

Design & Access Statement – 27 Shepherds Lane, Caversham, RG4 7JJ

1 Summary

This Design & Access statement, which is being submitted alongside the planning application made to Reading Borough Council to demolish the existing detached bungalow and erect a replacement two storey property with a basement floor at 27 Shepherds Lane, Caversham, RG4 7JJ.

The proposal is for the replacement property to be designed to fit within the constraints of the site and with architectural detailing that is contemporary in style, but also aligns with the character and proportions of the four-bedroom properties within the road.

This proposed development is shown on the submitted application plans, prepared by Easy Home Plans:

- A1 – Existing Elevations
- A2 – Existing Floor Plans
- A3 – Proposed Elevations
- A4 – Proposed Basement Floor Plan
- A5 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- A6 – Proposed First Floor Plan
- A7 – Proposed Block Plan
- A8 – Proposed Street Scene

2 Proposal Background

The proposed development is for the replacement of the existing property, which the current owner purchased in March 2016 with the objective of creating a forever family home to accommodate current and future needs.

The existing property was built in 1932 and has undergone several extensions and works to satisfy the needs of the various owners of the property over time. However, the property now requires complete refurbishment and upgrade from an internal and external perspective. Due to the age and current condition of the property together with an increase in building standards, it makes more sense to demolish and replace the existing property rather than try to remodel and extend.

A previous proposal was submitted in December 2016 but was withdrawn from the planning process in August 2017 following feedback from the assigned planner – this new application seeks to address the concerns raised in the previous application and is therefore a completely different design by a new architect that is fully aligned with the site constraints.

3 Site Details

3.1 Site Location, Shape & Area

Site location is 27 Shepherds Lane, Caversham, Reading, RG4 7JJ and is wedge-shaped and therefore the sites gets progressively wider from the front to the rear of the site and extends to over 823 sqm or 0.2 of an acre in total.

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3.2 Use Class

C3 residential property.

3.3 Scale, Layout & Appearance (A1 & A2)

Existing property is a detached 3-bedroom chalet style bungalow, with 2 bedrooms, bathroom, kitchen, dining room and living room on the ground floor and a large bedroom on the first floor.

It should be noted that the property has had several poorly designed extensions over the years that have left the property with a mismatch of architectural styles and therefore the property doesn't have any architectural merit from a design perspective.

3.4 Landscape & Topography

A pebble drive with mature bushes to the front boundary of the site. A laid to lawn garden occupies the rear of the site with several trees at the bottom edge of the garden located towards the rear at the South boundary. Please note that no TPO's currently relate to any trees on the site.

Site is mostly level with a gradual incline towards the rear of the site and with the existing property sitting approximately 400mm higher than the public highway.

3.5 Access & Parking

The existing property is positioned to the front of the site and the entrance for both vehicular and pedestrian access is from Shepherds Lane, which is at the North boundary of the site. There is a driveway and off-road parking area to the front of the property for at least 3 cars.

4 Surrounding Area

4.1 Location & Area

The immediate surrounding area is a mix of developments of varying styles, sizes and of varying ages, with some properties built pre-1932, post 1932 and some as recent as the 1980's. The site lies on a run of exclusively residential properties, which are mainly large four-bedroom detached houses, but with some three-bedroom detached bungalows as well.

4.2 Use

Predominately C3 residential dwellings with some agriculture farmland and golf courses between the settlements and the River Thames dividing Caversham from the much larger Reading.

4.3 Scale & Appearance

There is a mixture of properties in Shepherds Lane largely consisting of detached two storey properties. The existing property appears at odds within the immediate context in terms of scale against significantly larger properties, which have overall plot sizes smaller than the existing site, which has one of the largest overall plots in Shepherds lane.

There is a mixture of styles reflecting the pattern of development over the last 100 years or so.

4.4 Landscape

Well landscaped public and private areas consisting of well-established mature vegetation with typically sufficient mature trees to site boundaries, which creates generally good levels of privacy.

4.5 Access

Existing vehicle access to the road and highway network via Shepherds Lane.

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5 National & Local Planning Policy *

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):

Section 7 - Requiring Good Design. Largely reflects previous guidance of PPS1 in that LPAs should encourage good design. This ought to be achieved by incorporating the following factors, which are addressed in respect of the proposal:

- Optimising the potential of the site (para 58 bullet 3);
- Responding to local character without stifling innovation, originality or initiative design (para 58 bullet 4 and para 60);
- Being visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping (para 58 bullet 6);
- Taking opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions (para 64).

Section 11 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment. Great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in national Parks, the broads and AONB, which have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty (para 115). LPAs to take into account “the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness”.

Local Planning Policy:

Policy CS1: Sustainable Construction and Design.

Proposals for new development, including the construction of new buildings and the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing building stock, will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, minerals, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.

To meet these requirements:

- All new housing is required to meet the most up to date Eco-Homes ‘Very Good’ as a minimum standard, and all new commercial developments are BREEAM ‘Very Good’ as a minimum standard;
- All new developments maximise the use of energy efficiency and energy conservation measures in their design, layout and orientation to reduce overall energy demand;
- All developments reduce mains water use and demonstrate that water conservation measures are incorporated so that predicted per capita consumption does not exceed the appropriate levels set out in the Code for Sustainable Homes or BREEAM Standards;
- Developments incorporate sustainable urban drainage facilities and techniques as part of the layout of a development as appropriate and as advised by the Environment Agency, including minimising the size of impermeable areas so that peak run-off and annual water run-off is reduced where possible and in any case is no greater than the original conditions of the site. Particular care will be needed in areas of flood risk where different solutions may be required.

Policy CS2: Waste Minimisation.

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Development should demonstrate measures to minimise the generation of waste in the construction, use and life of buildings and promote more sustainable approaches to waste management, including the reuse and recycling of construction waste and the promotion of layouts and designs that provide adequate space to facilitate waste storage, reuse, recycling and composting.

Policy CS5: Inclusive Access.

All buildings should be located, sited and designed to provide suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily.

Policy CS7: Design and the Public Realm.

All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including:

- Layout: urban structure and urban grain;
- Landscape;
- Density and mix;
- Scale: height and massing;
- Architectural detail and materials.

Developments will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives:

- Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place;
- Continuity and enclosure;
- Quality of the public realm;
- Ease of movement and permeability;
- Legibility - clear image and easy to understand;
- Adaptability - capable of adaptation over time;
- Diversity - meets a wide range of needs.

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they:

- Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;
- Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;
- Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them;
- Are visually attractive because of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping. Applications for major and minor developments should be accompanied by a Design and Access statement that deals with all the above matters.

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Policy CS24: Car/ Cycle Parking

Maximum car parking standards and cycle parking requirements will be applied in relation to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.

CS38: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal, and the Borough's vegetation cover will be extended.

* Text (section 5) sourced from previous planning application produced by Tony Holt Design.

6 Proposal Detail

6.1 Proposed Elevations (A3)

The elevations shown in A3 indicate the final appearance of the proposed development including the overall mass and bulk of the final design, which has been designed to fit within the constraints of the site – namely the bungalow at No25 and the set-back two storey property at No29.

The front right of the property has been set-back at ground and first floor level and the rear left at first floor level has also been set-back to align with the end of the extension of the bungalow at No25 – this design together with an exaggerated hip roof design to the sides helps to reduce the impact of mass and bulk on neighbouring properties to a significant degree especially toward the bungalow at No25. As a result, it is believed that the design will create and maintain a feeling of space between the properties at first floor level.

In addition, it is expected that the use of natural materials combined with thoughtful architectural detailing will produce an individually designed property that would sit comfortably within the urban landscape and character of Shepherds Lane.

Large glazed areas have been designed to maximise natural light penetration and where possible glazed elements have been positioned and sized to respond to the orientation of the site, enhancing the energy efficiency of the building.

6.2 Proposed Basement Floor Plan (A4)

The basement (shown in A4) offers access to the plant room, bathroom, office, sauna and games room. And note that the basement has been designed to start from the point of the main staircase rather than the front of the property, which significantly reduces any risk to neighbouring properties of the basement construction. Glass floor panels have also been designed to provide natural light to the basement as one of them will be positioned directly under the glass sloping roof on the ground floor. In addition, separate external stairs have also been designed to provide an additional entry/exit point from the basement if required.

6.3 Proposed Ground Floor Plan (A5)

The ground floor (shown in A5) accessed via a large pivot front door will provide access to the hallway and main staircase (designed with a glass side wall as a design feature and with two rear windows both with privacy glass to allow natural light in) with doors to the WC, living room, utility and the primary area (family, kitchen and dining area).

The floor plan layout has specifically focused on creating as much space as possible for the primary area, which will be the main focal point of the ground floor especially with the glass sloping roof design. Direct access out onto the rear garden, which will promote the use of these outdoor spaces

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together with large bi-fold doors will permit this primary living space to benefit from the movement of the sun, maximise natural light and therefore enjoy the visibility and amenity of the rear garden.

Secondary spaces such as the Utility that do not have a high demand for good levels of natural light and are only used periodically have been positioned towards the centre with the exception being the living room, which will benefit from natural light from the bay window design and is located at the front left.

6.4 Proposed First Floor Plan (A6)

The first floor (shown in A6) accessed via the main staircase provides a hallway and 3 good sized bedrooms and a family bathroom together with a master bedroom and master en-suite. The design of the first floor makes best use of the available space given the design constraints. A gallery has been added as a design feature and two sky lights have also been added to provide natural light to the hallway and the main staircase.

6.5 Proposed Block Plan (A7)

The final site plan (shown in A7), clearly indicates the new footprint and position of the new property compared to the existing property. At least 1 meter has been left to the boundary lines at No25 and No29. In addition, the front left has been aligned with No25 such that the end of the extension at No25 aligns with the start of the glass sloping roof on the first floor and therefore significantly reducing the potential of impacting No25 due to the two-storey design.

The existing site access has been retained and the parking area has been maintained with slightly increased footprint to the right.

6.6 Proposed Street Scene (A8)

The existing relationship with neighbouring properties creates a large set-back between the existing property and No29 (shown in A8). The replacement property seeks to improve this relationship by setting back slightly the right side (at ground and first floor level) and thereby creating a slightly more uniform look across the three properties whilst also reducing the bulk of the front, which aligns more with other property on Shepherds Lane.

In addition, the design of the roof indicates a small ridge running left to right together with exaggerated hip roof design to the sides resulting in the highest point towards the centre. The eaves running parallel to the side boundaries form the lowest point of the roof line. As such, this demonstrates how the design responds to the neighbouring properties by reducing the impact of mass and bulk and therefore helping to preserve established amenity where possible.

7 Appraisal Conclusion

7.1 Site Location, Shape & Area

Existing property to be demolished.

7.2 Use

No change - The continued use of the site as C3 residential is entirely appropriate given the residential surroundings.

7.3 Scale, Layout & Appearance

The existing site is currently occupied by a three-bedroom detached chalet bungalow property. Although it is acknowledged that the proposed development will add to the amount of floorspace on the site, but the resulting space has been carefully considered in context of:

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- character of the surroundings;
- site constraints;
- size and shape of the site;
- existing site orientation;
- avoiding overlooking of adjoining properties;
- impacting on existing trees.

Recent developments granted planning approval have been taken into consideration during the design process and it is believed that the proposed property can comfortably be accommodated on site without harming either the character or appearance of the area, the amenity of neighbouring properties or highway safety. Furthermore, it is believed that the proposal continues the character and pattern of development in the area and offers the potential to replace the existing property with a modern, but well thought out and designed replacement property.

In addition, it is worth noting that the additional space is mostly due to the basement and greater first floor space rather than any significant uplift of the actual site footprint when the old and new are compared.

The layout has been aligned with the constraints of the site, but also to consider the existing features and orientation and ensure that the proposal has sufficient distance to all boundaries. An appropriate level of amenity space is being maintained for the property and the proposal avoids harm to the amenities of neighbouring residents.

The proposed property respects the existing development within the local area, whilst avoiding harm to the amenities of the neighbouring properties at No25 and No29.

The design evolution and the resulting appearance has been fully considered with the proposed development constituting an architecturally designed solution for this site, which would make a positive contribution fitting in well with the established pattern of development in the local area. Therefore, the proposal would not adversely affect the local distinctiveness of the area.

7.4 Landscaping:

The proposal has been designed to work with the existing soft landscaping and trees on site.

7.5 Conclusion:

The proposed property has been designed to respond positively to the landscape and character of the site, avoiding any harm to trees. The development of the site and the proposed design of the property has been put together by the applicant's desire to design a property of the highest standards that provides a feeling of space and enhances the quality of the landscape. The lessons learnt from the previous application have been considered with much of the feedback given from the planner incorporated into the current design proposal. As such, it is believed that the final proposed scheme now results in a proposal, which does not represent an over development of the site and nor does it create any overbearing impact on the neighbouring properties. And maintaining the amenities of neighbouring properties at No25 and No29 has also been achieved. As such, the proposed development responds positively to planning guidance for development in this location and therefore should be fully supported by the aligned planner.