

Heritage Statement:

The Heritage Asset (Oxhey Hall Conservation Area):

The subject property is located within the Oxhey Hall Architectural Conservation Area. It is not a Listed or a Locally Listed building. There are no trees within the subject property's boundaries that are protected by a tree preservation order. The Conservation Area is not located within an AONB.

The subject property is located in an historically significant 'metroland' development dating from c.1935-37. The development - Oxhey Hall - is located to the south of Watford, off the A4125. The development is on a hill, with a significant increase in gradient from the A4125 along the north boundary of the development, towards the 'back' of the development to the south, where it borders Oxhey Hall Playing Fields (formerly Oxhey Hall Golf Club).

The subject property was built c.1935 as part of the speculative residential and new town development precipitated by the extension of the metropolitan rail network. Oxhey Hall is typical of this "Metroland" style of development, and is characterised by attractive architectural details, widespread use of traditional materials including brick, roof tiles, timber and coloured / painted render, as well as outstanding topography, trees and wildlife.

The character of this area is determined by the mix of typologies (predominantly two-storey detached and semi-detached, with an occasional chalet-style bungalow). This mix of typologies results in an irregular spacing of houses; some with side accessways, and some without. Most of the properties which originally benefitted from side accessways have been extended so that the footprint of the ground floor occupies some or all of the side passageway (for use as a garage, and/or for habitable space). Almost all properties enjoy generously-sized back gardens.

The scale and proportions of the buildings are mainly regular and were designed to look larger than they actually are to give an increased impression of prosperity. Features which contribute to this include; the projecting 'bay' to the front of the property, with a recessed entrance porch; a two-tiered roof (with a lower ridge height in the roof above the front bay), and particularly deep eaves; the use of wide, horizontal windows to the front. (Several properties features exposed timberwork to the front elevation of the upper floor, however this is not a feature of the subject property.)

These features, together with the original roof form and roof slates and the mono-chrome palette of the exterior walls, as well as the hedges and shrubbery to the front and rear of the property are all in keeping with the original design ethos and are to be retained in the proposed works to the subject property.

In our appraisal of the subject property and its 'Metroland' context, the design team has been mindful of the 'good' and 'bad' interventions which have occurred in the ACA over time. The integrity of the context has been paramount in preparing our design proposal. We have considered the current 'status quo' of the ACA, assessing both the original character of the properties, and the character, scale and form, and materiality of the extensions which have occurred over time, in the ACA.

The overriding scale, form, materials and elevational characteristics of the proposed design is - we feel - respectful of, and very much in keeping with, the present-day Oxhey Hall ACA, and the design guidance outlined by Three Rivers LPA for domestic extensions in an ACA.

The property:

The subject property is a detached three-bedroom two-storey dwelling, located at the crest of the hill, within 350 metres of the A4125. The property is accessed via an inclined front driveway and benefits from a 50 meter rear garden which faces south-west.

The property is dated, with little or no maintenance or modernisation occurring for at least two decades. There are numerous dilapidations, water ingress, animal / bird ingress, failing and collapsed roofs (rear 'lean-to' sun room), condensation mould and poor ventilation and thermal performance, generally. The existing internal layout is cramped, dark, and closed off from the rear garden, and is not suitable for C21st inhabitation by a young family.

The majority of homes in the enclave have been enlarged over time, either by way of loft conversion, or rear/side extension. Several have also extended to the front at first floor, above the original entrance porch. The proposed front infill extension to the subject property directly matches several extensions which have been granted planning consent on Hillcroft Crescent.

The applicant wishes to enhance the property's appearance, generally, and in doing so, enhance its 'kerb appeal', increase the accommodation, and provide valuable storage at first floor adjacent to the master bedroom. To achieve this, it is proposed to match the many other examples of houses in the ACA which have also carried out a 'front infill' extension at first floor. Precedent for this particular intervention, to this house typology, on Hillcroft Crescent, and in this ACA, is plentiful. The form of the proposed roof is a hipped, pitched slated roof with deep eaves, to match like-for-like the features of the existing dwelling, and the surrounding properties. All proposed new materials will match existing.

The property benefits from off-street parking to the front, and an established private pedestrian connection to the Oxhey Hall playing field which is located to the rear of the property.

The impact of the proposed front infill extension to the neighbouring property (No.72) is deemed to be minimal. The proposed extension does not impact the daylight or direct sunlight to the neighbouring property, and no overshadowing occurs. The proposed front infill extension proposes no windows which can be viewed as impacting privacy, or causing overlooking to the neighbour.

When viewed from the street, the proposed front infill sits into the available space, in a manner that is setback and subservient to the host dwelling. Similarly, the proposed roof form - while mimicking the existing - has a ridge height which set down from, and is smaller in scale than the host dwelling.

For any further information regarding the Heritage considerations, for the proposed design, please request this additional info' directly from the agent for the application (the undersigned).

Kind regards

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