

Planning Statement

Westside, Wrotham Road, DA13
0HW

STATEMENT WRITTEN BY:

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This statement has been produced in support of a planning application for the demolition of the existing two-storey dwelling and erection of a two-storey detached dwelling together with hard and soft landscaping and parking.
- 1.2 A site meeting and written feedback from the Council has already been provided which is addressed in further detail below.
- 1.3 Since the site meeting on 30 July 2024 the Applicants have further reduced the width and depth of the proposed development in line with officer's recommendation.
- 1.4 The Site has a history of planning applications for similar development which are more particularly set out in the 'Relevant Planning History' section of the Council's most recent written feedback.
- 1.5 Whilst an analysis of all previous planning history on the Site would not be helpful for the purposes of this Pre-Application Request, it is anticipated that the parties will be assisted by focussing on:
 - The issues raised by the Inspectorate in the most recent appeal decision¹; and
 - The feedback in the recent written advice from the Council.
- 1.6 During this statement, various defined terms will be referred to throughout. These include the following:
 - **Appeal Decision:** The appeal decision referenced at footnote 2 below.

¹ Planning Application ref 20230351 / Appeal reference APP/K2230/W/23/3329874

- **Appeal Proposal:** The Development that was previously considered by the Council and Inspectorate in the application / appeal reference at Footnote 2.
- **Proposed Development:** The amended development proposed in the course of this Request.
- **Request:** The Pre-Application request reference PRE20240125
- **Site:** The area outlined in red as set out in the Site Plan submitted with this Request.

1.7 These issues will be explored in section 3 below.

Report Structure

1.8 Section 2 of this Statement provides a description of the Site and surrounding area; section 3 sets out the planning assessment; section 4 provides a conclusion.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The Site is located in an urban setting within the northern part of the Hook Green Meopham Settlement Boundary.
- 2.2 The public highway known as Wrotham Road runs directly adjacent to the Site with existing residential properties on all sides. The street scene along Wrotham Road is generally varied.
- 2.3 On the west side of Wrotham Road in the locality of the Site, dwellings tend to be of a two storey, semi-detached design with a mixture of rendered brick work or pebble dash. There is little in the way of aesthetical value in these properties.
- 2.4 Opposite the Site on the east side of Wrotham Road, the character and design of the dwellings becomes arguably more aesthetically pleasing. The properties are generally detached (although have little spacing that separates them) and have used a mixture of materials which include brick, render, wood / hardi-plank.
- 2.5 As highlighted by the Inspectorate in the Appeal Decision. The current dwelling is unusual given that it has a greater setback within the street scene from the adjoining dwellings and is of a relatively simple design being two storeys, with pitched roof fronting the street.
- 2.6 The existing dwelling has an attached garage and small front garden with brick wall with a generous rear garden.

3. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Preliminary

- 3.1 Following the Appeal Decision and the written feedback received in the course of this Request, the parties have worked constructively to narrow the issues.
- 3.2 Accordingly, there is only one key issue left, this being the perceived scale of the proposed dwelling which will be examined in further detail below.
- 3.3 Before addressing this issue, it is helpful to note the areas that are now hopefully common ground between the parties which have been narrowed during the course of the Appeal Decision or this Request. These points are as follows:
- **Demolition of existing dwelling:** The current dwelling has little in the way of architectural value and as such there is no issue with its demolition and replacement.
 - **No obligation to replicate existing style of street scene:** The Applicant is under no obligation to create a design that replicates the surrounding properties. Mimicking existing styles does not necessarily result in an improvement to the character of the area.
 - **Condition of materials:** Any issues with proposed materials should not necessarily lead to the refusal of an application as such matters can be appropriately conditioned and dealt with as part of any discharge application.
 - **Future occupier amenity:** The Proposed Development will not impact amenity of future occupiers.
 - **Neighbouring amenity:** The Proposed Development (subject to maintaining a sufficient gap) between neighbouring dwellings would

not negatively impact neighbouring amenity. The written feedback during the course of this Request notes that the Proposed Development will not lead to overlooking (subject to some minor alterations to glazing on the rear first floor) nor will it have detrimental impact on light received into the neighbouring properties.

- **Highways and parking:** Sufficient parking spaces has been shown in the Proposed Development.
- **Front Garden:** The Proposed Development addresses previous concerns in the Appeal Decision by retaining the majority of the soft landscaping to the front garden.
- **Roof height:** The revised plans demonstrate that the height of the Proposed Development has been decreased in line with the height of the neighbouring properties.

Remaining points of concern

3.4 The recent written feedback from the Council provides the following observations as to the amendments necessary for the proposal to be compliant from a design perspective:

- Proposal 1: Reduction in width of the Proposed Development
- Proposal 2: Reduction in depth of the Proposed Development
- Proposal 3: Alterations to the pitch of the roof
- Proposal 4: Reduction in scale of single storey rear extension

3.5 These four proposals are addressed in turn below.

Proposal 1: Width

3.6 The width of the proposed development is the critical issue that the Applicant appears to be at somewhat of an impasse on at present. The Applicant views the width of the proposed development as being an aspect that is crucial to the proposed development functioning for the Applicant's purposes. That being said, the width of the proposed development has been further reduced from the proposal submitted as part of the Request.

3.7 It is accepted that the Inspector in the Appeal Decision was critical of the increase in width. However, it is helpful to assess the Inspector's exact findings on this matter. The Inspector's comments on this point are set out below.

*"The proposed building would be much taller than the existing dwelling and would also be taller than the adjacent dwellings as seen on the proposed elevation plans. This **combined** (our emphasis) with the increased massing where two storey components come close to either side boundary, considerably reduce the spaces in and around the dwelling which is an important characteristic of dwellings within the street scene."*

3.8 Much has been made by the Council in relation to the increase in width and the maintenance of a gap, however it should be kept in mind that the increase in width proposed is minimal.

3.9 As can be seen on the annotated proposed plans below, the north elevation will remain broadly in line with the existing development, arguably the built form along the north elevation (when viewed from the street) will decrease given the sloping nature of the roof.

3.10 In relation to the south boundary line, there is a marginal increase in width however as can be seen at Figure 1, the increase is minor and has now been broken up through the single storey sloped roof projection that partially wraps around the south elevation.

Figure 1: *Proposed Development (outline of exiting dwelling outlined red)*



3.11 It is not considered that this modest increase in width has any negative impact on the character of the area. However, even if this point is not agreed by the Council, the amended design has now been significantly softened through:

- A small sloped single storey roof projection on the southern aspect of the front elevation to accommodate the garage.
- Ensuring the principle/two storey part of the proposed dwelling largely remains within the footprint of the existing dwelling. The second storey is broadly in line with the existing dwelling save for the gently sloping roof element.
- The addition of a bay window and variation in roof forms to the front elevation to break up any perceived bulk.

- 3.12 The Inspector at no point during the Appeal Decision, made an absolute finding that a large degree of separation between the proposed dwelling and neighbouring dwellings was essential to maintain for the proposal to be compliant with local policy.
- 3.13 Rather, the Inspector took issue with the **cumulative** impact of the previously proposed scheme when assessing its height and massing of two storey elements in proximity to neighbouring dwellings.
- 3.14 As set out above, the issue of height has already been satisfactorily addressed in the proposed scheme put forwards in the course of the Request.
- 3.15 As also set out above, the design has been amended to reduce the massing of two storey development close to the boundary line. It is therefore considered that the cumulative impact has been significantly reduced and is compliant with local policy.

Proposal 2: Depth

- 3.16 The issue of depth was never a factor that was raised as an issue in the Appeal Decision as far as impact on the character of the area was concerned. This is not surprising given that a single storey rear extension that is obscured from the street view could not impact the street scene or character of the area.
- 3.17 It is therefore not understood how, from an impact to character point of view, concerns could continue to be raised on the depth of the Proposed Development.
- 3.18 It is accepted that concerns were raised in the Appeal Decision as to the impact that the depth of the Appeal Proposal would have on the occupiers of Risley (the dwelling to the north) in terms of the sense of enclosure.

- 3.19 Importantly no issue was taken with any impact to the neighbouring property to the south (Hook Green). For ease of reference the north elevation of the Appeal Proposal is snipped below at Figure 2.

Figure 2: *North elevation of dismissed Appeal Proposal*



- 3.20 The north elevation in the Proposed Development has now been significantly scaled back to take on board the comments in the Appeal Decision as shown in Figure 3 below which has been annotated to show the existing dwelling outlined red.
- 3.21 The Proposed Development has clearly addressed the concerns raised by the Inspectorate as to the sense of enclosure caused to Risley as the proposal does not differ notably in scale from the current dwelling and certainly not to an extent that would cause an adverse impact that would warrant a refusal on the basis of being overbearing.
- 3.22 As can be seen from Figures 4 and 5 (annotated floor plan and cross sections), the Proposed Development does not significantly deviate in floor

print or overall scale in comparison to the existing dwelling which has been outlined red for indication purposes in the plans below.

Figure 3: *North Elevation of Proposed Development*



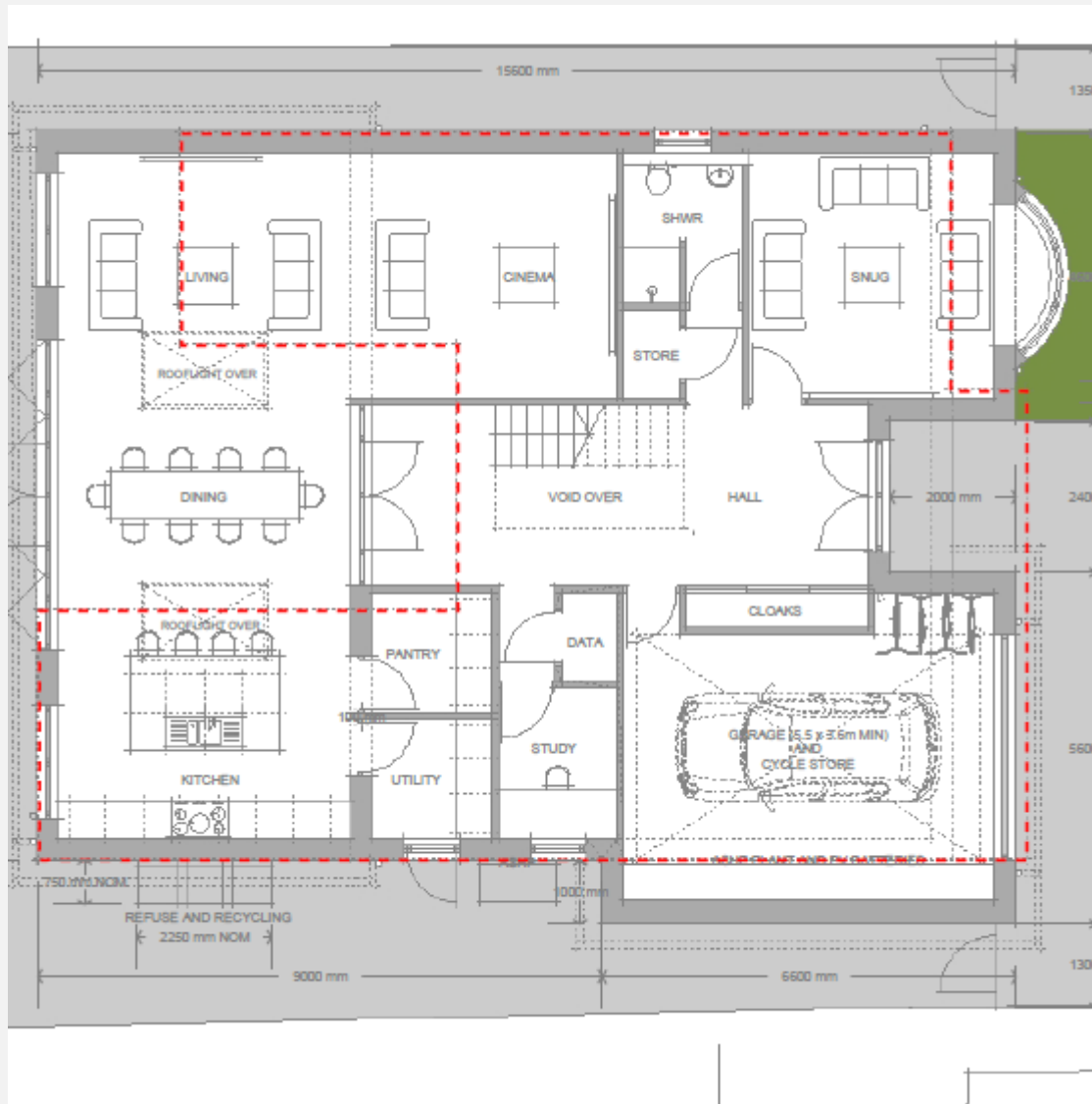
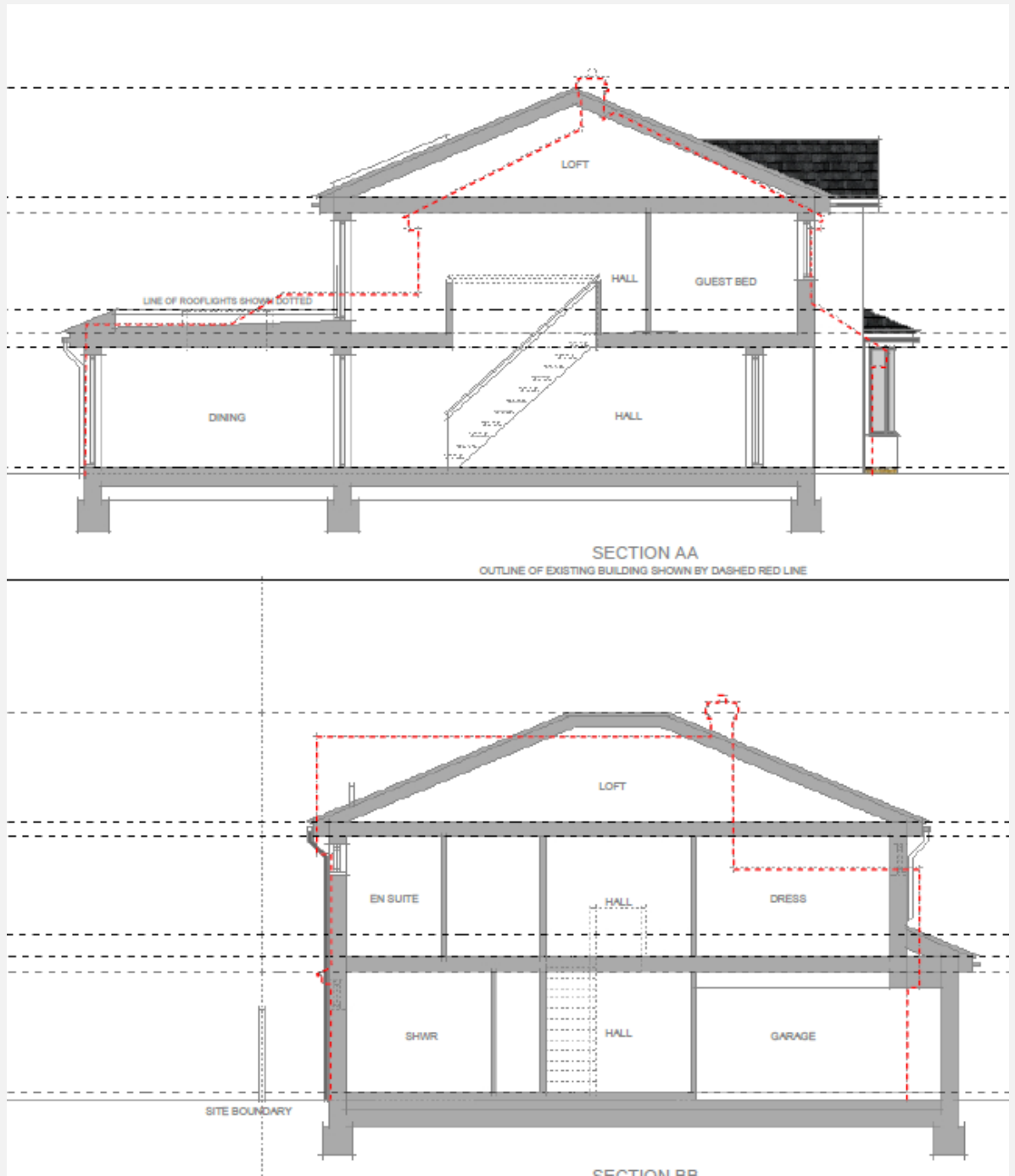
Figure 4: Floor Plan of Proposed Development

Figure 5: Cross Section of Proposed Development



- 3.23 There would still be a marginal forward projection along the north elevation but this is minimal. In any event, a forward projection was welcomed by the Inspectorate who stated that *"the projection forward into the street scene to give more of a presence to the dwelling"* was a positive factor.
- 3.24 The proposed increase in height is negligible and is now in line with the height of Risley.

Proposal 3: Roof pitch

- 3.25 The pitch of the roof is broadly similar to the Appeal proposal which was not raised as an issue in the Appeal Decision.

Proposal 4: Single storey rear extension

- 3.26 The Applicant's position in relation to a reduction in the scale of the single storey rear extension is broadly in line with their position on the proposed changes to the depth of the Proposed Development.
- 3.27 As stated above, the scale of the rear single storey extension cannot be viewed as having a negative impact on the character of the area or street scene given it is not visible to the public. The rear extension is in line with the Appeal Proposal which was not raised as an issue in terms of impact on surroundings. The Inspector was clear that their concern was on the front elevation's impact on the street scene.
- 3.28 As set out above, the Inspector did raise concerns with depth but only to the extent that it caused a sense of enclosure to the occupiers of Risley to the north. However, this was due to the two-storey flank wall as opposed to the single storey rear extension.
- 3.29 The Inspectors lack of issue with the single storey rear extension would appear entirely logical given that (as demonstrated by Figure 3) the rear extension would (as far as north and south elevations are concerned) follow in almost an identical floor area and height.

- 3.30 The Proposed Development does provide for the single storey rear extension to be one continuous structure along the width of the Proposed Development, however it is hard to see how this would be adverse from a design or neighbouring amenity point of view.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 The Applicant's position is that they considered the Proposed Development has satisfactorily addressed the issues raised by the Inspectorate in the Appeal Decision.
- 4.2 For the reasons set out above we respectfully request that permission is granted.