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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

Statement to accompany Planning Application

**Proposed New House in the grounds of
104 Medstead Road, Beech**

Draft#6 20/09/2023



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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Design and Access Statement has been prepared to support an application for full planning permission for the following proposals

- Construction of a detached 3-bedroom house with attic accommodate on the frontage at 104 Medstead Road.
- Car parking spaces for 3 cars
- Demolition of the brick walling with brick piers and decorative metal railing infill panels along the front of the site to allow the garden to be extended to the ownership boundary. (The existing gate and brick piers etc will be retained).
- Planting of a new hedge along the south boundary.

1.2. Following two pre-application enquiries and the responses from the Principal Planning Officer, Mary Bird we have taken the following actions to adjust the proposals

- **Comments of 10th October 2022** (ref 31446/999)
- We carried out a detailed topographical survey to establish the exact configuration of the features of the site, its boundary lines and site levels and have drawn accurate site sections to show level differences across the site.
- We have reconsidered the boundary of the proposed site and altered in detail to reduce the impact of the access drive to no 104 which cuts across the site and so divides the proposed site into two
- We have reviewed the site layout to ensure there is clear definition between the curtilage of the new dwelling and the existing house.
- **Comments of 29th March 2023** (ref 31446/999)

- We have included reasons why we are of the view that the design and layout of the proposal demonstrates that it conserves the character of the area so that policy BCP06 is fully addressed.

2. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

2.1. Context: The site is within the curtilage of no. 104 Medstead Road adjacent to the road where the garden is flat before it slopes up steeply to the existing dwelling via a driveway which curves throughout the site to achieve the level change from road level to the house's forecourt, a climb of about 9M

2.2. The site is within the settlement policy boundary and is also within a designated Special Housing Area (Local Plan Policy H10) Bushy Leaze Wood and Ackender Wood are Natural England Ancient Woodlands and form a large mature woodland belt running alongside the southern side of Medstead Road.

2.3. The planning officer's report for the application at no 106 explains that *"A number of dwellings have been approved in recent years within the SHA. This includes no 108 (ref 32221/007), a dwelling on a plot of 0.203ha to the west of 116 (28390/006) and a dwelling allowed on the frontage to the west of 108 at appeal. The impact of the proposal upon the character of the area are therefore key to whether or not the scheme is acceptable in line with policy H9 (Neighbourhood Character). It is important therefore to consider what the specific character is of this site and its surroundings. Furthermore, the planning officer says: The plot (no 106) falls narrowly below the area of 0.2ha and is approximately 0.194ha and the policy suggests that highway be excluded but is not clear on what this should include. The plot size reduces to 0.16ha when excluding the driveway which also already serves no. 108. On the face of it the conflict with H10 might seem clear cut but the*

adjacent frontage plot allowed on appeal (see 28390/007) has a plot area of 2.1ha but that falls below 0.2ha when excluding its own share driveway arrangement.

2.4. The Appeal Inspector did not mention the aspect of the driveways. The three plots including 116 and consented units occupies 0.599ha (i.e. essentially 0.2ha each, but again all excluding driveway) whereas 108 & 106 .. would occupy 0.439ha (i.e. just under 0.22ha each). With the proposal at the margins of what the policy expects it still falls to whether there would be any conflict with its goals, not just in a technical sense, but as a result of perceptible impacts to the character and appearance of the environment if it were permitted and constructed.

2.5.

Policy H10 also has a controlling influence on the proposal. The purpose of the policy is to protect existing character, and the goals of the policy are to protect *“the character of relatively low-density housing set in well-wooded plots”*. The policy partly seeks to achieve this by restricting the density of housing to 5 dwellings per hectare. The total curtilage of No 104 is 0.44ha and if the policy were to relate to the two houses on the whole site that would result in each house having 0.22ha each and so would satisfy the policy

2.6. The other indicator is the actual area of the proposed plot. The land directly related to this plot has a total area of 0.130 ha. On this basis the plot does not quite comply with the 0.2ha requirement of H10 but the context of the site and not just its technical dimensions is significant when assessing the effect the proposal has on the character of its surroundings.

2.7. The site has a narrow and deep format with steeply rising ground behind maturely planted which masks the house on the higher ground at no 104 (see photo on front cover). When viewed from

street level the new house will be seen to be in a maturely planted garden with virtually no view of a house behind. The infill will be seen to be well spaced between its neighbours and backed by a hinterland of extensive verdant growth, which is the character of the area that is sought to be retained.

2.8. *Beech Neighbourhood Plan, Policy BPC06 states “Within the Special Housing Area (shown on Map 6) any subdivision of plots should not result in a plot area of less than 0.2 hectare unless it can be demonstrated that this would conserve the character of the area.”*

In this case the proposed plot size is restricted because of the orientation of the drive to 104, the existing landscaping and the location of the garages and the parking area in front of 104. We have considered and looked at in detail the curtilage of the proposed site:

The separation between the southern part of the site and the northern is not quite as severe as it may seem on plan. There is an existing garden path along the west boundary with steps up past the end of the cypress hedge to join onto the drive so allowing a walk around the garden of the new site. Where the steps join the drive the boundary can be taken to the west end of the more northern hedge along its centre line so that a clear definition between the new site and the grounds of no 104 is created. On a steeply sloping and mature site it is not unreasonable that a single site would have different aspects and containment areas within it. The area of this site is now 0.130 hectares. It is significant to note that the approved site layout at No 106 has a very similar configuration to the proposal and for comparison we have indicated its layout on the revised plans to be submitted with this application. We have calculated the site area at No 106 to be approximately 0.196 hectares the proposals for which were allowed after a successful appeal to the Planning Inspectorate.

The proposed site is also larger than the adjoining curtilage at No 100 (0.075 hectares) and No 98 (0.069 hectares) and similarly for curtilages of the other houses continuing down Medstead Road. So, although the proposed site may be smaller than the policy would require its curtilage size is typical of this along the frontage. Also, significantly, it is supported by the “verdant grounds of no 104 to the hinterland.

We have carefully positioned the house centrally on the site so that the distance between the proposed house and its site boundaries is generous on both sides. Compared to the neighbouring houses it has more generous green space around the house than the neighbouring properties have and probably has more than at No 122 as well. We have therefore worked to conserve the character of the area and avoid the example of the new house at No 106 where it is located close up against its east boundary thus visually crowding the street frontage

2.8.1. *Beech Neighbourhood Plan, Policy BPC07*

New plot boundaries are required to be enclosed and should be landscaped, preferably with hedges. As many as possible of the existing trees, hedges and landscape features that contribute to the amenity and character of the area should be retained. The proposals will carry out this policy.

2.9. The infill to the frontage is in character with the neighbouring properties which display a regular pattern of individual detached houses set back evenly each with front gardens along the road. At present the garden of No 104 forms a distinct wide and gap in the street scene. The over-formalised front boundary brick wall with brick piers and with decorative metal infill panels is out of character. The other houses have a very low-key rural treatment of hedging and fencing to their front boundary. By removing the wall and

railings and planting a hedge alongside the boundary, the infilling of this gap will complete the integrity of the road frontage and be a distinct improvement in the street scene thus demonstrating that the development adds to and conserves the character of the area.

2.10. The proposed dwelling has been kept as a modest and compact two-storey 3- bedroom house and has been placed centrally on this plot. As a result, it is similar in scale to the other houses along the road and with generous space on each side of the property. The distance to no 106 from the west side of the proposed house is 14.5M and to No 100 from the east side is 17.5 M

2.11. Floorspace to plot size ratio can also be an indicator of whether the house may be cramped on its site when related to its neighbours. The proposed house of 161 Sq M has a floor area to site ratio of 12.3% (No 106 is 10.5%, No 116 is 13.57% and no 100 is 16%). This ratio is therefore more in character with the older house east of the site

2.12. There are no trees affected by this proposal.

2.13. There are three car spaces provided for this house. There is no provision for a garage which reduces the impact of built form along the frontage. There is also 2 cycle spaces provided to the rear

2.14. The alignment of the existing access drive has been considered to see if there might be other options to avoid the intrusion into the plot. The topographical survey has provided the information to allow us to show ground profiles taken through the site from north to south. The sections are included on the site plans 115/A0.3a and show that the existing access drive has an average gradient of approximately 1:7 which is considerably steeper than the recommended pedestrian access gradient of max 1:12. Section AA (along the west boundary) shows that if the access drive were to take that route the gradient would be 1:4 and if the route directly

uphill from the present gates were to be chosen then that would be approximately 1:3. Both these gradients are too steep for residential access and both would cause huge disruption to the neighbouring houses.

2.15. The sections also illustrate that the backdrop to the site is mature landscaping giving the verdant character required by the policy. The existing house at no 104 is hardly visible and is, in itself, largely unaffected by the proposal.

2.16. There is an area set aside to the rear for Bin & Cycle storage and recyclables will be stored internally in the Utility Room

3. Design Approach

3.1. The proposed house has been designed to respect neighbouring houses in scale and detailing. The scale has been kept down by using dormers on the first floor similar to adjoining houses. There is really no over-riding character to the houses on the road. Immediately to the East, there are three traditional houses but differing in style although all with dormers. Beyond that there are wide variety of styles. Opposite nos 98 to 96 are two New England styles houses with wood cladding to the upper storey. No 53 is a Skandia Hus house with brick and wood cladding. To the West is No 106, which is unique, and most of the others higher up the road are traditional large brick houses. The proposed house is designed to try to fit in with these differing styles and give some sort of cohesion to the street scene.

3.2. From the ground survey the difference between the highest point where the car park meets the drive and an average level in the garden is 1.3M. It is proposed to raise the ground level below the house by 0.6M to avoid steep slopes into the car park area and yet keep site levels which equate to the area around the existing pond. The ground will be regraded to slope from the edge of the house

terrace to the front boundary at a slope of approximately 1 in 15 which when compared to the steeply sloping garden behind it will bring the character of the site back to a more natural ground form.

- 3.3.** The ridge height of the proposal is 7.6 m above floor level. If the datum is set at the higher ground level of 60.9 the ridge of the roof will be 2.61M lower than at no 106 and only 1.72 higher than at no 100. As a result, the proposed ridge height fits neatly in between the heights of adjoining roofs
- 3.4.** The preferred materials will be high-quality clay tiles on the roof and the walls finished with facing brick and light coloured vertical timber cladding all chosen to be appropriate to the area and conserve its character. The windows and doors will be energy efficient triple glazed aluminium framed and the front door assembly will be in oak.
- 3.5.** Low-level external lighting will be provided to parking bays off the shared driveway and hooded lights to the front door and rear terrace so that light spillage does not affect the adjoining countryside
- 3.6.** Unfortunately, the site is too shaded and the useable roof area too restricted to allow Photovoltaic Panels to work efficiently but an air source heat pump will be installed to minimize energy consumption.

3.7.

APPENDIX 1: Photos of existing



Medstead Road; East to No 100 (above and West to No 106 (below)



On the site looking East to No 100 (above and West to No 106 (below)



The backdrops to the site as view from the road (no 104 hardly)

visible)



Entrance gates to No 104 with the house at high level behind mature planting