

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

1. Site Location

Ferncourt Farm, Bleadon Hill, Bleadon, Weston Super Mare, BS24 9JX

2. Description of current property

The property is a detached dwelling house located in the countryside at Bleadon Hill. It is part of a holding consisting the curtilage, numerous outbuildings and approximately 14 acres of agricultural land.

The settlement boundary of Bleadon Village is 0.48 km to the South; the settlement boundary and built-up perimeter of WSM is 0.4 km to the West. The Hillcote estate, comprising 40 houses, is 0.12 km to the NW while the settlement at Hillside, made up of 21 houses is 0.15 km to the East. There is also a cluster of houses at the top of Celtic Way; the closest is 100.5 meters distant.

The house is outside the Mendip Hills ANOB which is 0.12 km to the North East.

3. Planning History

On 12th July 2017, Application Number 17/P/1175/LDE, resulted in a Certificate of Lawful Use being issued concerning a yard and former agricultural buildings to the immediate south which stated. "The existing use of land as residential in association with the main dwelling".

On 19th July 2019, Application Number 19/P0004/FUK, resulted in the granting of planning permission for a proposed two storey side extension and single side front/side extension.

4. Description of the proposed development

Proposed new front porch, rear patio area and revised access to and from the road.

5. The design principles applied to the proposed development, its context and use

5.1 Front Porch

The porch has been designed so that it is proportionate and central to the house. It will be built from blocks and oak beams and finished using the same style of

render as the main house. It is in keeping with porches on similar sized properties in the area.

The proposed porch is not visible from any other dwelling houses and is screened, from the road, by a substantial hedge which is a little over 8m high and 3 m wide.

The proposed porch would be a sensible addition. The purpose is to enable the occupants to shelter from inclement weather when entering and leaving the front of the property. This is particularly pertinent for older family members who are currently exposed to wind and blown rain.

5.2 The rear patio

There is an existing raised rear patio to the 1920s section of the house but not to the recently built extension to the east. The proposed rear patio will run the length of the house and to the west will infill behind the current garage and car port.

The proposed rear patio will be finished to the same level as the existing rear patio which, at its highest, is approximately 1m above the level of the lawn and laid with grey flag stones or tiles. It will be used for accessing the rear of the dwelling, for leisure purposes and entertaining.

It is necessary for the rear patio to be built as a raised platform because the house sits on a hillside which is relatively steep. The front of the house, which is orientated to the north, runs parallel to and level with the hillside. The rear, faces due south, is also level with the hill side, although the supporting walls have been built upwards to compensate for the fall of the hillside so that the floor of the house is level.

The proposed rear patio does not overlook any other houses. It is screened to the east by 2 separate hedges which run down the hill side together with a line of mature evergreen trees. To the west it is screened by a substantial hedge.

The existing patio is screened to the south by shrubs which run along its entire length and by a cluster of former agricultural buildings. It is proposed the new rear patio is screened in a similar way using native shrubs which, together with the existing buildings, will make it all but invisible.

This will also "tidy up" the north western section of the curtilage which is already raised as a consequence of a house standing on it but which was destroyed by fire in 1941. This is currently "rough ground".

This aspect of the proposal is in keeping with numerous other properties on Bleadon Hill/Celtic Way which have raised rear patio areas.

5.3 Revised access to the road (Bleadon Hill)

It is unclear whether planning permission is needed to carry this aspect of the proposal into effect although it is included for the sake of completeness to ensure the applicant does not infringe any planning requirements.

Currently, the dwelling house is served by three points of access onto Bleadon Hill each of which can be used by vehicles or pedestrians. These are marked as access points 1, 2 and 3 on the plan. This is not a proposal to add a new or widen an existing access point. Rather, it is asking permission to close access points 2 and 3. This would be achieved by extending the existing hedge, which stands between the dwelling and Bleadon Hill which, as explained above, is over 8m high and 3 m wide.

Access points two and three have proved difficult and dangerous to use. Particularly when exiting either driveway in a vehicle. The visibility is extremely restricted. There is no visibility splay. Drivers exiting the property need to listen carefully for approaching traffic while creeping forward, exposing the front of the vehicle to any approaching traffic, until a full range of visibility is acquired. There have been several near misses.

The applicants 18 year old son has recently passed his driving test which has given impetus to this application.

The safest point of ingress and exit using a vehicle is access point one. This is much wider at approximately 18ft and has a splay, formed from trimming back the hedge in the spring and autumn, so that it is 43 meters to the west and the east measured from a point 2.1 meters from the edge of the road. When sitting in the driving seat of a vehicle this provides clear visibility in either direction.

This access point has been used in conjunction with the dwelling house for well over 10 years. It is how vehicles accessed the buildings and yard subject of application 17/P/1175/LDE. Vehicles can leave the road here and park outside of the dwelling. It was used historically by the drivers of cars towing caravans when the adjacent paddock was used as a caravan site.

A further advantage of extending the hedge at access points 2 and 3 is that it would make the dwelling more private and secure whilst at same time increasing bio diversity and thereby resulting in a net gain for nature.

