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Design Statement
To accompany planning application
In respect of
Proposed two storey rear extension, alterations to roof and loft
conversion to existing dwelling house
At
121 Cassiobury Drive, Watford. WD17 3AH.

Overview

The scheme involves extension, improvement, and modernisation of a comparatively small house, having only three bedrooms, of which one is only a single size. The existing house has only one family bathroom, and no ensuite shower rooms. The kitchen is cramped, and no separate utility area exists.

The house has an internal depth of only around 7 metres. The first-floor accommodation has sloping ceilings and areas of reduced headroom, particularly to the rear where below the cat-slide roof.

The present house, having limited accommodation, does not make best use of the generously sized plot.

Cassiobury Drive is characterised by large detached houses, commonly having additional accommodation at second floor level. The average size house in the street is considerably larger than 121.

Heritage value

The subject house is of some architectural merit, adopting a design inspired by the Arts and Crafts Movement in the 1930's. It is well proportioned, with an elegant front elevation. It incorporates neo-vernacular features such as catslide roofs, dormers, and small secondary windows. It employs traditional materials such as London Stock facing brickwork and substantial oak framed windows with leaded glazing. There are some intricate details of note, including laced valleys, tile corbels and coved soffits.

Internally, there are various original features including woodblock flooring, panelled doors, elaborate joinery, wooden panelling to the entrance hall walls, brick & tile construction fireplaces and plaster coves.

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The property has suffered some unfortunate alterations, not least the insertion of contemporary double-glazed opening casements with bulky PVCu frames. This has detracted from the architectural and historic appeal of the house.

The proposal seeks for retain as many original features as possible and preserve the “Arts and Crafts” style, but at the same time creating a larger and more energy efficient home, and provide living standards and facilities that are commensurate with a property in this popular residential area.

The rear extension replicates the original cat-slide roof and its associated dormer windows.

Principal elevation

The front elevation facing the street will remain largely unaltered. Improvements will be made by removing the clumsy and bulky PVCu opening casements and creating a fenestration arrangement close to the originally intended design. The front slope will extend further up, and have an increased area, but only by around 22 %. The prominent front gable remains the same.

Ridge height

The height of the main ridge is increased by 1.30 metres – i.e., from 7.45 metres above ground level to 8.75 metres. This is a modest 17.5 % increase. This higher ridgeline is not out of character with the neighbourhood. There are many houses nearby with similar or slightly higher ridge lines.

Roof scape

In order to increase the depth of the house by a reasonable amount, but without increasing the ridge height excessively, a crown-top flat roof is required. This is primarily due to the very steep roof pitch, which must be copied for the extended parts. However, the crown-top flat roof will not be visible from ground level, and there will be no obvious clues to its existence when viewed from any perspective.

Street scene

An increased ridge height is not considered detrimental to the street scene. There is a wide variety of architectural styles of house – with varying overall heights – along both side of Cassiobury Drive. There is no repetition to disrupt or discernible rhythm to interrupt.

The width of the house remains the same, with generous a separation each side. Vistas between the extended house and both neighbouring houses will be preserved. As the scheme does not include any side extensions, there is no risk of “terracing”

No projections to the existing front slope are proposed. The cat-slide roof over the front entrance remains. As such, there will be no perceived increase in general bulk or sense that the building is overly prominent.

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Amenity

There will be little or no impact on the neighbouring houses. There will be no increase in potential overlooking from windows. Any additional windows in the side elevations are either at ground floor level (and thus shrouded by boundary fences etc.) or serve shower or bathrooms, and will have obscure glass.

Materials and detailing

Wherever practical, the proposed external materials will match those of the existing house, thus avoiding any “extended look”, and preserving the original character of the building. The original cast-iron gutters have been replaced with standard smooth surface PVCu types, downgrading the property’s appeal. This will be remedied by installing cast-iron effect PVCu rainwater goods throughout, that faithfully mimic the appearance of the original cast-iron types, but avoiding the maintenance issues associated with cast-iron. The original steel window frames – apparently Crittal or similar – will not be retained or matched given their very poor thermal performance. Instead, a carefully selected slender dark bronze finish aluminium extrusion will be employed for all the frames. A suitable balance will be struck between practicality and Building Regulation compliance issues such as energy efficiency and controlling maintenance, and preserving the traditional character of the house.

Detailing, such as the configuration of eaves and verges, will receive careful attention. Further details are set out in the planning specification.

Chimneys

Both existing chimneystacks are retained. It is not clear if they were previously lowered or altered. The absence of traditional detailing to their upper regions suggest they may have been lowered. The proposal involves raising them to a suitable level above the new roofline, and incorporating oversailing courses in a contrasting colour brick and fitting of conventional clay chimneypots. A more authentic and intended appearance will result.

External amenity space:

The residual rear garden has an area far exceeding 50 square metres, and thus complies with planning policy.

Boundary treatments:

These will remain unaltered.

Planning precedents

Many houses in the vicinity have been granted planning permission for substantial extensions, including two storey rear additions. There should therefore be presumption that the proposal is acceptable.

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Interior

Original features within the entrance hall and stairwell area will not be altered, but only repaired where required.

Within the principal internal space, the living room, the only modifications will be to the rear external wall. Here, an arched opening will be formed, leading the extension. Original features in this main room, including the door, joinery, the brickwork fireplace, wood-block flooring, and plaster coves will be retained. These elements will be replicated within the extended part of the living room, thus ensuring continuity.

Conclusion

Given the above, it is considered that all relevant planning policies have been considered and complied with, and good architectural design ensured.

Accordingly, it is considered the subject proposal should be granted permission.

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All parts of the extension, including roofs, walls, and ground floors, will be constructed to current day Building Regulation standards in terms of thermal insulation and air tightness.

All windows will be modern types, incorporating high performance double glazed sealed units.

As such, the energy usage of the extended house will be less than the present thermally inefficient house.

Mechanical ventilation will be provided to all existing and proposed bathrooms and shower rooms, which will include heat recovery arrangements, further reducing energy needs.

Wherever practical, measures will be taken to upgrade the thermal insulation of the existing walls by a combination of cavity wall insulation and internal insulated dry-linings.

Existing single glazed windows will be replaced with double or triple glazed types, with low E glass and argon gas filling. Where practical, thermally broken wooden sub-frames will be used. The maximum possible thermal performance will be sought, working within the constraints of the existing oak sub-frames and those posed by architectural requirements.

All lighting will be of low energy types, e.g., LED or compact florescent.

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For the extended parts, all aspects of Part M of the Building Regulations will be complied with. The proposal does not seek to improve the accessibility of the existing house. The existing front door step will be retained.

Importantly however, the proposal does not prevent *future* measures being taken to improve accessibility, e.g., the formation of ramped access to the front door.

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Daylight / sunlight assessment statement

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Given the relative positions of No.'s 119 and 123 – which both extend significantly further back than the existing house, the proposed rear extension will not restrict the passage of daylight to any windows, doors or glazed areas serving habitable rooms in the neighbouring dwelling. The above, coupled with the site's orientation – i.e. the southwest aspect of the rear elevation, any reduction in sunshine incident upon the neighbouring houses and their gardens, will be minimal.

No part of the proposal cuts a 45-degree sightline drawn from the nearside edge of any principal window serving a habitable room in the neighbouring dwellings, either at ground or first floor level.

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The existing house has off-street parking for at least three cars. This will not be reduced. The garage remains available for parking. This provision is considered adequate for the resulting 5-bedroom residence.

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Tree survey / Arboricultural statement

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The proposal does not involve felling of trees. The proposal will not affect any trees that are either within the subject property's grounds or those standing upon neighbouring land.

No tree survey / plotting of trees on plans is therefore required.

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