

April 2017

Planning, Design and Access Statement

The Firs, Church Grove, KT1 4AL

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared in support of a planning application in relation to The Firs, Church Grove.
- 1.2 This planning application follows verbal pre-application feedback received in 2016. Section 6 of this Statement sets out an account of the feedback received and how we have responded to this.
- 1.3 The proposals are for:
- “Demolition of existing building and erection of part two storey/part four storey building, plus basement, to provide 9 residential flats (6 x one bed, 3 x two bed)”.*
- 1.4 This planning application also follows grant of planning permission in 2007 (ref. 06/3918/FUL) for the demolition of the existing house and erection of a replacement building to provide 6 flats. Whilst this permission has since expired, it does however provide a precedent for the redevelopment of the site.
- 1.5 This report has been prepared following an examination of the site and surroundings, research into the planning history of the property, and an examination of relevant policy documents.

2. Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site comprises a two storey residential house which has been vacant for some time and has fallen into a state of disrepair. As can be seen from the photos below, the surrounding gardens have been left unattended for some time causing difficulties in terms of access and resulting in an unattractive frontage onto Church Grove.





Appearance from grounds of Heron House

- 2.2 The property is situated within the Hampton Wick Conservation Area. It is also located opposite to Bushy Park, which is a Grade I listed park, and adjacent to a pre-school which is a Building of Townscape Merit (BTM).
- 2.3 The property's other neighbour to the north-east is a contemporary 5-storey block of flats named Heron House. To the north are a variety of detached and semi-detached residential dwellings. The general character of the area is therefore very varied.
- 2.4 The below extract from Richmond's Proposals Map shows that the property is within an 'Area at Risk of Flooding' and an 'Archaeological Priority Area'. We note, however that the site is within Flood Zone 1 according to the Environment Agency.

Application site



Above: Proposals Map Extract

3. Planning History

- 3.1. Of most relevance to this application is planning permission ref. 06/3918/FUL (and 06/3919/CAC), which granted consent for:

“Demolition of existing house and erection of a three/four storey building containing 3 x 1 bed flats and 5 x 2 bed flats with associated car space, cycle, bin stores and recycling stores and revision to front wall.”

- 3.2. This permission has since expired and was not implemented, however provides a useful precedent as to a starting point in what can be achieved at the site. The below plan shows the approved scheme within the context of its neighbouring buildings.

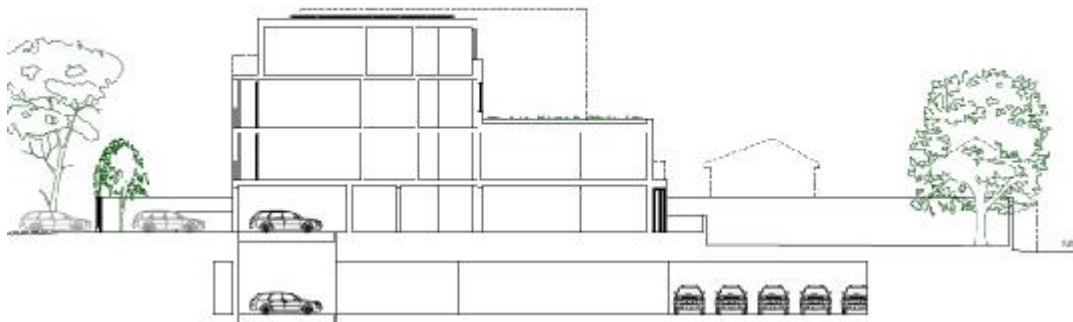


4. Proposals

- 4.1. It is proposed to demolish the existing and replace with a part two storey, part four storey block of flats, plus a basement floor to accommodate parking spaces for the proposed residential units.
- 4.2. The application proposals will result in the following break-down in units:

Floor	Unit	Beds	GIA (sq. m)
G	Unit 1	2	84.1
G	Unit 2	2	70.9
1	Unit 3	1	55.2
1	Unit 4	1	50.1
1	Unit 5	2	72.4
2	Unit 6	1	54.0
2	Unit 7	1	50.0
3	Unit 8	1	46.5
3	Unit 9	1	49.0

- 4.3. The following plan shows the proposed section of the building, stepping down to the rear and maintaining a very good sized garden area. This leaves a significant amount of space between the proposals and the residential buildings on Saddlers Mews.



5. Planning Considerations

- 5.1. This section outlines the relevant national and local planning policy against which the proposals are considered.

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012) sets out the Government's planning policies for England and replaced the majority of the existing Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) and Planning Policy Guidance (PPGs).
- 5.3. At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 14). It states, at paragraph 17, that planning should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, businesses and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs.
- 5.4. The NPPF states that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. To deliver a wide choice of high quality homes, widen opportunities for home ownership and create sustainable, inclusive mixed use communities, local planning authorities should plan for a mix of housing based on current and future demographic trends, market trends and the needs of different groups in the community

Local and Regional Policy

- 5.5. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that any planning application must be determined in accordance with the development plan for the area unless any material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.6. In this case the development plan comprises;
- Richmond Core Strategy (2009)
 - Development Management Plan (2011)
 - The London Plan (adopted 22 July 2011, as amended).
- 5.7. We note that the Council have recently finished final consultation on their Local Plan Review and intend to submit to the Secretary of State for independent Examination in Public in Autumn/Winter 2017. As such, it is assumed at this stage that minimal weight is given to this document.
- 5.8. This section now sets out the key considerations of the proposed development in relation to the above planning policy and guidance under the following headings:

- i. Proposed demolition of existing building*
- ii. Design of replacement building*
- iii. Impact on heritage assets*

- iv. Principle of Residential use*
- v. Residential Amenity*
- vi. Parking*
- vii. Sustainability*
- viii. Ecology*
- ix. Trees*
- x. Archaeology*
- xi. Affordable Housing*

Proposed demolition of existing building

- 5.9. We note that the proposals are next to a Building of Townscape Merit (BTM), and lie within the Hampton Wick Conservation Area. Policy DM HD1 states that buildings which make a positive contribution to the conservation area should be retained, and that new development should conserve and enhance the conservation area.
- 5.10. It is considered that a key benefit of the proposals is the replacement of the existing building, which has become derelict and detracts from the conservation area and the setting of the BTM. As shown in the photo below, the view of the property from public views within the wider conservation area is limited to an unattractive boundary wall and overgrown landscaping.



View from main entrance



View from Church Grove

5.11. The proposals vastly improve the contribution that this site makes to the conservation area, through the removal of a building which clearly detracts from the conservation area, and its replacement with a high quality and well design development.

5.12. We note Policy DM HO1 which allows for redevelopment of existing housing in the following scenarios:

1. It has been demonstrated that the existing housing is incapable of improvement or conversion to a satisfactory standard

As noted above, the building is in a very poor state of repair, as evident when visiting the property. It is considered that in this instance, the redevelopment of the building would result in a significantly higher quality scheme than a conversion scheme could.

2. The proposal improves the long-term sustainability of the site

As noted later in this Report, the proposals incorporate a number of sustainable features (such as PV panels and a sedum roof) and achieve a carbon emission reduction in excess of 35% over 2013 TER.

3. The proposal does not have an adverse impact on local character

The proposals will in fact enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area, as discussed previously

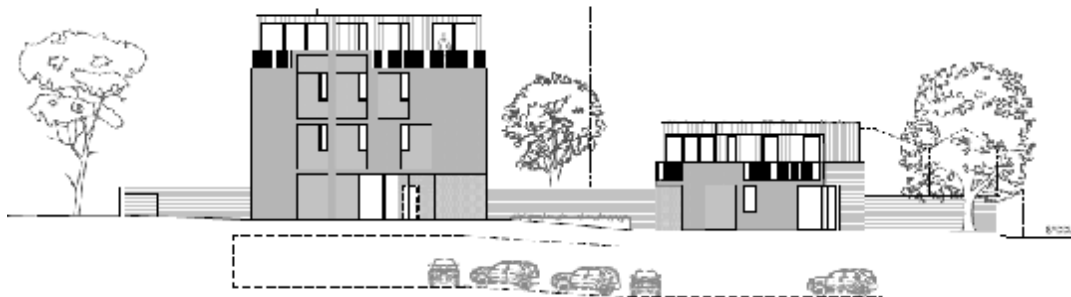
4. The proposal provides a reasonable standard of accommodation

The proposals meet the Council's floorspace requirements and are of a high quality design.

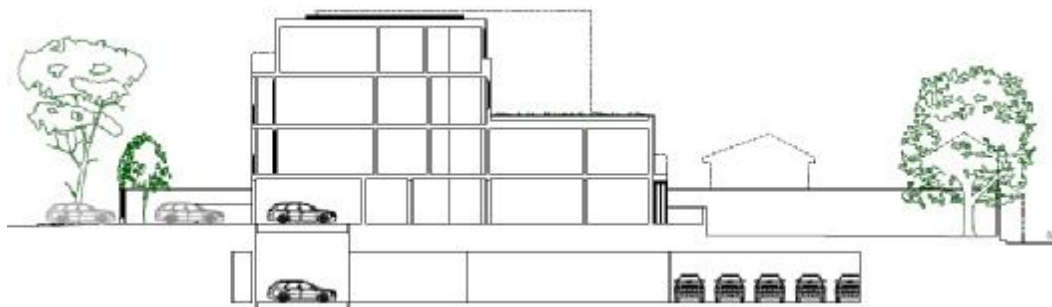
- 5.13. We note that the principle of the demolition of the existing building has been previously accepted by the Council through the grant of planning permission ref. 06/3918/FUL and accompanying conservation area consent 06/3919/CAC which allowed demolition of the building.

Design of replacement building

- 5.14. The design of the replacement building has been informed by Policy DM DC1, and also by pre-application discussions with the Council, and have evolved in response to this. Initially, two separate buildings were proposed, with the second being set further in within the rear garden area. However, officers raised concern about this approach within the context of Policy DM HO3 which seeks to resist the loss of back gardens. As such, the proposals were amended so that the massing was moved to the rear of the main building, whilst stepping down so as to reduce its impact on surrounding properties, as shown in the plans below.



Previously proposed section showing two buildings



Revised section showing removal of second building and additional massing at rear

- 5.15. As per the previously approved scheme (ref. 06/3918/FUL), a high quality contemporary design is proposed. Due to the varied nature of surrounding buildings, the Council have previously confirmed that they are content that the site can accommodate a contemporary design without undermining the character of the conservation area.

- 5.16. In terms of the appearance of the proposals from the wider conservation area, it is considered that the proposals represent an improvement from the approved scheme due to the fact that a front car parking area is no longer proposed. Instead, the front forecourt is to be pleasantly landscape, vastly improving the existing frontage. Further, as requested by officers during pre-application discussions, it is proposed to replace the unattractive boundary wall with black metal railings to allow visibility through, and the refuse and cycle parking is to be located along the side boundary so as to create a feeling of openness to the front forecourt.
- 5.17. Pre-application comments have also been adhered to in regards to the proposed fenestration. It was advised that the windows previously proposed were too asymmetrical, as such they have been revised as per the plans below in order to create a neater overall appearance.



Previously proposed front elevation



Revised front elevation

5.18. Policy DM DC1 requires that development is to scale with the existing surrounding development. The plan above shows that the height of the proposed building remains lower than the adjacent block of flats (Heron House). In any case, the top floor is set back so that in reality, the extent to which you would see the top floor from the street would be limited. This is an improvement on the previously approved scheme (ref. 06/3918/FUL), which did not feature a step-back at top floor and therefore appeared more dominant when viewed from the street and competed more with adjacent buildings, as illustrated in the plans below.



Previously approved scheme



Proposed scheme, with set back top floor thereby reducing the massing

Impact on Heritage Assets

- 5.19. As noted previously, the adjoining pre-school is a Building of Townscape Merit (BTM). Policy DM HD3 states that proposals should protect and enhance the setting of a BTM. It was noted in the Council's consideration of the approved scheme that at present, views of the BTM from the west are obscured by the siting of The Firs and the overgrown trees/shrubs. As such, the setting of the BTM is currently severely compromised by the derelict and un-kept nature of the property, and the proposals would by their nature improve the setting of the BTM and wider conservation area. It is considered that the proposals not only preserve, but enhance the setting heritage assets and therefore this is a significant wider benefit of the scheme.
- 5.20. In regards to Bushy Park, which lies opposite to the site (on the other side of the road) and is a listed park, we note that the properties are largely obscured from views within the park by trees and vegetation. Further, the proposed height of the development will be lower than Heron House and other buildings along the road. As such it is not considered that there would be any adverse impact on the park.

Principle of Residential use

- 5.21. Nine new residential flats are proposed, as set out in the table below.

Floor	Unit	Beds	GIA (sq. m)
G	Unit 1	2	84.1
G	Unit 2	2	70.9
1	Unit 3	1	55.2
1	Unit 4	1	50.1
1	Unit 5	2	72.4
2	Unit 6	1	54.0
2	Unit 7	1	50.0
3	Unit 8	1	46.5
3	Unit 9	1	49.0

- 5.22. In terms of unit mix, 6 one bed units and 3 two bed units are proposed. Officers confirmed through pre-application discussions that, due to the location of the site near to Kingston town centre and the high PTAL rating, this proposed mix is considered acceptable.

5.23. Regard has been had to Richmond's Residential Development Standards SPD, which sets minimum floorspace area of 45sqm for one bedroom units and 60sqm for two bedroom units. As shown in the table above, the proposed units meet these standards.

Basement

5.24. Whilst there is no currently adopted policy in relation to basement proposals, regard has been had to the Council's Planning Advice Note 'Good Practice Guide on Basement Development'.

5.25. In particular, the physical appearance of the basement has been given due consideration. Due to the fact that it solely serves the purpose of parking for cars, no lightwells are required and as such there will not be any physical manifestations of the basement. It will therefore not impact upon the surrounding conservation area of the setting of the adjacent BTM.

5.26. As part of this application, the following documentation is submitted to demonstrate acceptability of the basement:

- Archaeological Statement by CGMS, confirming that the site is considered likely to have a low archaeological potential for all past periods
- Flood Risk Assessment by RSK – the property is in Flood Zone 1, and the report concludes that development should not be precluded on flood risk grounds
- Tree Report by Barrell Tree Consultancy – the results of this report are outlined later in this report

5.27. We would also highlight that no habitable rooms are proposed within the basement level.

5.28. We note that the forthcoming Local Plan includes proposed Policy LP11 relating to basement development. This policy is not yet adopted, however the proposals accord with the broad requirements of the policy in that the basement does not encompass more than 50% of the garden and is only one storey in depth, one metre of topsoil is provided, and evidence has been submitted that the proposals will not impact on structural stability of surrounding buildings (through the submission of a Construction Method Statement).

Residential Amenity

5.29. Policy DM DC5 relates to neighbourliness, sunlighting and daylighting. In regards to sunlight and daylight, the supporting text to the policy states that whilst there may be some impact from new development, the test is one of reasonableness, and the impact on habitable rooms.

- 5.30. As such, a sunlight/daylight report is submitted as part of this planning application, which confirms that the proposed development would not have a perceptible impact on any of the surrounding existing habitable windows. In terms of the development itself, all of the proposed habitable rooms exceed skylight levels. In terms of sunlight, three living room windows fall marginally short of the recommended requirement, however they do so because of the presence of balconies, which are provided due to the requirement to provide private amenity space. It is considered that three marginal shortfalls is acceptable given the overall benefits of the scheme and the flexible wording of Policy DM DC5.
- 5.31. Further, we note that the previously approved scheme, which had a very similar massing to the current proposals, was considered acceptable in sunlight/daylight and residential amenity terms.
- 5.32. In terms of overlooking and impact on sense of enclosure, we firstly note that the neighbour to the north-west of the property (Heron House) do not benefit from any windows on their flank elevation, as shown in the photo below. As such, there is no potential for impacts on privacy or sense of enclosure to this residential block.



- 5.33. To the other side of the property is a pre-school and the buildings on Saddlers Mews are a substantial distance from the proposed building. As such, as per the previously approved scheme it is not considered that the proposal would have a harmful impact to the visual amenities of the locality.
- 5.34. Following pre-application advice, where possible side elevation windows are obscure glazed, so as to reduce further the potential for impact on privacy and overlooking.

Parking

- 5.35. Appendix 4 of the Council's Development Management Plan sets out requirements for car and cycle parking. One parking space is required per 1/2 bed residential unit, as such the proposed basement accommodates spaces for 9 cars in order to meet this requirement. Additionally, one cycle space is required per unit. These are to be provided within a covered bike store along the side boundary as shown on the plans.
- 5.36. Our client is aware that the new residential units will be required to be 'permit free' and is willing to enter into a s106 agreement to this effect.

Sustainability

- 5.37. As part of this application, an Energy and Sustainability Report is submitted, prepared by Mecserve. The Report demonstrates that the proposed development will achieve a carbon emission reduction in excess of 35% over 2013 TER, as required by the Council for schemes of less than 10 units. Additionally, the Council's Sustainable Construction Checklist has been completed showing that a B rating can be achieved (i.e. helps to significantly improve the Borough's stock of sustainable developments).

Ecology

- 5.38. In accordance with officer pre-application advice, a number of ecological enhancements have been proposed, following a site investigation by CSA Environmental. Specifically, integrated bat boxes, bird boxes, appropriate plant species and log piles will all be included as part of the development. Our client is happy for further details of these enhancements to be required by condition.

Trees

- 5.39. As part of the proposals, a number of trees must be removed, as shown on the submitted Tree Plan prepared by Barrell Tree Consultancy (BTC). In their report, BTC have categorised each of the trees within and adjacent to the site. There are two Category A trees, one of which (T20) is to be retained, and one (T11, a Yew tree to the front of the property) is to be felled.

- 5.40. The tree is considered to be a marginal Category A tree, and BTC note that any impacts of the tree's removal would be offset by the maturing of the proposed landscaping to the front, and the wider benefits that the scheme brings about. We also note that this tree was proposed to be removed as part of the approved scheme (ref. 06/3918/FUL), with the officer commenting that it (along with the other trees proposed to be removed) makes limited contributions towards the appearance of the conservation area due to their domestic scale. As such, it is considered that the same considerations applies in this instance and therefore the removal of the Category A tree is considered acceptable in the context of the proposals and the previous permission.
- 5.41. A number of Category C and some Category B trees are also proposed for removal. These are of general poor quality and of a small size, and therefore have limited value within the wider conservation area. As such it is considered that their removal is acceptable.
- 5.42. Our client is happy to accept a condition requiring details of replacement trees and planting within a landscaping plan.

Archaeology

- 5.43. The property lies within an Archaeological Priority Area. As such, an Archaeological Desk Based Assessment has been prepared by CGMS and is submitted with this planning application. This confirms that the site has a low archaeological potential for all past periods. We note that the previous permission was not subject to any conditions in this regard.

Affordable Housing

- 5.44. Policy DM HO6 relates to affordable housing and, on sites of less than 10 units, a financial contributions to the Affordable Housing Fund commensurate to the scale of development. However, Core Strategy Section 7.2 sets out the financial contributions will be subject to a number of factors, including economic viability and any planning benefits which the scheme brings about.
- 5.45. As such, a Viability Assessment has been undertaken by Savills and is submitted with this application. It concludes that the scheme cannot viably make a payment towards affordable housing, as even without an affordable housing contribution, the scheme is in deficit against the benchmark site value.
- 5.46. Further, the scheme proposes a number of planning benefits which, in accordance with Core Strategy Section 7.2, should be taken into consideration when considering the requirement for financial contributions. The following sets out the planning benefits of the proposed scheme:

- The addition of nine new residential units (a net increase of 8), which is a priority land use within the Borough
- Bringing back into active use a building which is vacant and has fallen into a state of disrepair
- Erection of a replacement building which enhances the appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the adjacent BTM
- Improvements to the boundary treatment and landscaping generally
- Inclusion of sustainable measures such as photovoltaic panels

6. Conclusion

- 6.1. The proposals are for the demolition of the existing derelict and run-down residential unit, and replacement with nine high quality self-contained units, which will contribute towards meeting the housing needs of the Borough.
- 6.2. The proposals follow the grant of planning permission for a replacement building in 2006, which although expired, sets a precedent for the redevelopment of the site.
- 6.3. The design of the replacement building has taken into account pre-application advice and has been revised accordingly.
- 6.4. The application proposes a single storey basement which is fully compliant with forthcoming planning policy.
- 6.5. The existing property is vacant and in a run-down condition. The proposals will significantly improve the appearance of the building and its contribution to the wider Conservation Area.