



WILLIAM GREEN
ARCHITECTS

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

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A HOUSEHOLDER PLANNING APPLICATION & LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

for

A PROPOSED SINGLE-STOREY AND BASEMENT EXTENSION WITH INTERNAL ALTERATIONS REMODELLING TO THE EXISTING DWELLING AND EXTERNAL LANDSCAPING WORKS

at

CROSSWAYS, LITTLE HEATH LANE, POTTEN END, BERKHAMSTED, HP4 2RY

prepared on behalf of

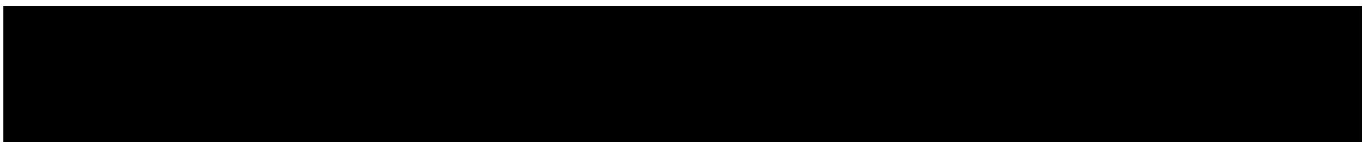


by

WILLIAM GREEN ARCHITECTS

Dated

11 January 2024



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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.0 This Design and Access Statement describes the proposal, the subject of a new Householder Planning Application & Listed Building Consent, for a single-storey side extension and internal remodelling at Crossways, Little Heath Lane, Potten End, Berkhamstead, HP4 2RY.
- 1.1 The Design and Access Statement has been written in accordance with the CABI publication 'Design and Access Statements - How to write, read and use them'.

2. ASSESSMENT

- 2.1 Crossways is a Grade II-listed country house set in extensive gardens on the east side of Little Heath Lane behind a dense band of trees and shrubs, effectively obscuring it from public view.
- 2.2 The house was built in a Queen Anne revival style in 1911 for Mr Spencer Holland.
- 2.3 It is two storeys with a steep, tiled, hipped roof and attic. The plan form is square with single-storey pavilions with pyramid roofs to either side of the principal west-facing elevation. It has a Serliana frame around the entrance door and sash windows with some shutters.
- 2.4 The south elevation has regularly spaced six over six sashes and a central portico with a balcony above and dormers in the roof and is the grandest of the elevations.
- 2.5 The east elevation is notable for its more straightforward form, with two bay windows on the ground floor and a more informal off-centre garden door.
- 2.6 The north elevation is the service elevation. There have been alterations since its inception, most notably removing the chimney stacks and adaptations in the service rooms on the northwest corner.
- 2.7 The site is not within the Potten End Conservation Area. The boundary of the Chilterns AONB runs along Little Heath Lane in front of the house but is not within it. The property is, however, within the London area Green Belt.

3. INVOLVEMENT

- 3.1 The applicant has shown great appreciation and respect for the existing property in their proposal to develop their home. They sought advice from various professionals, including architects, heritage consultants, surveyors, and landscape designers, to better understand the original property and the feasibility of possible renovations. The initial project overview states that, given the property's Grade II listing, they are mindful of the challenges in planning, development, and refurbishment. They aim to reinstate original features while renovating and redeveloping the existing house to create a practical and beautiful family home. They also aim to explore all possible ways to improve the building's energy efficiency.
- 3.2 The applicant selected William Green Architects from a shortlist of four architects who conducted initial feasibility studies. As Architects, we have extensive experience working with listed buildings, designing and delivering high-quality solutions that integrate with their host buildings.
- 3.3 Robin Williams & Associates Garden and Landscape Design Consultancy specialises in private gardens and landscapes. The client appointed Robin to provide an initial concept design for the proposed landscaping works, which helped provide a valuable starting point for developing the architectural design.
- 3.4 Hubbard Conservation is a specialist in historic building and environment consultancy. They provide a pragmatic approach to restoration, renovation, adaption, repairs, and development of the historic environment, as well as advice on finding viable, sensible, and sustainable uses for redundant buildings. As conservation specialists, they provide a comprehensive and personal service from the concept of the project to the end.
- 3.5 The applicant commissioned a topographical and complete house survey, which was issued to all consultants to provide a detailed and accurate representation of the site and property.
- 3.6 The local Planning Authority was consulted under a pre-application advice Ref:23/02387/PRLB. Before submission, William Green Architects, the applicant, and other consultants undertook extensive and careful consideration. The aim was to provide an open and detailed appraisal of the desired proposed works to enable the local authority to offer a well-considered and detailed response.
- 3.7 There was positive engagement from the local authority and Conservation Officer who attended the site and issued their detailed report on December 12th 2023.
- 3.8 The LPA Case Officer and Conservation Officer highlighted several key items within the pre-application report. This included; the reduction of the proposed extension in line with the existing outbuildings to lessen the scale and footprint, omitting the external detached carport and proposed bay extension to the southern pavilion, that the introduction of new dormers was unlikely, but alterations were possible subject to evidence of their originality. This application addresses the above items of note and looks to provide additional evidence and justification to support the core principle of the development. It is deemed that more destructive investigatory works, material specifications, and finer details can be subject to and agreed upon via planning conditions.

4. USE

4.1 The site is currently used for residential purposes. This application does not seek to change the properties' residential use.



5. AMOUNT

- 5.1 The overall site area measures 7,438m² / 1.8 Acre.
- 5.2 Existing Gross Internal residential floor area including outbuildings = 548m². The overall built volume = 1,771m³.
- 5.3 Proposed Gross Internal residential floor area including outbuildings = 687m². The overall built volume = 1,917m³.
- 5.4 The proposal represents an approximate 25% (139m²) increase in the floor area with an approximate 8% increase in the overall built volume.
- 5.5 Over 50% of this proposed floor area increase (80m²) will come from the basement, which will not have any perceived visual/volume impact on the existing house, site or surrounding context.
- 5.6 A full structural report, including a methodology statement, will be submitted to alleviate any concerns the proposed works and basement may have on the listed building.
- 5.7 It is deemed that the amount proposed represents a modest addition that can comfortably sit on the site without appearing as overdevelopment or extensive sprawl within the Green Belt. The amount proposed will have a significant positive benefit in ensuring the historical building remains in good viable use.

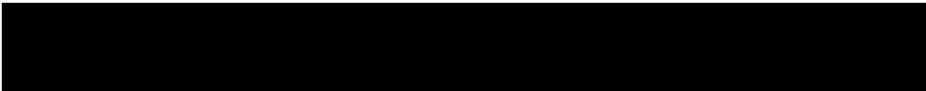
6. LAYOUT

- 6.1 The proposed design is a result of carefully evaluating the existing dwelling's internal and external arrangements and design.
- 6.2 The main dwelling is constructed on a square footprint, with rooms at each of the corners. Two square pavilions flank the principal elevation, and additional single-story outbuildings form "outstretched arms" extending further north and south from these pavilions.
- 6.3 The proposed buildings form a rough chevron shape, with the point facing east and the open arms of the flanking pavilions/outbuildings facing west. This arrangement creates a strong and formal public front-west-facing principal elevation, with the outstretched arms helping to invite and direct visitors to the entrance while dividing the public arrival from the private gardens to the north, east, and south.
- 6.4 This clear separation between public and private areas is a crucial component of the external design, and it has been retained and enhanced. Visitors are welcomed into the property before they reach the central corridor that opens up the first views of the private gardens to the north and south.
- 6.5 The eastern elevation is more straightforward in form, with lovely views over the private gardens and the valley beyond. The northern elevation and rooms are primarily related to the service areas, including the kitchen, utility, stable/storage and courtyard area. These are well positioned with the house hierarchy, favouring the main living to the sun-filled southern rooms.
- 6.6 As highlighted in the statement of significance, the northern areas have undergone several iterations, and many of the original historical forms and arrangements have become unintelligible as they have been developed over time. The kitchen, in particular, is an area that has changed throughout history, with modern living requiring a closer and higher functional integration within the main dwelling.
- 6.7 The northern area forms the primary focus for development, with less impact on the higher-quality and higher-status regions to the west, south, and east. Consideration was given to renovating the existing stable areas to facilitate new accommodation. However, this may only add to a poorly integrated alteration within originally ill-thought-out areas. These areas have their own quality and could be better used as ancillary service accommodation to the main dwelling.
- 6.8 William Green Architects proposed positioning a separate and detached kitchen extension to the northern section of the lawn behind the courtyard outbuildings. Separating the main proposed volume allows more of the existing buildings to be expressed. The kitchen is significantly enhanced by its new location and connection with both the eastern and northern gardens and its proximity to the main dwelling and central hallway.
- 6.9 The proposed kitchen extension will break through the existing north-facing window to provide access to the new extension. Although there is some perceived harm in removing the window, the benefit of the location allows the proposal to be integrated closely with the main dwelling. Ensuring the historic building remains integrated and well-used in daily life, a point noted in the pre-app report.
- 6.10 Moving back to the central hallway, using axial views to the private gardens helps draw occupants into these spaces. The use of the water rill further emphasises this

view and connection to the south, while the proposed extension aims to create a similar connection to the north. This northern connection reincorporates the northern garden within the scheme.

- 6.11 The kitchen will feed off the main central hallway, sunken down by a couple of steps to provide level garden access and a degree of subservience to the main dwelling.
- 6.12 On the first floor, the south-eastern master bedroom aims to connect with the south-western to create a master suite with a dressing room and ensuite. The existing modern wardrobes are proposed to be removed, and a new concealed jib door is proposed to provide access to the proposed dressing room and subsequent ensuite.
- 6.13 The awkward split bathrooms to the northwest will be amalgamated as one. Doing so will remove the disjointed window, reveal the connection, and create a more functional, spacious family bathroom.
- 6.14 The proposal seeks to create a light well in the western/northwest-facing area of the second floor, drawing light down to the first and ground floor whilst creating a vertical connection with the property. It's noted that given the extensive remodelling on the second floor, some of the original historical fabric may have been removed by previous occupants. Some minor investigative works have been carried out to assess the age further. It is understood that any work may cause some perceived harm to the listed asset. However, based on this initial investigation, it can be determined that the floor joists in the area run front to back, which, given the size of the proposed open, would result in the potential cutting of two floor joists. Still, a more extensive and destructive investigation would be required to fully ascertain the exact age and originality of the proposed floor. Similar to the well-integrated proposed ground floor extension, which maintains subservience whilst resulting in a significant positive ongoing use of the property. The same can be said for the lightwell. The relationship of the house via the existing secondary staircase will maintain the hierarchy of the attic rooms being of lesser status than the first-floor rooms. Still, the benefit of the proposal is that it will help draw light down to the first-floor landing and entrance hall. It also integrates the second floor and ensures the building can respond to family life instead of a thoroughly segregated status. The proposal believes this item can be conditioned, with further details submitted following further investigation.
- 6.15 The proposal seeks to amalgamate the east-facing window and door into a single French door. The reasoning is to create a more informed symmetrical elevation similar to the south and western elevations, benefiting the views over the eastern garden and beyond. There is some ambiguity between the possible division of the existing dining room. It is assumed that this was probably subdivided similarly to the first-floor rooms above. The position of the door appears ill-considered, given the intricate skirting and architrave detailing found throughout the house. The large inglenook fireplace has been renovated and may conceal more of the history of this lost room. Without further invasive works, it isn't easy to ascertain the exact historical importance of this door and window. If this subdivision were the case, the historical original form would likely have been somewhat diminished. Although the idiosyncratic nature of the window and door positioning is believed to add informality to the rear eastern elevation, the arrangement is slightly jarring

both internally and externally. The proposal to introduce symmetry to the elevation will aid the overall appearance, while the distinctive mismatch in nature and status of each elevation can still be perceived.



7. APPEARANCE AND SCALE

- 7.1 The client requested that any changes to the existing building be respectful regarding scale and massing and for new additions to reflect a timeless appearance.
- 7.2 The proposal has looked to reintroduce the original four large chimney stacks to the main dwelling (appendix fig.1&2), bringing back some lost character and increasing the apparent height and scale. The front northwestern chimney has a truncated stack. Given the potential structural implications and associated risks of an overly tall, thin, isolated chimney stack, the proposal does not look to increase the height without full structural support.
- 7.3 Regarding the main proposed extension, consideration was given to a flat roof orangery style extension (appendix fig.3), but this would create a much stronger built form that would differ from the pitched roof design. The design would result in a much stronger visual draw upon the eastern elevation and a significantly more extensive flat roof area, which could cause more perceived harm.
- 7.4 Another option was a more modern intervention (appendix fig.4,5&6), with a minimal and pair-back nature that allows the host building to remain dominant. However, this, too, caused too much of a visual draw with a strong juxtaposition of style.
- 7.5 The final design, which results from numerous iterations, sits comfortably in scale, massing, and appearance. It is respectful to the existing building, seated between the overtly traditional and pastiche and the ultra-modern and strongly juxtaposed.
- 7.6 Topographical changes were made to reduce the overall scale of the proposal, keeping the eaves at the same height as the existing stable outbuildings. The level change maintains a degree of subservience to the main dwelling while elevating the quality of internal living space with level access to the eastern lawn and taller vaulted ceilings within.
- 7.7 The proposed footprint was reduced in light of pre-application comments, resulting in a further reduction of scale.
- 7.8 The proposed pitched roof, although adding volume, is more respectful of the existing buildings, mirroring their scale and simplicity. It is subservient to the main dwelling while carrying a similar status to the pavilions and a slightly higher status over the outbuildings.
- 7.9 The existing building language is carried over to the proposal with clay tiles on the pitched roof and brick walls tying back to the existing brick plinth of the main dwelling and brick walls of the existing outbuildings. This helps the proposal sit comfortably next to the host buildings while maintaining an identity of its own.
- 7.10 The proposal seeks to retain the core principle of the stables and northern pavilion, stepping back flat roof-built volumes and combining it with glazing to create a lighter touch and connection between the pitched roof elements.
- 7.11 The fenestration was carefully considered (appendix fig.7,8&9), with fixed glazing creating a "light" point of connection while also giving the apparent separation from the existing dwelling and outbuildings. The glazing bars divide larger glass panes and strike a balance with a modern but traditional appearance.

7.12 Offsetting the sliding doors that open onto the kitchen terrace, creating informality to the proposed eastern elevation and further solidifying the subservience to the more formal elevations of the original dwelling.



8. LANDSCAPE

- 8.1 Robin Williams, an award-winning landscape designer, created an initial concept design for the external landscaping of a proposed country home before any architectural plans. William Green Architects only made minor amendments to add to the overall gardens.
- 8.2 The design complements the existing garden and topography, aiming to enhance the grounds and create a functional English garden that is both beautiful and worthy of the home.
- 8.3 One of the design's standout features is a water rill aligned with the central hallway, emphasising and directing the viewer's gaze outward along the central axial view.
- 8.4 The landscape design carefully adds to the already defined areas, incorporating a vegetable garden near the potting shed, maintaining the eastern garden's views, and incorporating the previously superfluous northern garden with obscured vehicular parking, an informal meadow garden with a mown pathway, and a games lawn.
- 8.5 The proposal introduces soft landscaping around the extension, which helps utilise the subtle form of nature to integrate the proposal and ground it to the site.

9. ACCESS

- 9.1 Site access is via an approximately 50-metre track from the main road, Little Heath Lane. This track passes through dense and mature forest vegetation before it opens up onto a formal driveway in front of Crossways.
- 9.2 As mentioned earlier, the main dwelling, pavilions, and additional outbuildings form a chevron shape, with arms stretched, that contain the private formal driveway and direct visitors towards the main entrance. The sense of direction is further emphasised by the scale change of the smaller outbuildings, stepping up to the pavilions and the main dwelling itself.
- 9.3 A circular planted area and sundial are at the centre of the driveway. This design is visible in the early ordnance surveys, as is the dated sundial noted in the property listing.
- 9.4 Due to the early adoption of the design, the existing stables and garages are unsuitable for modern vehicles. The flat roof addition to the southern pavilion only further indicates how poorly integrated "modernisation" can impact the heritage asset. Therefore, the front driveway is utilised as the main parking area, which harms the principal elevation and clutter the driveway with cars. Furthermore, manoeuvring is significantly more complicated with parked vehicles in a space not designed for them.
- 9.5 As a result, the proposal seeks to create a dedicated space suitable for modern requirements without impacting the heritage asset or surrounding context. Following the advice of the local planning authority within the pre-application, the proposal has omitted the open carport garage from the scheme. To prevent a sprawling effect, the permeable gravel parking area has also been reduced to keep it closer to the original built volume.
- 9.6 However, the proposal retains the location for daily parking north of the existing stable outbuildings. The relationship works with the site hierarchy, maintaining parking in the service area and its intended location. This further benefits the front driveway, which can be retained for formal use and a greater expression of the principal elevation.
- 9.7 The proposed location is well-screened from the road and main dwelling by the belt of trees and existing outbuildings, respectively. Additional landscaping is proposed to conceal the parking area and to reinforce a sense of privacy from the private gardens to the east. The result will be a better-organized site, suitable for modern requirements, which does not interfere with the heritage asset or the surrounding context.

10. CONCLUSION

10.1 The proposal for creating a new extension and making internal alterations has been thoughtfully designed to blend with its surroundings and collectively has a positive impact on the heritage asset. The comprehensive proposal meets relevant planning policies, and trust will lead to a positive outcome.

11. APPENDIX



Fig.1 – Front elevation 1976 photograph with original chimneys shown



Fig.2 – Side/Rear Elevation (South-East) 1970s photograph with original chimneys shown and tired render



Note: All visualisations are indicative with final materials/finishes to be agreed upon.



Fig.3 (above left) - Early concept design. A more traditional orangery-style flat roof is concealed behind a parapet. The design creates a greater solid mass and visual draw with contrasting style against the existing, causing more perceived harm to the existing.

Fig.4 (above right) -Early concept design. More modern Low-level pitched roof. Improved relationship with pitched roof design reflecting existing. The sloped roofs and material change add a perceived reduction in scale. Large pitched roof lights and cladded modern “louvre” sections conceal glazing behind. However, the lack of separation and linear nature created a similar visual draw and perceived harm to the existing.



Fig.5&6 - Developed concept design. “Standalone pavilion” with clear separation from the existing whilst creating a stronger relationship with existing pavilion buildings. Modern design with large glazing and simplified appearance minimising visual draw. The higher roofline increases the proposed scale, but the design remains proportionately correct against the existing property. Upon review, the client wished to explore a more balanced modern/traditional design to avoid a strong juxtaposition of styles.



Fig.7&8 - Developed fenestration design to find the traditional/modern balance by reducing oversized glazing, introducing additional structure, and incorporating planting to ground the proposal. Preference for singular grouped doors, maintaining simplicity. Slight offset with a larger expanse of wall to the northern side, forming a bookend. The informality of the design contrasts the formality of the main house and responds to the subservient nature of the extension.



Fig.9 – Proposed developed fenestration and material consideration (Pre-Application scheme). Note, all materials are indicative with final material/finishes to be agreed upon. Utilising materials that respond to the main dwelling and single-storey buildings, e.g. clay tiles, bricks with doors and windows with glazing bars breaking up glazing. The overall style and appearance are relatable to the main dwelling and outbuildings. At the same time, subtly infused modern design elements allow the proposal to be read comfortably on its own without creating a bold juxtaposition of styles. Retention of soft landscaping enables the proposal to connect with the ground and reduce the perceived scale of built volume.