

RE: 12B Northcourt Avenue, Reading, Date – 03/07/26

Response to Officer Comments and Design Amendments

Dear Planners,

We would like to thank the Planning Department for the time and effort invested in reviewing the proposals and providing detailed feedback throughout the pre-application and planning application process.

The revised scheme has been prepared following careful consideration of the comments received from planning officers and the Conservation Officer. The intention has always been to work collaboratively with the Local Planning Authority to achieve a proposal that is sympathetic to the character of the property whilst meeting the practical needs of our family.

The following summarises how the revised scheme has responded to the concerns raised.

1. Overdevelopment, Excessive Massing and Visual Dominance

Officer Comment:

The site is deemed overdeveloped in form, with excessive massing and visual dominance.

Response:

The current proposal has been significantly reduced compared with the earlier schemes. The overall scale, volume and massing have been refined to create a more subordinate relationship with the host dwelling. The revised design removes a number of previously proposed elements and simplifies the overall form to reduce visual impact.

2. Roof Above Existing Garage and First Floor Accommodation

Officer Comment:

The plans show the roof above the existing garage space to be raised to accommodate a first-floor level.

Response:

The revised proposal seeks to provide modest family accommodation whilst maintaining a clear hierarchy with the principal dwelling. The proposed ridge remains significantly lower than the main house ridge and has been designed to remain visually secondary to the host building.

We respectfully note that previous Conservation Officer comments indicated that a lower ridge height and acceptable roof form could potentially be accommodated, with concerns focused primarily on scale, massing and dominance.

3. Overbearing Impact on Neighbours and Northcourt Avenue

Officer Comment:

Overbearing impact on neighbouring properties and Northcourt Avenue.

Response:

The revised scheme incorporates substantial reductions in visual bulk. Three previously proposed dormers have been removed and replaced with conservation-style rooflights. The remaining roof accommodation has been redesigned to minimise visual prominence and reduce the perception of massing from surrounding viewpoints.

4. Impact Along the South-Eastern Boundary

Officer Comment:

Still overbearing along the south-eastern boundary due to the introduction of dormers.

Response:

In response to this concern, dormers have been removed from parts of the scheme and replaced with rooflights. Any remaining dormer accommodation has been reduced in scale and carefully positioned to minimise visual impact.

5. Loss of Architectural Characteristics

Officer Comment:

Loss of architectural characteristics.

Response:

The revised design seeks to remain sympathetic to the existing Edwardian character of the property. The roof form has been simplified and traditional materials and detailing are proposed where practical. The intention is to retain and reflect the character of the existing dwelling rather than introduce a contrasting architectural style.

6. Remodelled Roof and Increased Height

Officer Comment:

The remodelled roof and increased height are harmful.

Response:

Response:

The proposed ridge height remains lower than that of the principal dwelling, thereby preserving the visual hierarchy between the original building and the extension. The roof design has also been simplified and refined in response to previous feedback, and these revisions have already been accepted by the Conservation Officer.

We would also respectfully note that previous Conservation Officer comments indicated that a lower ridge height and an appropriate roof form could potentially be accommodated, with concerns focused primarily on issues of scale, massing, and dominance rather than the principle of a remodelled roof itself. The current proposal has been carefully developed to address those concerns by reducing visual bulk and ensuring a more subservient relationship with the host dwelling.

7. Harm to Neighbouring Amenity

Officer Comment:

Potential harm to neighbouring amenity.

Response:

The revised scheme has been substantially reduced in volume and visual impact compared with earlier submissions. Particular attention has been given to neighbouring relationships, window positioning & design and roof design to minimise any perceived impact.

8. Privacy and Overlooking

Officer Comment:

Potential adverse impacts through loss of privacy and overlooking from the north-easterly facing dormer.

Response:

The dormer design has been reviewed and amended. The scale of the dormer has been reduced and privacy measures incorporated, including obscure glazing of windows where appropriate. These amendments significantly reduce opportunities for overlooking whilst allowing the accommodation to remain functional.

9. Impact on Character of Nos. 12, 12A and 12B Northcourt Avenue

Officer Comment:

The proposal is harmful to the character of the group of properties.

Response:

Response:

We fully recognise the importance of preserving the character of this unique group of properties. The revised proposal represents a significant reduction from the earlier schemes and has been developed specifically in response to officer comments. The design seeks to remain clearly subordinate to the host dwelling while respecting and retaining the established character of the site.

We also note that the roof of No. 12A has been modified in recent years. While the current proposal does not seek to replicate those alterations, it has been carefully designed to remain sympathetic to the evolving character of the group and, where appropriate, to reflect the scale and form of existing roof modifications within the immediate context.

Taking these factors into account, we consider that the revised scheme responds positively to its surroundings and would not result in harm to the character or appearance of the group of properties.

10. Scale, Massing and Wider Street scene

Officer Comment:

The proposal remains dominant within the site and wider streetscene.

Response:

The revised scheme incorporates substantial reductions in scale and massing when compared with previous submissions. The removal of dormers, introduction of rooflights, simplification of roof forms and refinement of the overall design have all been undertaken in direct response to officer feedback.

Additional Considerations

We carefully considered the suggestion of substantially extending the ground floor footprint behind the existing garage. Whilst we appreciate the reasoning behind this approach, it is not our preferred solution for several reasons.

One of the primary reasons we purchased this property was the generous garden and outdoor space it provides. We are keen to preserve as much of this amenity as possible for our family and therefore wish to avoid a substantial loss of garden area through extensive ground floor development.

In addition, a significant rear extension would require considerably greater construction works and associated costs. Given the substantial investment already required to repair and improve the existing garage structure, we have sought a more proportionate solution that delivers the accommodation required whilst minimising additional encroachment into the site.

We would also like to retain a garage element where possible. The garage provides valuable storage and practical day-to-day convenience and remains an important feature for our family.

Condition of the Existing Garage

We would also note that the existing garage structure is in a deteriorating condition and requires significant repair and investment to ensure its long-term safety and usability. The roof and overall structure have reached a stage where substantial remedial works are necessary regardless of the current application. The proposed scheme therefore provides an opportunity not only to meet the accommodation needs of our family but also to secure the future of a building that requires considerable attention and upgrading. In this respect, the proposal represents a practical and sustainable approach to improving the existing structure whilst ensuring it remains safe, functional and well integrated with the host dwelling.

Conclusion

We respectfully submit that the revised proposal demonstrates a genuine effort to respond positively to officer feedback received throughout the planning process (pre-application response & previous planning application response). The scheme has evolved significantly and incorporates substantial reductions in scale, massing and visual impact when compared with earlier submissions. We remain fully committed to working collaboratively with the Local Planning Authority and respectfully ask that the revised proposal be considered in light of the amendments made and the efforts undertaken to address previous concerns.

Yours faithfully,

Mrs Ninika Nanda
Owner and Occupier
12B Northcourt Avenue