

First floor development of No.4 Downshire Square, Reading, RG1 6NJ

for Finerain Developments Ltd



**Design and Access &
Heritage statement**

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SITE LOCATION



Description

- This Design & Access statement has been prepared to support a proposal to develop No.4 Downshire Square by extending, demolishing and subdividing the existing 3/4 bed dwelling, in to 2 x 4 bed houses.
- This follows a number of applications 191358, 200571, 211416 & 221576. This proposal builds upon the planning principles established within the earlier applications.
- Consultation was conducted prior to submission to help forge a design that can be supported by planning officers, neighbours and local councillors.

Site Location & Extent

- No.4 Downshire Square, is located on the west side of Downshire Square, Reading. The location is west of the town centre and about a 10 minute walk to the infrastructure, commercial and employment opportunities of Reading town centre. It is therefore a sustainable location for development.
- This area of Downshire Square is a residential area, with schools, parks and a few local shops nearby. The residential properties

are separated from the street with a set of trees. The surrounding residential buildings date from the early 1920's to 1980's.

- The site is broadly square, with the existing single storey dwelling in the middle. The ground on the site is roughly level.
- The southern side garden and garage of the former residential plot has been excluded from this application and will be subject to a subsequent application to seek development for a further dwelling.
- The current larger dwelling curtilage is accessed from two vehicular and a pedestrian access point. But as this application seeks to create a new access (as approved under 221576). The old access points remain with the undeveloped parcel.
- The front of the site is separated from the pavement with a hedge behind a low brick wall. The only other trees/shrubs are on the eastern boundary of the site away from any development.
- This garden is laid to lawn and includes shrubs at the back of the site. The boundaries are defined by timber fencing. To the front boundary there are raised beds, and a few trees.

SITE AERIAL - NO.4 DOWNSHIRE SQUARE



SITE PHOTOS



CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES

- Beyond this, the adjoining houses are three storey town houses. This is achieved by two stories expressed in the elevation, as well as a hipped roof, with a central gable facing the street, and two small dormers in the roof, which make up the third storey.
- To the north the existing houses are two and a half storeys in height, and feature a gable facing the road.
- Downshire Square is next to a busy town centre road; impact on these traffic and acoustic considerations will be dealt with during the subsequent application.
- The dwellings on the south of the site are set back of the other dwellings by approximately 3m from the west elevation. The terrace has external walls faced in red/brown brickwork, and stone quoins. In the south elevation the windows and doors have stone surrounds. On the north elevation the doors and windows are set into brickwork openings.
- The existing dwelling has a hipped roof finished in brown tiles. There is a central dormer facing the road, as well as another dormer facing the back garden. The eaves height of the existing dwelling are circa 3m, significantly lower than adjoining buildings
- The front of the building is obscured by the brick/fence & hedging running along road and footpath.
- The bulk and scale of the existing dwelling when compared with the immediate context and Downshire square generally.

Principle of Development:

The property has a long planning history (applications 191358, 200571, 211416 & 221576) and although some were refused, various agreeable planning principles were established.

- The principle of residential development and demolition of the bungalow has been accepted and agreed by officers and the planning inspector.
- Alternative vehicular access, parking, demolition and landscaping to serve the development has been established under application 221576
- Application 211416 was refused at committee owing to the impact of development on the neighbours. The proposed development will respect these sensitive boundaries.
- Local and national planning policies are in favour of new dwellings where they can be sensitively delivered within the local authority. Therefore there is a presumption to support schemes that generate a net increase in dwellings and use land more efficiently.



CHARACTER STUDY – DOWNSHIRE SQUARE

Along the street scape there are various styles of houses, from a similar period in history with common themes such as gables / dormers, cat slide roofs high eaves. Materials are varied - brick, stone, render, pebble dash clay and slate tiles



DOWNSHIRE SQUARE CONSERVATION AREA



Extract from "Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal" - April 2009

5.2 The character of spaces within the area

The conservation area is, generally speaking, a tightly knit suburban area composed of continuous frontages of two-, three- and some four-storey buildings with front gardens generally reflecting a consistent frontage building line to each separate street frontage. Although there are some bungalows at the Maitland Road/Downshire Square junction, there is one recent example where bungalows have been successfully redeveloped to create a development more in keeping with its neighbours at what is now Brownlow Lodge to the north of number 2 Brownlow Road.

6.3 Architectural and historic character: building methods and materials

The conservation area is essentially a Victorian/Edwardian residential suburb of Reading, highly prized because of its location close to Reading town centre. It contains a core of Victorian and Edwardian buildings, and despite otherwise containing "newer" properties than many of Reading's other conservation areas, it retains its historical character and special architectural interest.

With the exception of a few stucco and stone buildings, the buildings in the Conservation area are generally of brick, which is one of the distinguishing features of Reading's architecture and there are examples of good quality brickwork throughout the conservation area. Brick was a popular building material in the 19th centuries and the ready availability of different coloured bricks provided the opportunity for the lively polychromatic brickwork found throughout this part of Victorian/Edwardian Reading. The town had several brickworks, the most notable being S & E Collier Ltd at Water Road and Elgar Road and two brick works in the Tilehurst area.

6.6 Local details and features

The pre-eminent local detail throughout this Conservation Area, and "unifying" it, is the presence, with few exceptions, of brick walls and/or brick walls and railings at the front of the properties.

6.10 Problems, pressures and issues

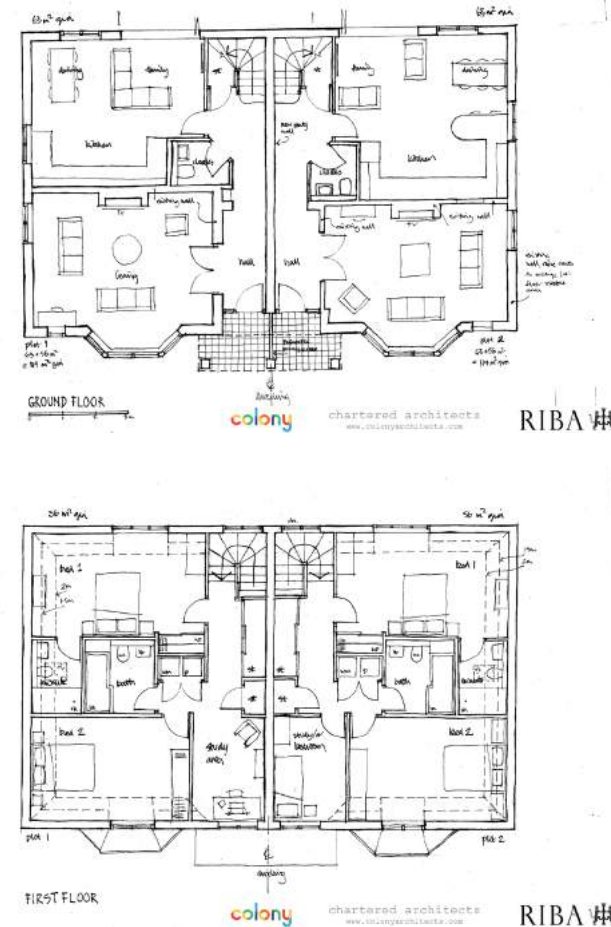
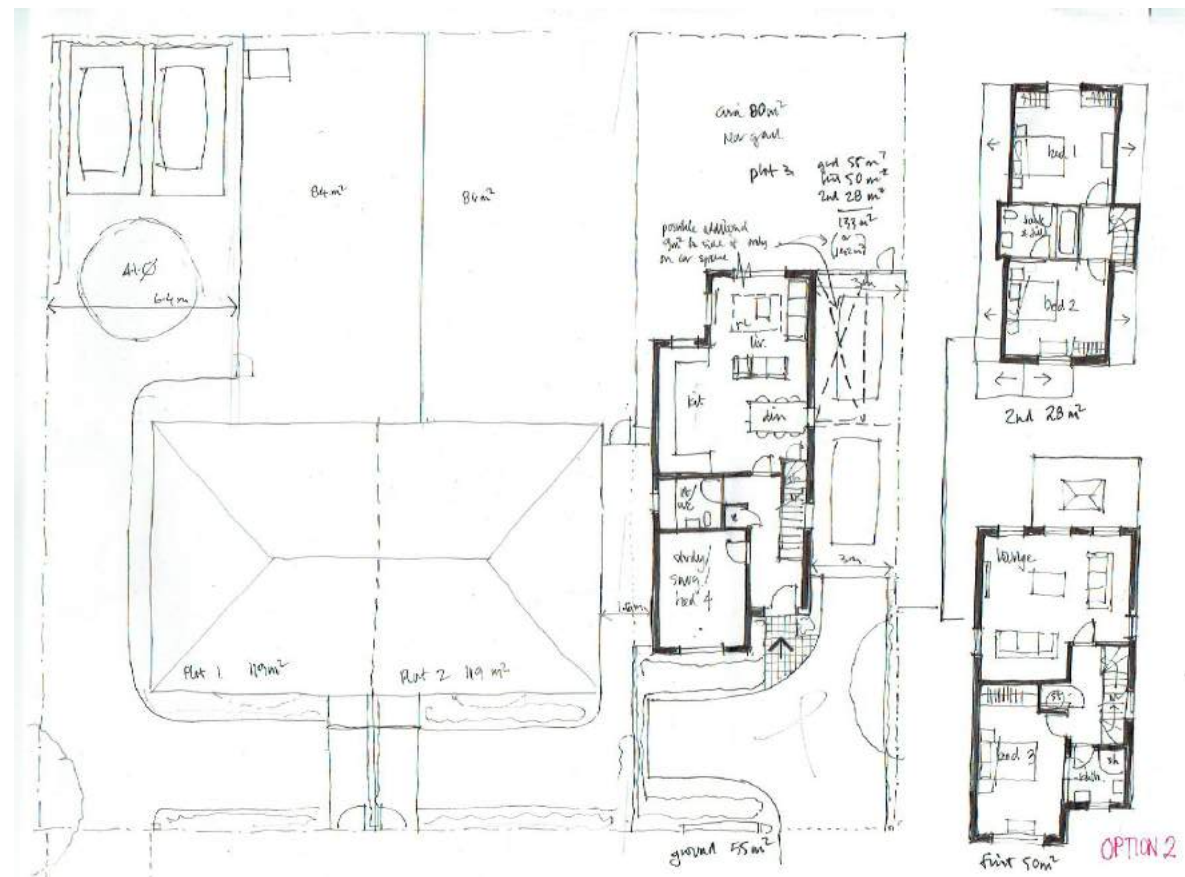
Design of new development

Within the conservation area itself there are few recent developments, but these have generally respected the character, scale of buildings and materials used in the conservation area, thus maintaining its character and appearance. A small number of elements within the conservation area detract from its character, but it is the larger developments immediately outside the conservation area which pay least heed to their context adjoining or near the conservation area and have a notably negative effect on its character and appearance.

Downshire Square Conservation Area
Townscape Appraisal Map

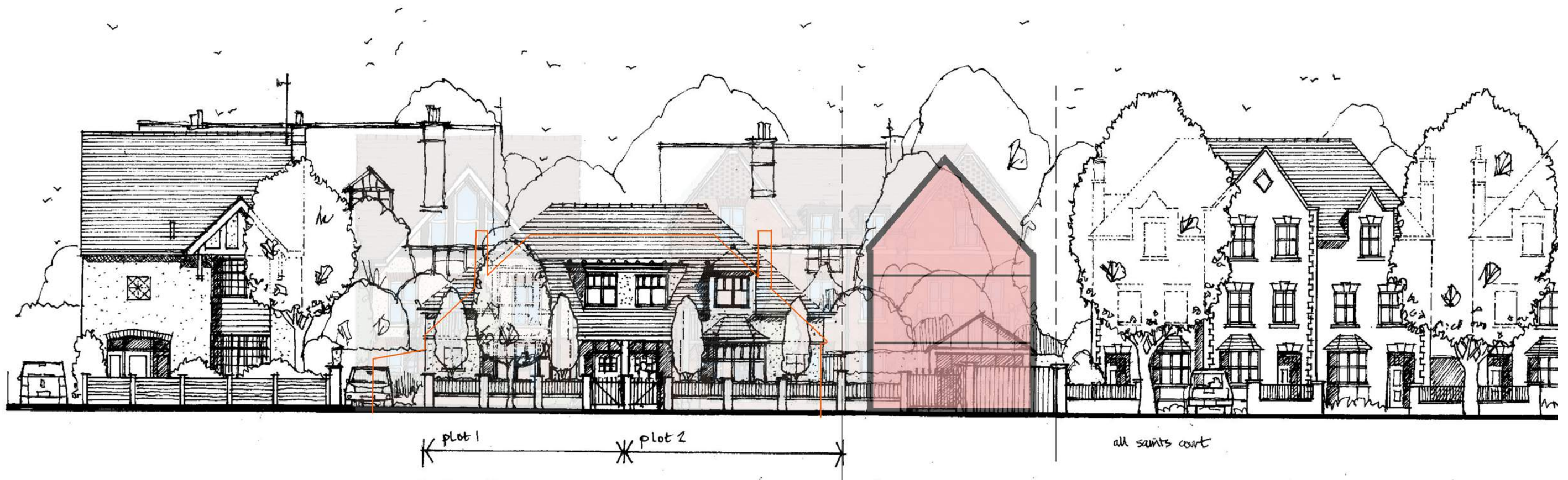
- Conservation Area Boundary
- Listed Building
- Buildings of townscape value
- Tree Preservation Orders
- Other tree groups
- Important open space (contains important trees)
- Significant views
- Character Areas

CONSULTATION



Prior to submission of this scheme, the design team presented and discussed early scheme ideas for the development of the entire site, following the refusal of application 211416 and hearing of application 211416 at committee, where members suggested more consultation should be made ahead of a future applications. The design and images presented on this page were tabled at the meeting, a summary of the discussion:

- General support was offered for this renewed approach to the development.
- The retention of the existing dwelling was seen as a positive and the additional first floor extension would not have the same neighbourly impacts
- The style and massing of the proposals would be considered as suitable to the sensitive conservation area setting.
- The new dwelling to the side plot was supported, subject to the final design aesthetic is suitable for the Conservation area



PROPOSED SITE PLAN - LANDSCAPE & AMENITY



SCHEDULE	m ²
Plot 1 - Gnd flr	78.8
1st flr	77
TOTAL	155.8m ²
Plot 2 - Gnd flr	70
1st flr	69
TOTAL	139.5m ²
Garage Studio	
Gnd flr	32.5 (incl stair)
1st flr	32.5
TOTAL	65m ²

Gated usable garden areas m ²	
Plot 1	191 (including parking)
Plot 2	169

Amenity & Landscape

- Each dwelling has a private rear garden and shared front entrance. The rear gardens are approximately 191 + 169sqm respectively, which is greater than the footprint of the dwelling. This is also commensurate to the gardens sizes, proportions and areas of the nearby dwellings.
- The existing cast-iron railings, which are considered to have heritage significance, at the southern corner of the site are being retained within the proposals. They are also outside of the application boundary, and the detailed retention measures will be covered within the application for a new dwelling to the side plot.
- A new front brickwork wall and low hedge will be constructed along the front of the property to replace the existing timber fence and improve the landscaping to the street scene.
- This area of the site has no significant trees.
- Additional planting will be added to enhance the existing screening to the eastern boundary of the site.
- It is expected that the new dwellings will be served by air source heat pumps located within the rear gardens.

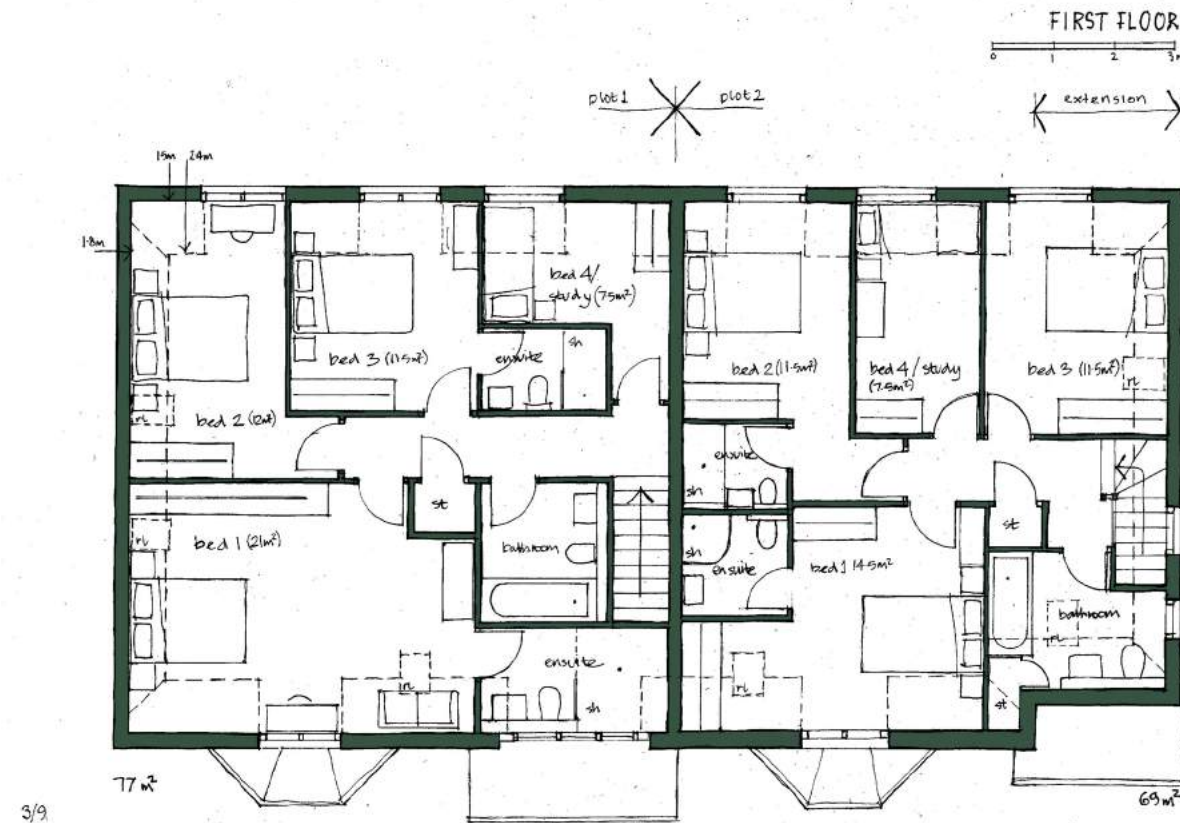
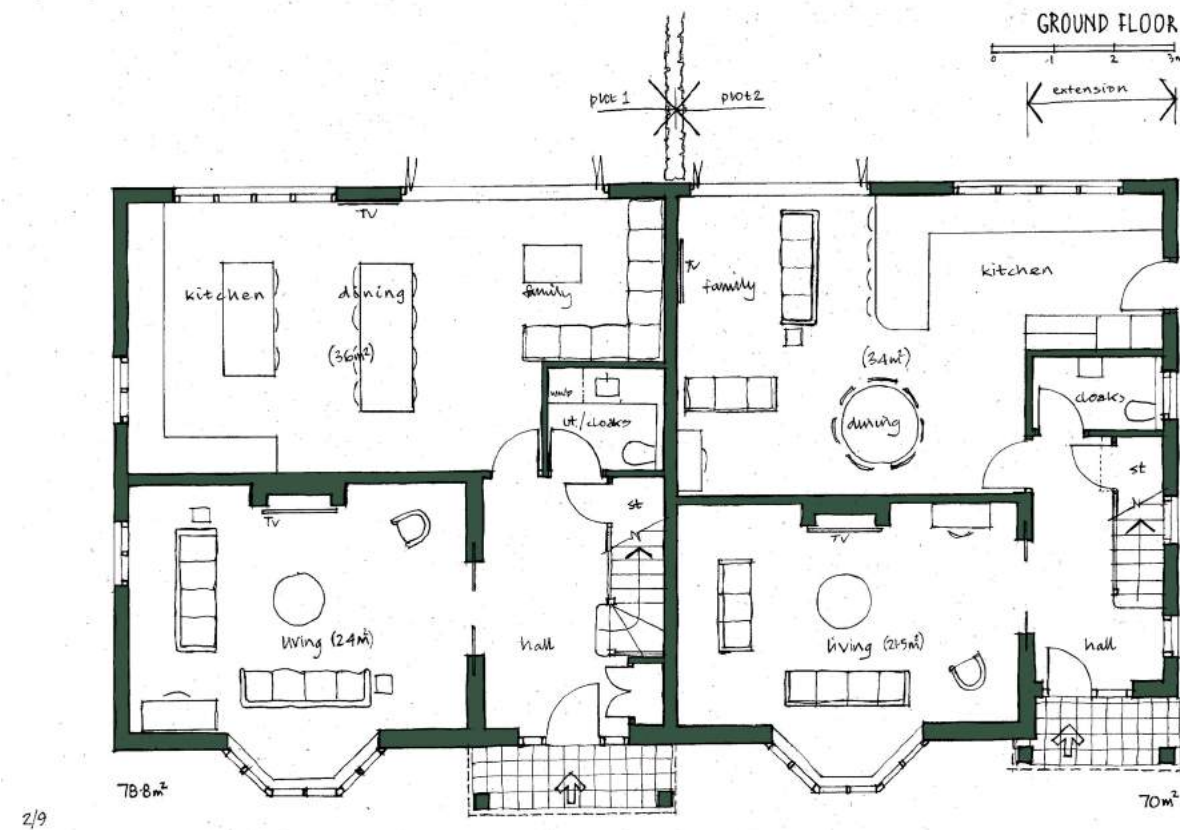
PROPOSED FLOOR PLANS – LAYOUT & AMOUNT

Amount:

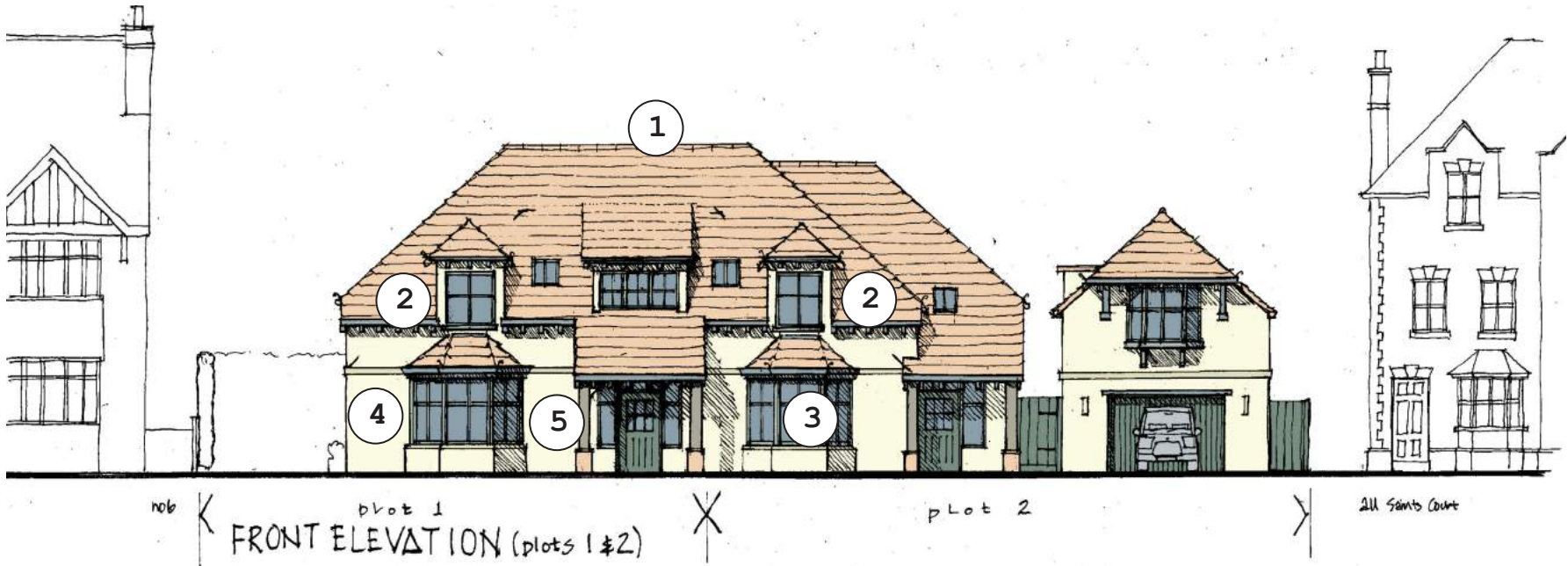
- The new 4bed 7 person dwellings, with a total of 115.8 msq per new dwelling, a total of 295.3 msq. The garage with studio/workshop is 65m msq in total.
- The existing chalet bungalow dwelling has a gross internal area of 193 msq. The property is considered to be a 3/4 bed property, depending on the room allocations.
- The new dwellings are compliant with the technical housing design standards, where the minimum area for a 4b 7p house over two storeys is 115 msq.
- The works also remove the ground floor northern side projection, which as a GIA of around 10sqm.
- The total net area of the residential accommodation increases slightly 102 msq.

Layout:

- The layout principle of this development is to work with the existing building wall positions to minimise demolition and retain main structural walls to support the new upper floor.
- A new central spine walls is to be erected through the centre of the generous exiting hall, which splits the dwelling into two. New staircases are then positioned at the start of the wall, near the entrance where access is available from the hall.
- Sleeping accommodation is all on the upper floors, with 2 supporting en-suites, 1 bathroom and storage available.
- The ground floor has two reception rooms, the lounge to the front and the open plan kitchen diner faces the garden to the rear.
- A few windows are retained, but most are altered to suite the new wall positions.



APPEARANCE – MATERIALS & STYLE



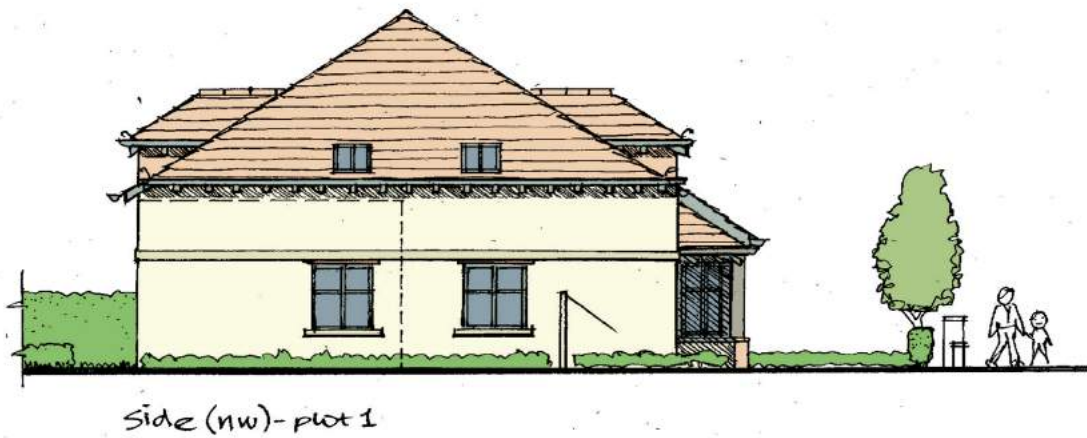
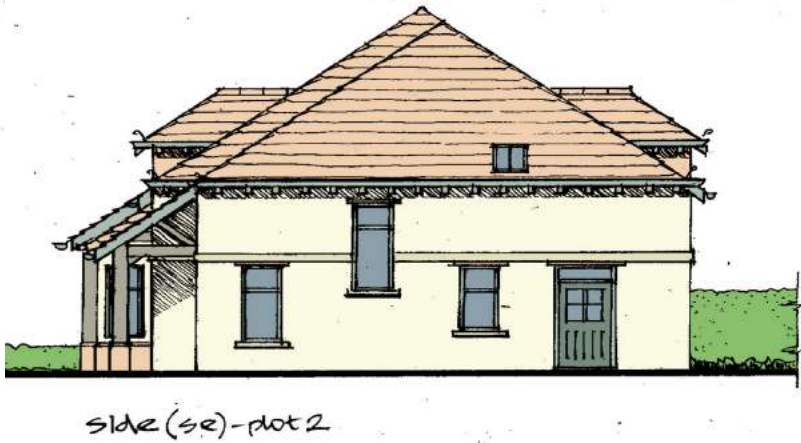
Materials

1. Clay tile roof (to match existing)
2. Tiled dormer cheeks
3. Dove grey window frames
4. Off-white insulated render system
5. Oak frame
6. RC Stone cills and string course
7. 3no. rows of tile creasing to window heads
8. Silver aluminium gutters & downpipes

To improve sustainability credentials, the external render system will be an insulated product to improve the overall house energy efficiency, working on a "fabric-first" principle.

Character

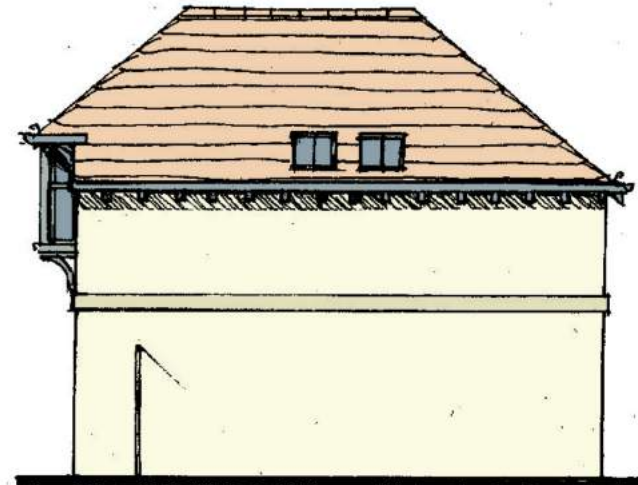
- The aim of the proposed design character is to build upon the existing character of the existing dwelling.
- The low-slung roof eaves, materials, dormers and fenestration style have all been selected to generate this character



APPEARANCE – GARAGE MATERIALS & STYLE



front (sw)



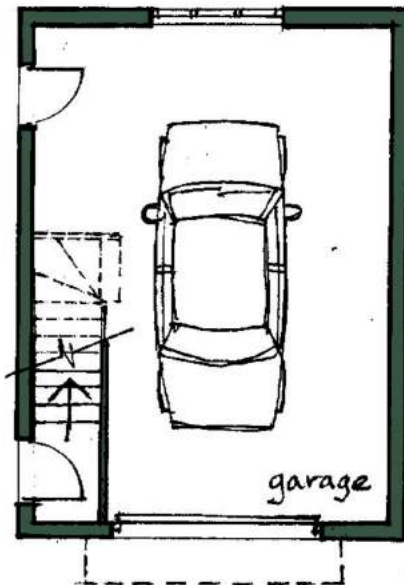
side (se)



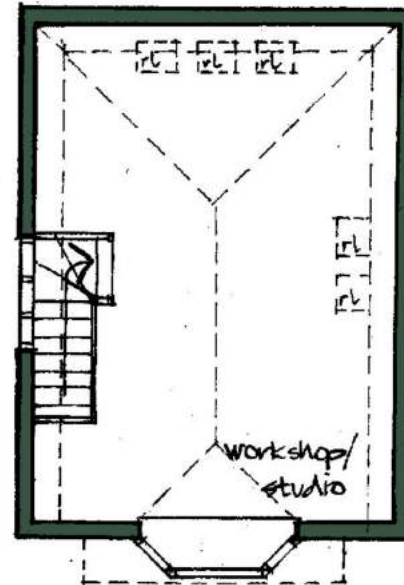
rear (ne)



side (nw)

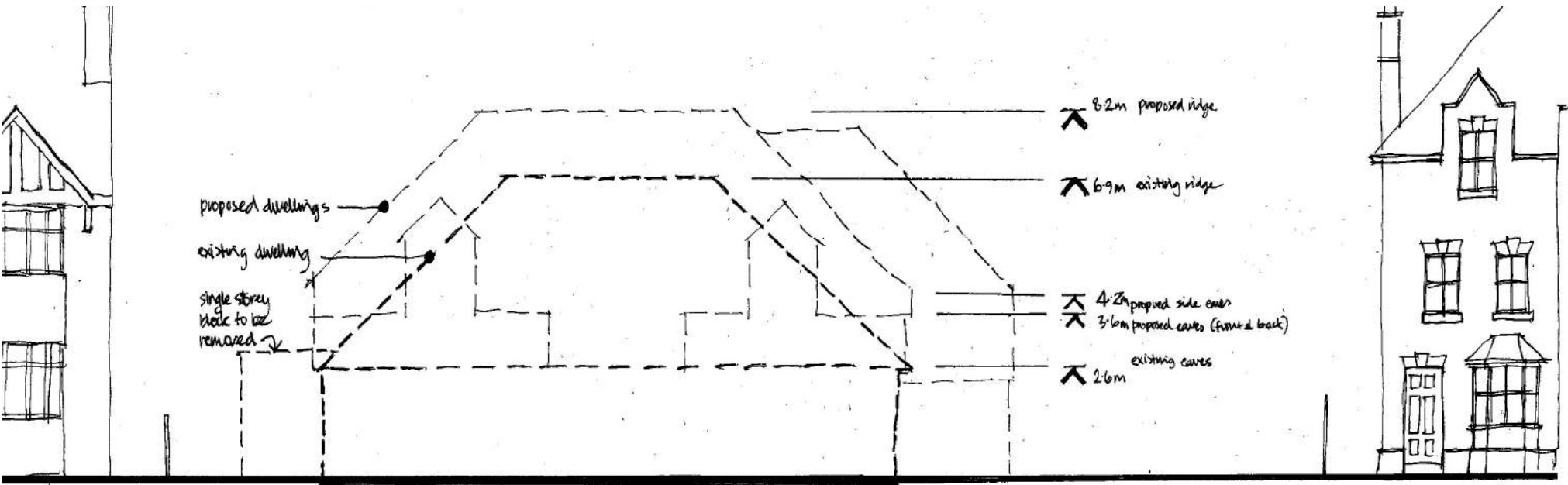


ground floor

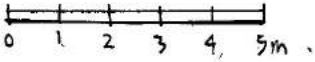


first floor

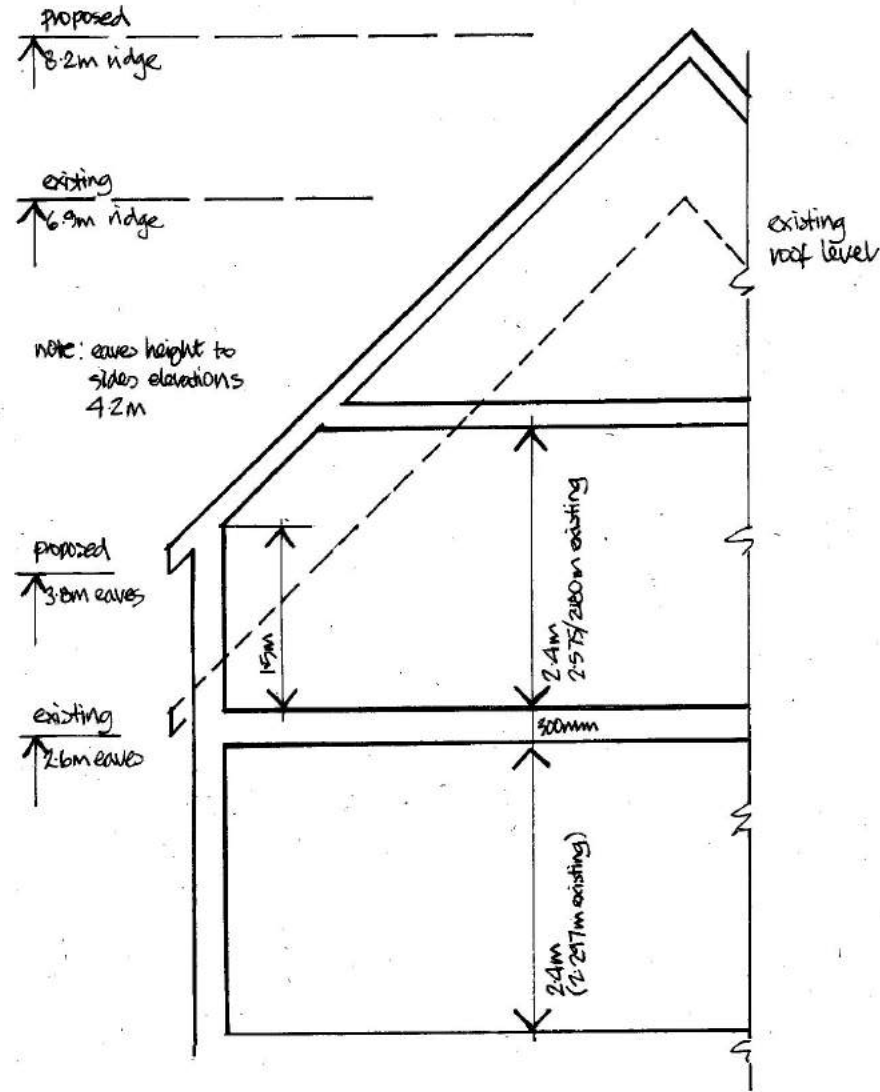
APPEARANCE – COMPARISON OF EXISTING & PROPOSED EAVE & RIDGE HEIGHT



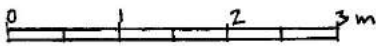
COMPARISON OF EXISTING & PROPOSED EAVES & RIDGE HEIGHTS



4/9



SECTION SHOWING PROPOSED
RAISED EAVES & RIDGE HEIGHTS



COMPARISON

APPROVAL APPLICATION NO. 221576 & REASONS FOR REFUSAL APPLICATION NO.230941



Approved Application No. 221576



New proposal addressing reasons for refusal

"The reduced area of land around the original dwelling, and the formation of additional dwelling within that reduced space, would result in an over intensive, awkward and contrived layout both functionally and visually with an associated stark appearance, over dominance of hardstanding and insufficient landscaping."

- 1. The proposed consists of a similar amount of reduced area found in the landscape proposal present in application no. 221576. The lanscaping present in the proposal exceeds what has been granted permission and the hardscaping reduced as a result which maintains the character of the site.

"The proposed development would provide an unacceptable standard of accommodation due to its unsatisfactory internal space and head height at first floor level, with consequent harm to the quality of living accommodation and amenity for future occupiers."

- 2. The proposal incorporates wardrobes and en-suites at the eaves where height height is reduced to 1.5m - 2m. Both units exceed space requirements for 2b 2p over 2 storeys.

"The proposed vehicular parking layout fails to demonstrate that it complies with the Local Planning Authority's standards in respect of vehicle parking."

- 3. Vehicular parking layout is identical to the proposal submitted with application 221576 and now serves 2 x 2b 2p as opposed to 2 x 3b 2p. Proposal is responsive to comments made by Reading's Transport Development Control Officers and updated accordigly to include EV charging ports, bin and cycle storage and highlighting changes to street scene.

The application fails to demonstrate that the proposal will not result in the loss of a

street tree on the frontage, whose replacement elsewhere is not demonstrated or desirable, and which contributes to the verdant character of the Downshire Square Conservation Area and to canopy cover of the Borough

- 4. Existing street tree to be retained shown in the proposed drawing to maintain character of the site.

"The applicant has failed to submit sufficient information for the Council to determine whether or not bats and other priority habitats would be adversely affected by the proposed development, contrary to Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and The Green Network) of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)."

- 5. Information to be submitted with report

"In the absence of a completed legal agreement to secure an acceptable contribution towards the provision of Affordable Housing, the proposal fails to contribute adequately to the housing needs of Reading Borough."

- 6. Once conditions satisfied, viability assessment to be submitted as part of S106.

CONCLUSION

The overall approach of this design proposal is largely determined by three principle factors that have prevented earlier schemes being realised:

- The decision to extend/demolish the existing dwelling,
- Appropriate sensitive design for the conservation area setting,
- The overlooking/overbearing relationship with the adjacent buildings.

The proposal overcomes all these point, therefore demonstrates an appropriate development approach.

The proposed scheme provides residential development on what is an under utilised urban plot. It furthermore adds to the family housing stock available within the borough, complies with the Council's standards and local plan policies as well as national planning guidance. The scheme addresses many of the past issues that have prevented development being sought. The team therefore cannot see any planning policy reason for this application not to be granted.

