

nca-architecture

7 Court Farm Barns, Medcroft Road, Tackley OX5 3AL
Tel : 01869 226610

Design & Access Statement in support of
Proposed Construction of 2 Semi-Detached
Properties at 20a Osler Road
Oxford
OX3 9BJ

January 2021

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This design and access statement accompanies a Full Planning Application to construct 2 no. semi detached 2 bedroom properties on the site formerly occupied by 20a Osler Road.
- 1.2 This statement will demonstrate the development of the submitted proposal, detailing our response to the specific design challenges presented by the site and the applicants brief, as well as salient planning policies and the sites immediate context.

2.0 Site Description & Planning History

- 2.1 Osler Road is located in the Oxford suburb of Headington, which is due east of the City Centre. It runs north – south, forming a junction at its southern extents with the arterial London Road, which is populated with a wide range of amenities, shops and services. Public transport links on London Road serve Oxford City, London City and major Airports, as well as regional settlements beyond the City limits, including Aylesbury and Bicester.
- 2.2 Osler Road is populated by a broad range of building sizes and design, most of which are in use as residential dwellings. The iterative development along the length of the Road has resulted in a diverse vernacular, with a variety of materials and styles and shape. Properties are generally detached or semi-detached, and are set back from the road behind pleasant front gardens which are landscaped or used for off road vehicular parking. Along the Western side of the Road, Headington Bowls Club creates a welcome break in the streetscene, with views of the Manor Hospital beyond.
- 2.3 Development from the centre and southern extents of Osler Road is more dense, with some smaller detached properties located to the rear of properties addressing the road. This are predominantly on the Eastern side of the road, and include the application site. North of the application site lies the John Radcliffe Hospital, and Manor Farm Surgery, which forms the boundary of the Headington Conservation Area.
- 2.4 The application site is located broadly centrally along the road, on its Eastern side, and is set back from the main highway behind 20 Osler Road. Historically, the site was originally included in the curtilage of 20 Osler Road, however an application to construct an annexe building was approved in 1977 (77/00691/AA-H). This building was subject to a condition that meant it should remain ancillary to the main dwelling at 20 Osler Road, however the ownership tie was successfully removed in 2018 following the approval of approval of application ref: 18/01611/VAR. Access to the site is provided via a footpath between the existing 20 Osler Road and 18 Osler Road, along the Southern extents of the site. At the head of the access path, the site opens up to the full site width, and is generously proportioned with a width of 14m and a depth of 24m taken along the centre-line.
- 2.5 The former bungalow was located fairly centrally on plot, with private amenity provided to the front and rear of the dwelling. By virtue of the limited access, the property was not afforded with an off-street parking space, and was excluded from eligibility for residents parking permits which are required to park on Osler Road by virtue of the active CPZ.

- 2.6 Further consent was granted in 2019 for a replacement building in place of the bungalow – Ref: 19/01727/FUL. The approved 2 bedroom building is single storey and was sited in a similar position within the site, albeit set slightly further forward and presenting with greater width. This repositioning affords the approved house with a larger private amenity space to its rear. Again, this replacement dwelling was proposed, and approved, as being car-free.
- 2.7 Two further application in 2020 were submitted to develop the application site, to provide 2 no. 2 bed houses. These have both been refused (20/02090/FUL) or recommended for refusal (20/02969/FUL) by virtue of the scale of development, proximity to side boundaries and impact upon the private amenity of properties on Stephen Road, whose rear gardens share a common boundary with the rear of the application site.
- 2.8 It is also important to mention that the existing 20 Osler Road has also been subject to recent planning history, and will be replaced by a new building consisting of 5 no. flats (20/00184/FUL). This application has been enacted, with the former 20 Osler Road demolished towards the end of 2020 – the former 20a Osler Road was demolished at the same time. As a consequence the approved buildings under applications for 20 Osler Road (20/00184/FUL) and 20a Osler Road (19/01727/FUL) will be considered as context to the development proposed in this application.
- 2.9 Curiously, the numbering of properties adjacent to the application site does not follow convention, with nos. 18 & 12 Osler Road, set behind properties which present to the road (nos. 14, 14a & 16 Osler Road), while no. 17 Stephen Road joins this cluster of dwellings behind the principle street frontages.

3.0 The Proposal

- 3.1 This application concerns the construction of a pair of semi detached houses on the existing plot for 20a Osler Road. Access provisions to the plot are retained between the replacement 20 Osler Road and neighbouring no.16 Osler Road. Both properties have 2 bedrooms, commensurate provisions for private amenity, bicycle and refuse storage, and are proposed as being car free.
- 3.2 This application serves to make more efficient use of a brownfield site, providing two new family starter-homes in a very sustainable location.

4.0 Design, Massing and Siting

- 4.1 It is important to define the context of this proposal, which is layered by virtue of its backland setting. It has immediate relationships with adjacent properties and garden spaces, and distanced relationships with those further away, and with the streetscene, whereby only glimpsed views of the proposal can be enjoyed.
- 4.2 The application site shares settings with nos. 18 & 12 Osler Road, and no. 17 Stephen Road, which are similarly set back from the street and behind larger, more prominent buildings. There is a clear distinction in scale, with the cluster of aforementioned properties being more simplistic, and more demure than their larger counterparts. The palette of materials and detailing draws additional contrast, and are combined with lower – profiled and modest scaled architecture.

- 4.3 These principles have been adopted in the development of the proposed pair of semi-detached properties, which are conceived as one and a half storey dwelling houses. By definition, the upper storey accommodation is set within the roof space, with low level eaves and ridge assisting to reduce mass, and scale of the development.
- 4.4 There is a clear ribbon of development established by the adjoining 18 Osler Road and 17 Stephen Road, and the former 20a Osler Road, which combine to create a band of development which is echoed by the much larger 40 Osler Road to the North. It is important to respect this corridor in the siting of the proposed houses – there is an established relationship here with the larger properties on Osler Road, whose large gardens have been historically reduced to provide additional accommodation within the City. The proposed pair of semi's are located on this axis, and share a footprint with the replacement bungalow approved in 2019 – the ground covering footprints are almost identical, with a 3sqm difference between the two.
- 4.5 There are additional considerations in the siting of the proposal, namely the balancing of adjacency to the replacement flatted scheme on the Osler Road frontage, and the provision of adequate private amenity space between the rear of the proposed semi-detached houses and their rear boundary. The relationship with the replacement 20 Osler Road is identical to that accepted in the flatted scheme application – this was based on the siting of the replacement bungalow, which is shared by this proposal. OCC Policy H16 describes minimum space standards for private amenity / gardens for new developments. For houses, this is defined as being no less than the buildings footprint, and should be appropriately proportioned. The private gardens for the pair of semi-detached houses are in excess of the host dwelling footprints (measured down the centre of the party wall), and are spacious and well proportioned for the size of dwelling, and the likely occupancy.
- 4.6 In addition to the relationship with the Eastern and Western plot boundaries, it is important to provide adequate separation from the Northern and Southern boundaries which flank the side elevations of the proposal. We note that this was directly referenced in the planning officers report for the refusal of the first 2020 application to develop the site (20/02090/FUL) and have incorporated side access for both dwellings to create a development buffer between the side boundaries. This serves to improve the quality of life for future occupants, who can access their rear gardens directly which is essential for practical maintaining of their primary amenity. The side buffer zones are also wide enough to provide planting between the building and side boundaries. This alleviates any sense of being over-cramped, enabling clear and generous separation from the side boundaries. Soft landscaping will additionally soften the setting of the buildings and could be encouraged to climb boundary treatments to offer greater softening between the application site and its neighbours.
- 4.7 The siting of the proposed buildings creates an additional buffer zone between the houses and the communal garden for the flatted scheme in place of 20 Osler Road. This is important for several reasons, as it provides a quality of outlook from rooms set towards the front of the semi-detached houses, and prevents a direct over-looking of the communal garden for the flats. This space has been subdivided with each proposed dwelling house benefitting from additional amenity and bespoke storage facilities for refuse and bicycles.
- 4.8 The design of the houses has been largely defined by its context. The site proportion and setting require a low profiled building that sits comfortably within the plot, and with a degree of separation on all sides. Adopting a chalet style silhouette, with low eaves instantly reduces the scale and visual mass of the building, which is further enhanced through the change in materials at first floor level. Modest window and door openings puncture the envelope, and are simplistically

detailed to create an uncomplicated composition which sits harmoniously within its setting. The rear windows at first floor are set more deeply in their reveals, to enable the inlaying of timber louvres set at an angle. These provide an outlook of the private gardens afforded to the proposed properties, but screens views towards the rear gardens of Stephen Road properties. These slats are not full height, and are complemented by velux windows to provide additional daylighting for the rear bedrooms.

4.9 The selection of materials is conceived to promote clear distinction from the larger and more prominent properties which present to the road frontage. The cluster of dwellings set behind these are generally more subservient in their design and palette, enhancing visual interest and introducing diversity, where glimpsed views can be enjoyed. These principles have been employed during the design process and have contributed to the success of the proposed building design.

4.10 Internal living spaces have been designed to be spacious and benefit from natural daylighting and ventilation. Gross floor areas for both houses exceed minimum standards described in the National Space Standards TAN and are planned to meet contemporary living requirements.

5.0 18 Osler Road

5.1 Due South of the application site lies 18 Osler Road, currently host to a pair of semi-detached properties, but formerly a single bungalow building. Consent was granted following an appeal against a refusal of application ref:18/00850/FUL.

5.2 This application concerned the demolition of an existing bungalow building, and replacement with 2 no, 2 bedroom houses. Concerns were raised during the application by OCC with respect to the scale, form, height, positioning and design of the proposal, height and proximity of the development to the principle elevation of the neighbouring 17 Stephen Road, and that the access provisions were not practicable to serve two dwellings. The planning inspectorate resorted to uphold the appeal and grant permission. The similarities between this development and that proposed for 20a Osler Road are clear, and it is important to consider the inspectorates findings as part of the determination of this application Relevant excerpts from their decision are set out below in *italics*.

5.3 Character and appearance –

The proposal is to replace an existing bungalow that occupies unkempt land behind 16 Osler Road with a new single building containing 2 dwellings. The new addition would be noticeably larger and taller in built form than its existing single storey counterpart with a footprint that would cover a greater portion of the site. Although close to the rear gardens of some properties that back onto the site, the appeal scheme would still retain reasonable separation to the buildings beyond, which include 17 Stephen Road and 20a Osler Road.

With the first floor accommodation set into the roof space and a relatively low eaves level, the proposed building would keep a reasonably low profile within the site. With adequate space around the new building on all sides, it would stand confidently within its plot. For these reasons, I am unable to share the concern of the Council and others that the proposal would constitute overdevelopment of the site even taking into account other recent housing schemes nearby.

Rather than appearing unduly cramped and obtrusive, the proposal would nestle comfortably into the site and respect the more spacious rear gardens beyond its boundaries.

The new dwelling would differ in type, scale and height compared with most buildings in the local area, which vary in size, design, age and type. It would not look out of place in that varied context, in which Artisan style properties are not an obvious defining or predominant feature. Because of its coherent design, low profile and sympathetic layout, the new dwellings would respect rather than compete for attention nearby buildings that are for the most part larger and far more visually dominant than the proposal.

The use of natural timber and timber boarding with grey slates would set the new building apart with those that are close to the site. Even so, developments of contrasting materials and general appearance can often enhance visual interest and add diversity to an area. That would be the case here. As the proposal would be set back from the highway and behind existing properties there would be no discernable effect on the character and appearance of the local street scene.

It is an appropriate and positive response to the particular characteristics of the site.

- 5.4 The proposed submitted for 20a Osler Road shares similar design principles as those adopted for the adjacent development. Indeed the side profile and silhouette is almost identical, with comparable eaves and ridge heights. Site coverage is also comparable, with the approved development at no.18 occupying 30.0% of the site (excluding access), whilst the proposed development at 20a occupying 27.8% of the site (excluding access). By virtue of these similarities, and comfortable siting of the proposal in its plot, the conclusion reached by the Planning Inspectorate should be applied to this application. The scale of development is therefore suitable for the size of plot.
- 5.5 The relationship with the Eastern boundary, shared with the rear gardens of houses on Stephen Road is improved in the submitted, which provides greater separation and adjacency distances in excess of 25m. The rear of the development at 18 Osler is much closer to the boundary, and as a consequence a private rear garden is not afforded to either property. The dual provision proposed at 20a improves on this further.

6.0 Sustainable Design Strategy

- 6.1 The following are key sustainability objectives for this project
- 6.1.1 Making efficient use of a previously developed site within a highly sustainable location.
 - 6.1.2 Where possible, materials that have low VOC emissions will be specified.
 - 6.1.3 The specification of energy saving devices, appliances and fittings throughout the proposed dwellings.
 - 6.1.4 Incorporation of renewable sources of energy generation such as solar or PV panels.
- 6.2 The proposal has been designed to conform to and, where possible, exceed current thermal standards set out in Part L1A of the Building Regulations.

7.0 Access and Parking

- 7.1 Pedestrian access is provided via the retained side access footpath from Osler Road. Soft landscaping and a change in surface finish will delineate the transition from shared surfaces to private ones, and will be detailed to alleviate surface water runoff from areas of hardstanding.
- 7.2 The proposed houses are car free, by virtue of the site being located within an CPZ and access to a wide variety of amenities and services on London Road.
- 7.3 Appropriate provisions for secure and covered bicycle storage are provided for both houses, with shared bin muster point located within 25m of Osler Road kerbside.

8.0 Summary Statement

- 8.1 The submitted scheme presents a balanced approach to the development of the site through the provision of additional accommodation within an established and sustainable location. The proposal presents a carefully designed and considered scheme that will assist the Local Authorities commitment to delivering new homes. The proposal is conceived to improve the quality of existing stock within the City, and provides an opportunity to make the best use of underdeveloped land - a core principle of the NPPF.
- 8.2 The proposal represents a carefully considered and appropriate development of brownfield land. The enclosed responds to the overall character of the area, drawing on the established height, mass, materiality and scale of neighbouring properties. Soft landscaping is retained and integrated into the proposal so as to clearly define, and improve natural surveillance of shared areas.
- 8.3 The scheme will provide good quality internal accommodation for the future occupants. The design has been carefully developed to complement the neighbouring buildings, and wider context, both in scale and through use of appropriate and similar materials. The low roof profile rear mitigates potential for overbearing of the neighbouring buildings, whilst maintaining high quality internal spaces.
- 8.4 This proposal presents a carefully designed and considered scheme that will assist the Local Authorities in their commitment to deliver new homes within the City. It conforms with salient policies as set out in the Local Plan and NPPF for a residential scale development and is considered to be an appropriate and efficient use of under-developed land. If sites such as this are not considered appropriate for development, the demand to meet housing needs will impart pressure on designated Greenbelt land.
- 8.5 As such, it is intended that the scheme submitted can be fully supported and the permission applied for granted.

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