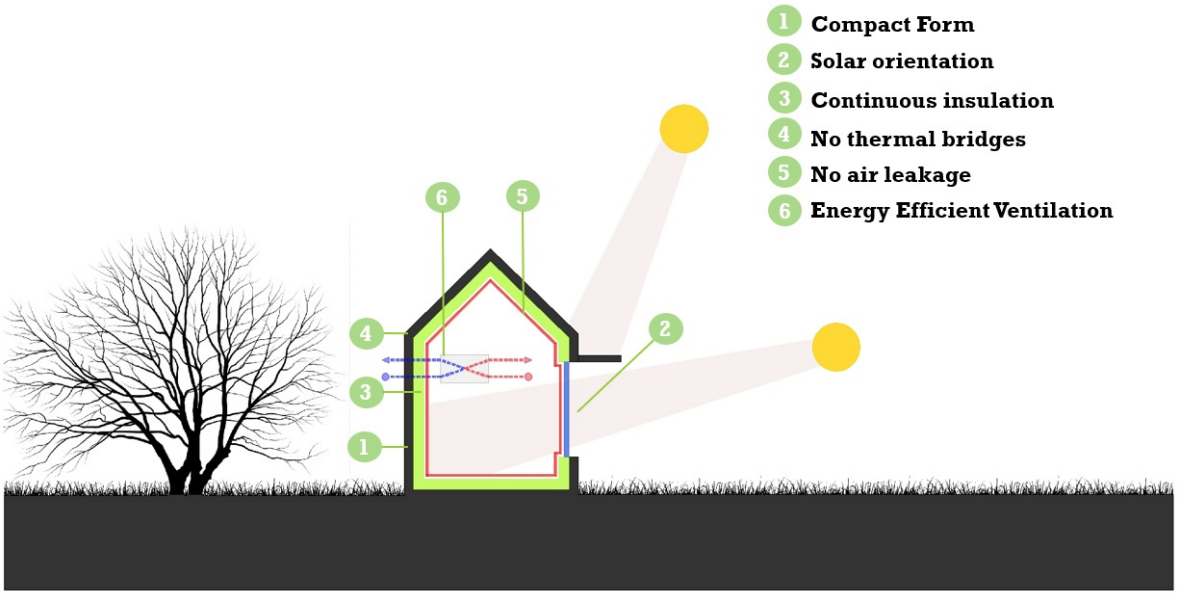
Bins will be stored within the garage and brought to the property boundary for road-side collection.

Bicycle Storage

Bicycle storage will be provided within the oversized garage.

Energy

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



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 will be required. 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, along side 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 in turn reduce its environmental impact.

Ecology

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

They produced three documents:

-Preliminary ecological appraisal
The ecological appraisal identified the areas on the site potentially home to valuable wildlife habitats and species. These areas include the amenity, introduced shrub, invasive plantations, log pile, trees, and the building itself.

The report 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
The 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.

Considering application 201525 proposed the complete demolition of the existing building, the proposed work in the current application is minor by comparison. Therefore, we would expect our proposal to be covered by the ecological surveys, assuming that the planning application would be made within 2021.

We request the council's confirmation that the existing report can be relied upon for the full application.

Arboriculture

An *Arboricultural Implications Assessment* and *Tree Protection Plan* was written by Andrew Belson Arboricultural Consultants on 3rd August 2020 for application 201525. The report uses a topographical survey to identify the position of each tree on the site, and this reflects what is current. Trees on neighbouring land were also inspected.



Lawson Cypress tree to be replaced

One of the trees in the report, a Lawson Cypress (Grade C1) would be affected by the proposed extension as it is within the RPA.

Despite a high crown lift, the proximity of the proposal (1.6m) could affect its future growth and pose a risk to the extension.

The sensible course of action would be to have this tree removed and replaced with a new semi-mature tree of the same species, 10m away from the proposed extension along the boundary line. The client's parents, who live at 127 Whiteknights Road's have confirmed they would not object to this proposal.

As our proposal only affects one tree, we would expect the *Arboricultral Impact Assesment* and *Tree Protection Plan* by Andrew Belson Arboricultural Consultants to provide adequate arboricultural information at planning stage.

We request the Council to confirm this approach is acceptable.

Impact on neighbours

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

Daylight

The proposed ground floor extension has a minimal impact on neighbours' access to light.

131 Whiteknights Road is not unduly affected, as the ground floor extension would be outside the 60 degree line, and the first floor extensions would be outside the 45 degree line.



127 Whiteknights Road. Rear of garage/store lean-to and tall planting to boundary of 129 Whiteknights Road

At 127 Whiteknighst Road, there is no undue impact from the upper floor extensions, as these are outside of the 45 degree angle.

At ground floor, the lean-to nearest the boundary is an unheated garage /store with polycarbonate roof, and could not be considered a habitable room as confirmed by the owner. The nearest ground floor window/door that would be affected is shown on the block plan. This window is one of two windows serving the same room, but the ground floor extension would fall within the 60 degree viewing cone.

However the window serves a room with further windows, and is already significantly affected by existing vegetation alongside the boundary. We believe therefore there is no undue impact to light to the rooms at ground floor.

The neighbours, who are the parents of our client, do not express any concern and fully support the proposal as it is designed.

Overlooking

Overlooking is negligible on the ground floor as any new side facing windows are located on the south facing wall, with no windows from 127 overlooking this area, with just a narrow path alongside the neighbour's house.

Overlooking from proposed windows on the first-floor extension is negligible as the windows are set well away from side boundaries.

The en suite and bathroom windows on side facing walls will be obscure glazed.

Conclusion

Our proposals will provide significant improvements and enlargement of the existing house, and will safeguard it's future use and enjoyment, whilst retaining heritage benefits to the street and wider area.

The proposals are sympathetic to the existing building, which was deemed to have gained status as a non-designated heritage assett, by improving the existing fabric and performance, retaining almost the entire structure and setting along the street, whilst enhancing the living accomodation and appearance at the rear.

The design respects the amenities of local residents and would represent a marked improvement when compared to the current building, which is somewhat in disrepair, and in need of refurbishment and modernisation.

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 bulk of massing on the street frontage.

It is requested that the council comment on all planning aspects and confirm the list of documents required to accompany a full householder planning application.

We request detailed pre-application advice on the following in particular:

- Design of the proposed rear extensions
- Remodelling and Impact on the heritage asset
- Window replacement options
- Design of the Porch
- Impact on adjacent properties and urban setting
- Use of existing ecology and tree reports to form part of the application
- Other requirements for the planning application