

Realm Consultancy

Planning & Surveying Consultants

Rebecca Harrison, Planning Case Officer,

Planning Department,

Gravesham Borough Council,

Civic Centre,

Windmill Street,

Gravesend,

Kent.

DA12 1AU.

My Ref.

23/0201/Jameson.

Date.

29/05/2024.

Dear Rebecca Harrison,

Proposed extensions & excavations including rear retaining wall at 1 Strand Close, Meopham, Gravesend, Kent. DA13 0EG.

Further to the earlier refusal last year of permission for development of the above site with extensions, excavations and retaining wall I was asked by the applicant to look at the decision and see if I could help. My investigations have led to this further application. In my view the earlier scheme did need some minor adjustments that you will see in the new drawings. I also believe there needed to be some clarification offered to you as to the nature of the scheme as there appears to have been a misunderstanding of the proposals on the Council's side. I hope therefore the revised drawings and this letter help to enable an approval to be issued on this scheme.

If I may go through your report on the earlier application, with reference to the design, character and appearance aspect of the proposals your summary towards the bottom of page 9 of your report indicates that the overall bulk and design of the scheme was acceptable BUT that "the proposal to re-affix existing fencing to the top of a new retaining wall along the rear boundary by virtue of its height would be...harmful to the streetscene". I fear your interpretation of the nature of the scheme has misled you on this aspect of the proposals.

An existing fence separates the rear garden of the application site from the footpath that runs between the application site and 45 Huntingfield Road. It is not proposed to raise that fence or any other boundary feature at all. It is only planned to remove the raised section of the rear garden within the application site and to support the ground upon which the footpath sits by constructing a rear retaining wall. Then the existing rear fence will be reinstated at exactly its current height and position (please see the sketch on the left hand side of drawing LJ/24/2 rev. A). Therefore contrary to your conclusion at the end of page 9 of your officer report there will actually be no change whatsoever to the character of the area and the streetscene, it will be totally unaltered. Your sketch on page 12 of your report and your comments in the paragraph above shows you believed the neighbours at number 45 would have a 3.4m fence they would look out on, in fact they will look at a fence EXACTLY the same as it is now, the retaining wall will not be seen (as from number 45 the retaining wall will in effect be underground).

The difficulty with this site that you may not have fully appreciated is the substantial change in levels across the site, raising up towards number 45, that I believe led you to interpret the effect on the neighbouring amenity at 45 Huntingfield Road incorrectly. Your sketch on page 11 of your earlier report suggests the 25 degree test will be infringed by the proposed two storey rear extension. However that sketch has been prepared on the premise that number 45 Huntingfield Road and 1 Strand Close are built at the same level. Number 45 is in fact on ground about a storey higher than number 1. This radically changes the way your 25 degree line on page 11 of your report should be illustrated and a more reasonable reflection of the relative ground levels will show how the 25 degree line is not infringed relative to this scheme.

Due again to the differential finished floor levels at number 1 & 45 you will perceive that the proposed 1st. floor side facing windows in the earlier application would be viewed from number 45 as ground level windows. As such privacy between ground level windows is not normally perceived as causing such a serious overlooking issue compared with 1st. floor windows.

Nonetheless you shall see that in the current proposals all windows on the 2 storey proposed rear extension that faced towards number 45 have been removed from the scheme so no overlooking shall now be caused by the current application.

Your only other objection to the earlier application seemed to be on the basis of the reduced garden area available as a result of the proposed extensions. There can be no doubt that the current garden will be reduced in size as a direct result of the planned building of new extensions. I would however put forward the case that as a result of the current proposals the usable garden for the existing house will be greatly improved. The current garden is built on a number of different levels, as illustrated in the attached photos. The current scheme will enable the garden to form a more gently undulating green space with no severe divisions in the usable areas (as is the case at present). The garden to the side and rear of the extended house will completely usable and due to the reduced levels of the garden area will be greatly secluded from the outside world by the hedges and fencing. The overall usable space will be greatly improved and will serve the enhanced house well. In no way can the newly shaped garden be considered inferior when compared to the existing very awkward garden or indeed when compared to other gardens in the locality such as numbers 3-7 Strand Close.

I do hope therefore as a result of the new drawings and this explanation of the scheme you will agree these proposals do provide an enhanced living environment on this corner plot without disrupting either the street scene of the living environment of neighbours. I therefore hope you will feel able to approve this application and will feel free to come back to me direct with any further queries you may have.

Yours Faithfully,



George Sewell, MRTPI.

Encs.