

# **DESIGN, ACCESS & HERITAGE STATEMENT**

Proposed Extension & Associated Internal Alterations  
Westbury, 46 Bell Lane, Widford, SG12 8SH

Prepared on behalf of Mr. J. Tattersall

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Rev A



**Alison Akester Architects**

1 RIDGEWAY, LITTLE HADHAM, WARE, SG11 2BT

Tel: 07914 676114

E: [alison@aakarchitects.co.uk](mailto:alison@aakarchitects.co.uk)

## 1.0 Introduction

Alison Akester Architects have been instructed by their client, Mr. Tattersall, to prepare a planning and listed building consent application for the demolition of the existing detached garage, removal of 2 no. sections of wall, formation of 1 no. new door opening and construction of a single storey side extension.

Westbury is grade II listed (English Heritage List No. 1176716) and is located within the Widford Conservation Area.

## 2.0 Relevant Planning Policy

GBR2, HOU11, HA1, HA4, HA7 and VILL2 East Herts District Plan

NPPF paragraph 194. *'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage asset affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.'*

Other guidance documents:

Widford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (Adopted October 2013)

## 3.0 Planning History

There have been numerous applications submitted for the property within the last 30 years ranging from the installation of fencing to the demolition of the existing garage and replacement with a two-storey extension.

The most recent submission was by the applicant for planning and listed building consent (ref 3/21/3144/HH and 3/21/3086/LBC respectively) to erect a single storey extension to the southwest of the property, replacing the existing outshut. In light of consultation with the heritage team, the applicant withdrew the application and has sought to find a proposal that will address the concerns raised by the conservation officer.

## 4.0 Description of the site

- Westbury is a detached property sitting on a triangular site with Ware Road to the north, Bell Lane to the South and a public footpath to the east. Off-street parking is provided directly in front of the property, accessed from Bell Lane (*figure II*). To the west is a garden, primarily laid to lawn and accessed via a path along the northern edge of the site or through the living room (*figure V*).
- To the east of the house, between it and the footpath sits a concrete prefabricated garage (*figure II*), accessed from Bell Lane. The garage is a contemporary additions with no historic significance. It is in a poor state of repair with numerous leaks causing damp and mould. It is detrimental to the setting of the listed building and the wider conservation area.
- The listing description is as follows:

*'House C17 or early C18. Timber framed, S and W walls cased in brick and all plastered, with steep old tile roof, half-hipped to S. Slate roofed single storey verandah across W side. A 2 storeys and attic house with 3 upper windows on W and large red brick central chimney. Narrow 2 storeys plastered service wing parallel on E side, set back with tiled canopy to battered door in the angle. 2-light Yorkshire sliding upper window with small panes on W with 2 2-light replacement casements with small panes. A picturesque plastered house on a prominent corner site. Part of a mixed architectural group.'*



Figure I. Southeast elevation facing on to Bell Lane



Figure II. Prefab garage to northeast of dwelling



Figure III. Footpath to northeast of site



Figure IV. Southwest elevation from Bell Lane



Figure V. Access to garden from northeast

- It is evident that the dwelling has been extended since its construction in the late C17/early C18. Originally rectangular in plan, probably with an entrance door to the northeast elevation, the property would have consisted of two primary rooms with the dividing wall accommodating the fireplaces to each. Given the proportions of the rooms it is likely that the reception room was to the front overlooking Bell Lane with the kitchen and ancillary accommodation to the rear.
- In the C19 a single storey extension was added to the southwest elevation, extending the reception room and creating a third room to the rear.
- Architectural detailing would suggest that the two-storey extension to the northeast elevation was constructed in the C20. This section of the dwelling accommodates the entrance hall, kitchen and shower room at ground floor level.
- The dwelling is accessed via the front door located on the southeast elevation within the C20 extension. This door leads into a small vestibule with mirrored cupboard doors directly in front of you. To the right is a small shower room and to the left a door opening with timber framed glazed double leafed doors taking you into the original hallway. To the rear of the shower room is the kitchen with a back door leading to the side alley between the dwelling and garage. Looking back through the planning history there have been different configurations of the ground floor within this C20 addition. All fixtures, fittings and fabric are contemporary and therefore have limited heritage significance.
- Stepping into the original dwelling there is a partition wall forming an entrance hall. This partition is not likely to be original but perhaps was installed in C19 when the outshut was constructed. Two doors lead into a living room to the south and the dining room to the north with a stair leading up to first floor level. The door into the living room is constructed of timber planks with bracing to the rear. The door into the dining room is also timber but is of panelled construction.



Figure VI. Entrance hall



Figure VII. Living room

- The living room, accessed from both the entrance hall and play room, has the most number of significant architectural and historical features of all the rooms at ground floor level. The timber frame is evident and the large brickwork inglenook dominates the space. There is clear evidence of where the southwestern flank wall was partially removed in order to connect to the C19 addition. This room is characterful and perhaps best demonstrates the history of the dwelling. In conclusion the room, in terms of layout and features, is of historical, architectural and archaeological significance.





Figure VIII. Playroom



Figure IX. Dining room



Figure X. Dining room

- Within the playroom there is a large 12 paned window with C19 detailing that overlooks the garden and a smaller window orientated towards Ware Road. This smaller window is modern with a top opening light. Whether this opening is a later addition or part of the original design is uncertain. As per the living room, the original wall of the property is clearly evident with returns both sides. Although there are less architectural features than the living room, the room holds historical significance, primarily demonstrating the historic evolution of the dwelling.
- An arched opening within the original internal wall leads to the dining room which is dominated by a second brickwork chimney breast. As one would expect, smaller than the chimney breast in the living room and now accommodating a contemporary log burner. There are no other discernible historic features within the space other than the timber sash window with architrave. However, the room still holds historical significance and contributes to the overall significance of the property.
- Another arched opening leads through the original external wall of the property, back into the C20 extension. From the dining room the floor level steps up into the kitchen. Within the kitchen there is a contemporary timber casement window with glazing bars and timber rear door. The walls are plastered and, as would be expected, no historical or architectural features.
- It can be surmised that the arched opening into the kitchen was formed in the C20 with the addition of the two-storey extension and that the matching opening leading from the dining room into the playroom was also formed at this point in time.

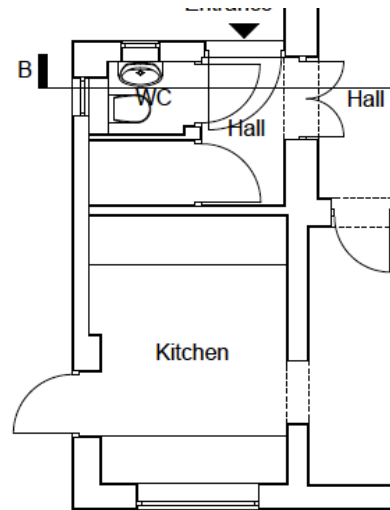


Figure XI. Kitchen viewed from back door

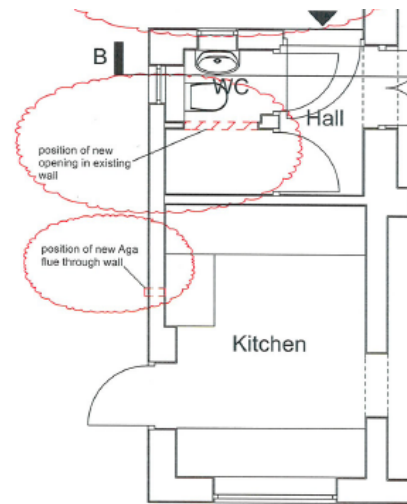


Figure XII. Kitchen viewed from dining room

- The Aga was raised within the conservation officer's notes during the consultation process of the previous application. The external flue is a modern addition being included on proposals for a listed building application in 2014. The aga is not shown in position on the existing plans but is apparent on the proposed (see below). The installation/re-positioning of the aga is not exclusively mentioned in any of the descriptions for the proposals but it may be assumed that the existing aga is either not original to the C20 extension or has been re-located at some point in the past. There is also an approved application from 1996 (3/96/0685/LB) which includes in its description 'To change ground floor bathroom into kitchen, remove utility wall, block in side window...'. Although it is unclear whether this work was carried out there is evidence of a window being blocked up on the flank wall which might suggest at least some of the work was carried out and that it is possible that the existing kitchen is not in its original C20 location.



GROUND FLOOR  
SCALE 1:50



GROUND FLOOR  
SCALE 1:50

Figure XIII. Excerpt from planning drawings (application no. 3/14/0545) showing alterations to aga`

## 5.0 Description of the proposals

- Below are a list of comments from the conservation officer relating to the previous scheme where the C19 outshut was to be replaced:
  - 'The C19 outshut should be retained.'
  - 'There is no objection to a modest extension being undertaken'
  - 'If any extension is undertaken with a pitched roof, then that roof should either match the pitch of the main roof, or should be finished in a covering that is suited to a low pitch.'
  - 'Any new work...needs to reflect the small paned windows encountered across the present historic structure.'
  - 'The removal of the brickwork nibs and partitions that demarcate the original side wall of the C17-18 wing is not acceptable and this masonry must remain in-situ so that various phases of construction are legible.'
- On assessment of the site, its historic significance and its context, and taking into consideration previous comments from the conservation officer it was agreed that any potential development should be in the location of the pre-fabricated garage to the northeast. As noted above the garage has no historical significance and is detrimental to the setting of the listed building and wider context.
- The proposal is for 22.5m<sup>2</sup> of additional floor space to improve the kitchen and add a small utility area.
- In order to be in keeping with the existing property the extension is of simple form, rectangular in plan with a pitched roof over, steep enough to accommodate clay plain tiles to match with the dwelling. Conservation grade rooflights within the east facing slope provide much needed morning light deep into the plan.
- Eaves have a slight overhang with open rafters to match the detailing on the existing property.
- The proposed windows are timber casement windows with proportions similar to those of the existing.
- The internal layout has been designed so as to harness as much daylight as possible and provide surveillance over the front drive. There are no properties immediately on the boundaries and the proposed site is bounded by 1.8m high fencing to both the north and east therefore the principle window is located on the southeast elevation. Rooflights within the northeast facing slope harness the morning sun to brighten the internal space.
- Consideration was given to the connectivity of the extension with the existing property. It is proposed to remove 2 no. sections of masonry wall, one being original fabric and the other C20 fabric. In order to retain the legibility of the dwelling and reduce the amount of fabric lost/disruption to the fabric, it is proposed to remove sections of wall, beginning from the existing doorways and retaining nibs on the opposite side.
- It is proposed to remove the existing aga and associated flue. The aga is currently located against the wall to be removed.
- When entering the existing property, the arrangement currently feels uncomfortable with a cupboard sitting directly in front of you. It is proposed to remove the mirrored cupboard (a modern addition) and form a new doorway into the kitchen. This alteration would improve the flow of the dwelling.
- It is proposed to close and lock the existing door from the hall into the dining room. All original features will remain so that the door can be re-instated at any time. To the hall side of the door it is proposed to construct a timber studwork cupboard for the storage of coats etc.

Again this can be removed and the works reversed at any point in the future without any detrimental impact on the fabric.

- With the installation of a new gate in the boundary, adjacent to the existing footpath, external rear access to the garden is retained. The gate will open inwards causing no obstruction to the existing footpath.

## **6.0 Impact of the proposals on the significance of the heritage asset**

- The existing garage is of limited heritage significance being constructed of pre-fabricated concrete. It provides no positive contribution to the listed building or the surrounding conservation area. Demolition of the garage and replacement with an extension that is sympathetic to the existing dwelling will have a positive impact on the overall setting of the listed building.
- The proposed extension is single storey and set back from the principle elevation therefore being subservient to the existing. The form repeats that of the existing and has matching materials to the existing both on the walls and the roof. Traditional detailing is continued throughout the extension and windows are proportional and appropriate to the historic nature of the existing. In summary the proposed design is sympathetic to the existing and would cause less than significant harm to the existing dwelling.
- Internally, the removal of the wall between the existing property and the proposed extension is less contentious being of relatively modern heritage. The removal of the wall between the kitchen and dining room is more so as it is original fabric. However, an opening has been previously made in it to connect the original to the C20 addition. We can also look at the opposite side of the building where sections of the original wall have been removed in order to connect to the C19 extension. Although the openings are significant, substantial amounts of wall remain providing a legible account of the buildings historic evolution. It is proposed to apply the same approach to the new openings, starting the openings from the doorways already formed in the walls and leaving nibs on the opposite side so that the line of the existing walls are obvious. These alterations would cause limited harm to the significance of the listed building.
- The key internal features of the historic property have been retained in-situ. The proposed alterations to the door between the hall and dining room can be reversed in the future if required resulting in a negligible impact on the significance of key historic architectural features.
- The opening proposed within the wall between the existing entrance hall and kitchen is of relatively contemporary heritage. As noted above, various applications have been sought and granted for the re-organisation of the ground floor space within this C20 extension. The formation of a door opening opposite the front door would improve the flow of the property and bring a positive change to the layout. This proposal would not harm any of the more significant fabric of the building and therefore this alterations is viewed as causing very limited harm to the significance of the listed building.

## **7.0 Impact of the proposals on the significance of the conservation area**

- The impact of the proposals on the conservation area relate to the demolition of the garage and its replacement with a single storey extension. As noted above, the garage is a single storey pre-fabricated concrete structure that is not in keeping with the listed building nor its surrounding area and currently has a negative impact on the conservation area. Its removal and replacement with a sympathetic extension, as detailed above, will only enhance the setting of the listed building and the wider conservation area.