

69 High Street, Ruislip, HA4 8JB

Design Statement

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View of the proposals from the south

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Introduction, qualifications, experience

1. My name is Marcus Beale. I am a chartered architect specialising in conservation: managing change whilst preserving cultural significance. I am director of Marcus Beale Architects Ltd, which I founded in 1991.
2. I have Master of Arts degree and a Diploma in architecture from University of Cambridge. I am a member of the Ecclesiastical Architects and Surveyors Association and inspecting architect for several churches within the Diocese of Southwark. I am a permanent member of LB Merton's Design Review Panel, and have sat on LBM Conservation Areas Committee for over 20 years.
3. I have worked continuously on heritage assets for 30 years, including at Oriel College Oxford, where I wrote both the Conservation Management Plan and Masterplan in 2007 and updated them in 2017. I have advised English Heritage on presentation of heritage assets at Dover Castle and Osborne House. My practice carried out the conservation of Westminster Abbey Chapter House for English Heritage, then their largest in house project. I have designed many new projects and works of alteration and extension in Conservation Areas. I am currently advising New College Oxford, St Hilda's College Oxford and Oxford Brookes University on major developments involving significant cultural change in Conservation Areas.
4. In 2017 I advised on the design of a development at 178-182 High Street, Ruislip which has now been successfully completed and occupied.

The purpose and scope of this report

5. This report describes the thinking behind proposals to extend 69 the High Street, Ruislip to provide three new flats. The site is in the Ruislip Village Conservation Area.
6. The report explains how the character of the Conservation Area has been considered in the design, and how the proposals respond to the need to preserve or enhance its character whilst optimising the use of a previously developed site to provide sustainable, new housing. It describes:
 - the site,
 - the proposals, then
 - assesses the impact of the proposals.
7. Please read this report in conjunction with the drawings listed at appendix B, and the accompanying Planning Statement.



178-182 High Street, Ruislip recently extended upwards to designs by MBA, sits comfortably within its setting at three storeys with a further mansard storey set back

The site

8. The application site is part of a shopping parade built in the 1930s on the east side of Ruislip High Street, near to its junction with Ickenham Road.

9. The building's original and current use is as a shop at ground floor with a single flat above the High Street frontage. The shop is serviced from a loading bay at the rear, accessed via a service road parallel to the High Street. Residential access is also from the rear, up external steps and across the flat roof of the shop. To the east of the site, separated by a timber fence, are gardens to semidetached houses on Midcroft Road.

10. The site is in the Ruislip Village Conservation Area and within the 'Developed Area' identified in the local plan.

11. The existing first floor accommodation is of a basic standard with low levels of thermal insulation. The rear part of the site is open and undeveloped. The site is capable of providing much needed housing close to the High Street, an area well served by shops, services, and public transport. The site has a Public Transport Access Level [PTAL] of 4.

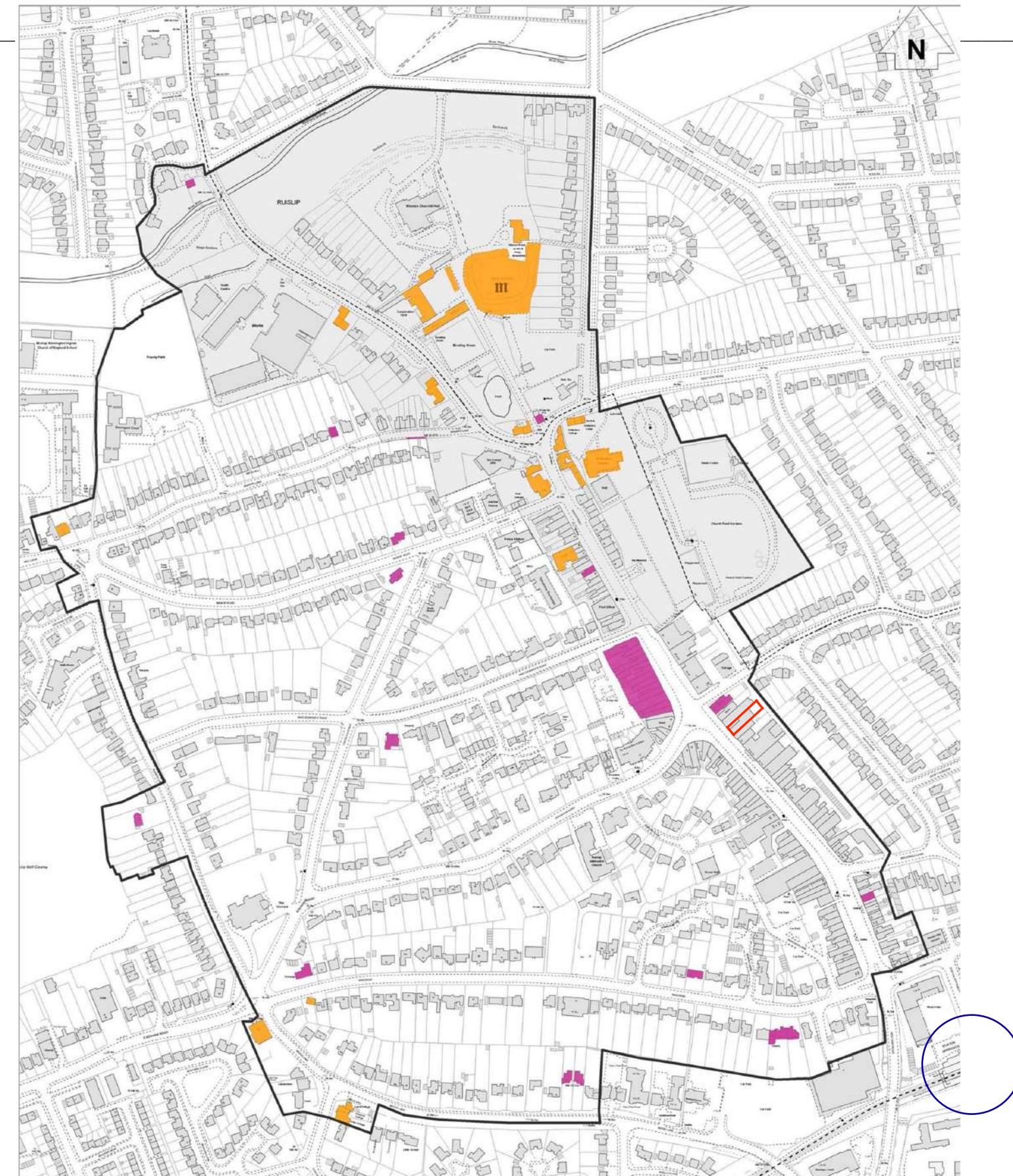
12. Planning policies require applicants to optimise, even maximise, the potential for sustainable new residential development and the site offers an opportunity to achieve this.

The Ruislip Village Conservation Area

13. Conservation areas are defined as "areas of special architectural or historic interest the character or appearance of which it is desirable to preserve or enhance". A conservation area is a designated heritage asset. The National Planning Policy Framework 2019 states at para. 193 that:

When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.¹

14. Development within conservation areas should therefore either preserve or enhance an area's character or appearance, that is: have a neutral or positive effect.



Scheduled Ancient Monuments
 Ruislip Village Conservation Area 1969
 Ruislip Village Conservation Area (Extended) 2009
 Listed Buildings
 Locally Listed Buildings

Ruislip Village Conservation Area map 2010 [LB Hillingdon] The site is outlined in red, the underground station circled in blue.

¹ NPPF 2019 para 193.

15. LB Hillingdon published a Conservation Area Appraisal for Ruislip Village Conservation Area in 2010. It states:

The Ruislip Village Conservation Area ...designated in 1969 ... originally included only the medieval village centre. In 2009, the conservation area was extended to include all of the High Street and the later residential suburbs to the west.²

The medieval village forms the core of the conservation area. This includes (Ruislip) Manor Farm, St. Martin's Church and the buildings immediately surrounding them. This area contains a number of early timber framed listed buildings and Locally Listed buildings. Many un-listed buildings within the area also make a positive contribution to its appearance.

The High Street lies to the immediate west and southwest of the Church and forms the commercial centre of the area. In appearance it is very much a busy and traditional high street. It mainly comprises parades of early 20th century shops of a variety of styles characteristic of the period, with interesting architectural detailing and decoration.

Beyond the High Street and the buildings of the original village centre, are residential areas. These mainly date from the 1920s and 30s and have a spacious and leafy character. They include good quality houses of varied size and design, many set on tree lined roads.

Much of the road pattern that exists today had already been established by 1916. The High Street, Sharps Lane, Ickenham Road and Wood Lane (the old medieval lanes) remained the same. By 1938 there were shops on the High Street that had developed in a linear fashion from the station to the church. Ruislip also had two cinemas, four banks, a police station, post office, two public houses, (the George Inn and the Swan Inn), tennis courts, a bowling green and a hotel.

16. The application site is in the middle of the High Street on its eastern side, within character area 2 as described in the CA Appraisal of 2010.

The buildings are predominantly two and three storey, purpose built commercial parades interspersed with some good quality individual buildings and some more recent infill



Site location plan showing the junction of the High Street and Ickenham Road



View looking north towards the application site [centre left]

² LB Hillingdon Ruislip Village Conservation Area Appraisal July 2010

of varied quality. Whilst the shop fronts are generally unremarkable, the decorative detailing at first floor and above is of considerable visual interest, exhibiting a variety of lively decorative detailing, most of which is characteristic of the architecture of the 1920s and 1930s.

The whole of the High Street is well preserved at the upper levels, with the roofscape being a particularly strong and interesting feature.³

17. Characteristic materials of the High Street in the earlier buildings are render, half timbering and clay tile hanging, strongly reminiscent of the Arts and Crafts and garden suburb movement, for example the architecture of Norman Shaw. Those of the 1920s and 1930s incorporate art deco and early modern influences, as well as classical forms with sometimes baroque detailing. In the later buildings the characteristic materials are brick, stone, and render. Behind the decorated frontages the buildings are simpler and more utilitarian in character.

18. Although the High Street frontages are not uniform their impact is as a group so care must be taken in altering or extending so that the overall balance of the streetscape taken as a whole is maintained. Heights are varied, from 2 to 3 storeys, sometimes with dormer attic storeys above. The ground also slopes gently upward from south to north, giving further variety to the roof line. This variety is an important positive component of its character.



View of the application site [red fascia, right] looking north



View of the application site [red fascia, left] looking south

³ Ruislip CA Appraisal page 31

19. The parade of shops of which no. 69 forms a part conforms to the general description in the conservation area appraisal quoted above. The variety of styles characteristic of the 1920s and 1930s together form a pleasing and varied facade to the commercial centre, although there have been additions and interventions at the upper levels, including in one case telecommunication masts camouflaged as brick.

20. To the north of the site on the corner of Midcroft Road is a bank building [no. 65], locally listed, with a blind-arcaded ground floor and deeply overhanging bracketed eaves, of two storeys with dormered rooms in the roof.

21. Beyond this is a development from approximately the 1980s of two full storeys plus rooms in the roof, no. 61.

22. At the junction of Ickenham Road opposite the site, nos. 82 and 84 High Street are three storeys with a parapet, and of a similar style to the application site. The buildings running north from this are three storey. No. 74 is of three full storeys plus an attic floor with rooms in the roof.

23. South of the application site, from no. 75 southwards, the buildings are of three full storeys, some with fins extending upwards from this. At the southern end of the High Street, nos. 178-182, a recent development comprises three storeys plus mansard [illustrated on page 2].

24. It will be seen that the High Street frontage is varied and many buildings are three storeys, some with additional rooms in the roof.



View east towards the application site outlined in red, from Ickenham Road. Note the three full storeys in the contemporaneous 1930s building on the left at 82-84 High Street

25. East of the site is a service road serving the back entrances and loading bays for the whole parade of shops. The service road is within the Conservation Area.

26. The rear of the parade has less aesthetic significance than the High Street frontage, yet it has historic evidential significance in the contrast between the 'architectural' front elevation and the purely functional areas to the rear. The service road is currently under-maintained. There is little passive surveillance from adjoining buildings, although the side windows at no. 75 give some overlooking.

27. East of the service road, behind a timber fence and a screen of evergreen trees, are private gardens of the houses at Midcroft Road and South Drive, 1930s semidetached houses with long rear gardens, outside the Conservation Area. The houses and layout are characteristic of suburban development of the inter-war years influenced by the Garden Suburb movement of the early 20th century.



View south east along the service road from Midcroft Road. The application site is immediately behind the metal-clad staircase.

View north east from the first floor of the application site, towards the private gardens on Midcroft Road. The boundary between the service road and the gardens is a timber fence about 2m high, protected by a crash rail. The gardens have mature planting including an evergreen screen about 4m high.

The proposals

28. The proposal is to:

- extend the High Street frontage vertically upwards to form a three storey elevation, and
- construct a new residential building at the rear.

Extension to the front elevation

29. The front elevation is composed in a classical idiom, its central window with an architectural stone surround and a curved pediment supported on scroll brackets.

30. Much of the charm in Ruislip High Street derives from the variety of styles represented in the 1930s elevations, a reminder that whilst architects were experimenting with art deco and modern styles, they had a strong grounding in classical architecture.

31. Above the wide single span of the shopfront, the materials are a red brown brick, with red brick flat arched window openings, each with a stone keystone.

32. It is proposed to extend upwards in brickwork to match closely the language of the existing elevation, without upstaging it. The upper storey will have five windows matching the width of the existing openings at first floor level, but with less ornamentation, as befits an attic storey. The red brick flat arches will be replicated in the new windows. The existing parapet - a stone cornice above a soldier course will be carefully removed and the detail replicated at a higher level.

33. In this way the extension will be visually unobtrusive, subordinate, blend in with surroundings, and maintain the significance of the architectural features of the original building.

34. The extended building will be taller than its immediate neighbours, but lower than the parade from no. 75 southwards. Many of the buildings in the area are three storeys high.

Amenity space

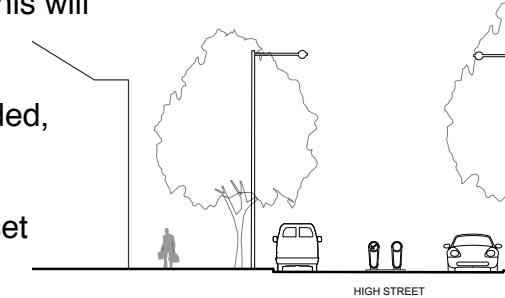
35. Behind the extended front elevation, the flat roof of the shop will be used to access the residential accommodation above and as amenity space for the flats. Private amenity space will be provided for the first floor flats, with communal space in the central area for those on the second floor. A timber screen will be provided along the sides of the podium to give privacy.



Concept sketch of the extended front elevation. Note the stone dressings on the original building, and the simplified upper storey proposed

Rear building

36. At the back, a three storey building is proposed, the ground floor left open to allow service access to the shops. Above this will be two storeys of residential accommodation.



37. The rear building will be lower than the front once extended, an appropriate relationship of front to back.

38. The rear building will be stepped in plan, with the sides set back from the site boundary to break up the rear facade into smaller vertical units, and to give depth and shadow to the elevation. The central bay will have windows with fixed vertical louvres directing the view southwards to mitigate overlooking of the private gardens to Midcroft Road.

39. The distance between the rear of the front building and the new flats is about 20m,⁴ reducing to about 18m at its narrowest point where there is a projecting bay on the rear building. Kitchens and living rooms overlook the central podium, from which the flats are entered. The more private bedrooms face outwards.

Amount of accommodation

40. The development will involve reconstructing the existing flat behind the original facade retained at first floor level, and will provide three new flats,

1 x 2 bed flat of 65m²,

2 x 2 bed flats of 73.5m² [approx.]

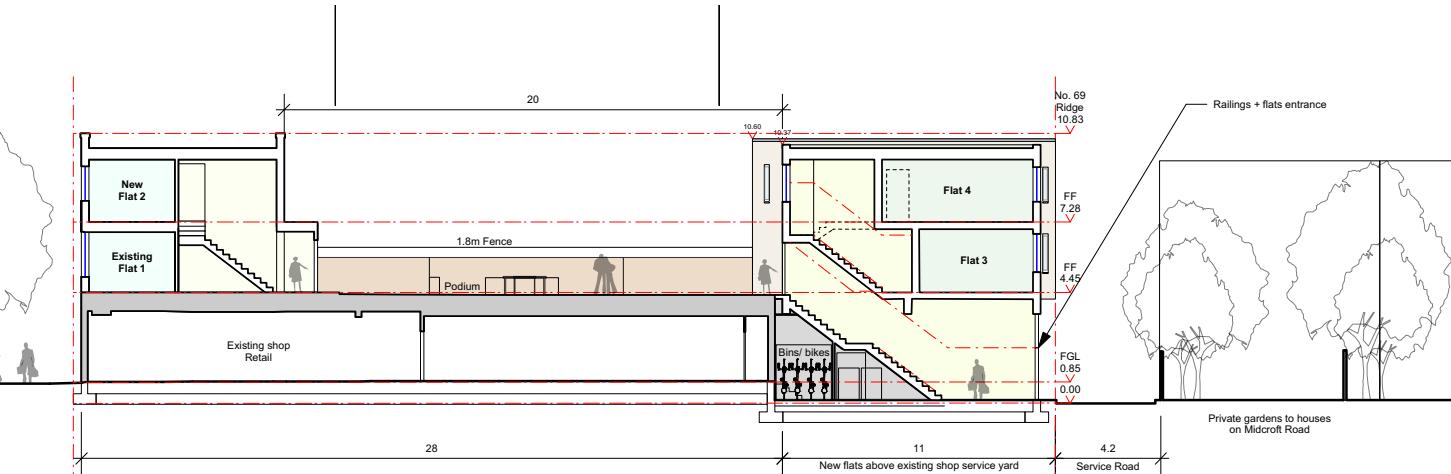
These will meet the London plan space requirements for a 3 person and 4 person flats, respectively.

Materials

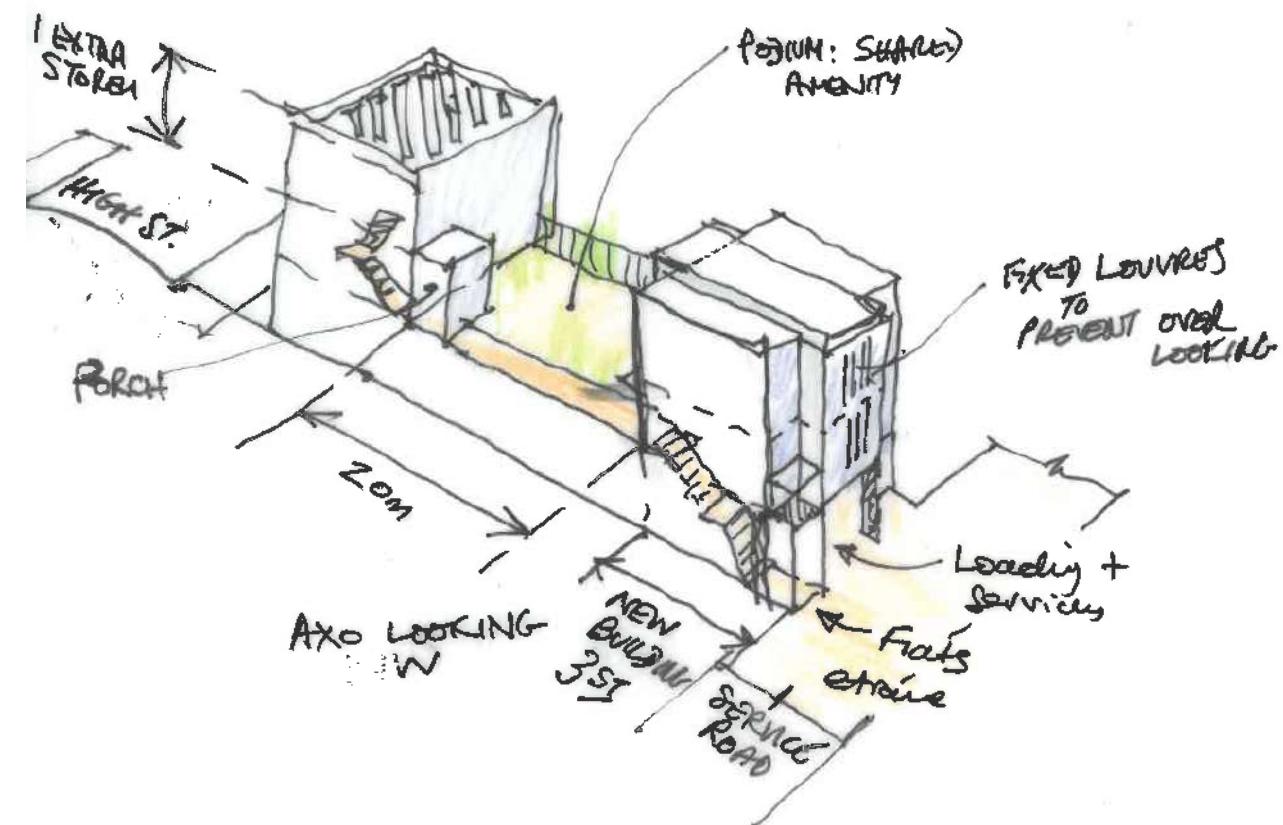
41. Materials will be brick [for the external elevations] and render for the internal elevations. On the High Street frontage, sash windows will be provided to match the existing. Elsewhere the windows will be composite, with PPC aluminium exterior and timber internally.

Cycle and recycling storage

42. Cycle parking and recycling is provided at ground floor level under the stairs at the rear building for all the flats, accessed from the rear service yard.



Cross section through the proposed development. The High Street is on the left



Concept sketch showing the relationship of the rear and front buildings

⁴ They are not exactly parallel.

Environmental sustainability

43. The new buildings will be constructed of lightweight timber frame or metal stud construction, which will provide high levels of thermal insulation and air tightness. Environmental systems will meet the requirements of the Building Regulations. The existing front brick wall will be thermally lined.

Social Sustainability

44. The central, communal amenity space will encourage a sense of community. The organisation with the living rooms facing inwards means that residents will be aware of each other without disturbing privacy, also encouraging a sense of community

The common entrance

The impact of the proposals

45. The principal impacts on the Conservation Area will be its effect on

- the High Street frontage,
- rear of the properties in Midcroft Road.

Impact on the High Street frontage

46. The new building will extend the existing facade without disrupting the overall balance of the group of buildings forming the eastern side of the High Street.

Although taller than its immediate neighbours, there is no strong formal relationship between these buildings. The extended building will sit comfortably within the scale of the wider surrounding area, which is predominantly 3 storeys high.

47. The proposed extension follows faithfully the language and materials of the existing building so does not fundamentally change its character. The building retains the original architectural features, complements them, and replicates the cornice detail which is a characteristic and attractive feature of the original building. I conclude that there is no harm to the aesthetic or historic significance of the High Street within the Conservation Area. The character of the impact is minor positive.

Impact on the properties on Midcroft Road

48. Daylight and sunlight. There will be no unacceptable loss of daylight and sunlight to the properties or their gardens at Midcroft Road, because the development is set back from the boundary.

49. Privacy and overlooking. The gardens are separated from the rear of the new building by the service road, about 4m wide, a timber fence, and an evergreen hedge about 4m high. This will screen the lower levels of the development when viewed from the private gardens. Fixed, angled, external vertical louvres are proposed over the windows on the central bay, angled southwards. This will give a greater sense of privacy to the residential gardens.



View of the proposals from the north

Impact on the rear of the parade and service road

50. The rear elevation will be stepped in plan: a central bay and recessed sides. This breaks up the form and of the building to allow a composed elevation of appropriate scale, materiality, and texture in relation to the whole parade of shops when viewed from the east.

51. Surveillance of the service road will be increased by overlooking from the new flats, improving the safety and security of the area. Side windows will be provided in the central bay allowing long views up and down the service road. The residential use means it will be overlooked at night.



Overall impact on the Conservation Area

52. The impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be neutral, since the new building will blend into the existing rear elevations of the shopping parade, and is of a similar scale, mass and materiality to other existing buildings within the parade. The Conservation Area is a designated Heritage asset. Conservation is '*the process of maintaining and managing change to a heritage asset in a way that sustains and, where appropriate, enhances its significance.*'⁵ The buildings within the Conservation Area are to improve the quality of the building stock and surrounding spaces. The impacts overall are minor positive.

Conclusion

53. We believe this proposal optimises the use of a previously developed site which has potential to provide good new housing. One poor quality flat will be replaced by four high quality flats. The development will be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable over the long term.

- The character of the conservation area will be preserved.
- Increased surveillance at the front and rear will materially improve safety.
- Impacts on adjoining properties will be acceptable, and are mitigated by design.
- The existing building will be improved and upgraded.

We therefore commend these proposals for your approval.



Rear, east elevation. Note this view will be screened by vegetation in the gardens of Midcroft Road



Vertical aluminium louvres

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⁵ National Planning Policy Framework 2019 p.65

Appendix A - Previous Planning Pre-applications

Development proposals have previously been drawn up for the site, by others. The first proposal was to add 2 floors to the frontage building and a detached four storey building at the rear to provide 5 additional residential units. Pre-application advice from the local planning authority, LB Hillingdon dated 30 January 2020 was that they would object to these proposals, because of the scale and the design. The scheme was considered to be harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Revised proposals, dated 20 March 2020, were submitted for a smaller scheme, one additional storey at the front in the form of a mansard roof and a three storey building at the rear, for 3 additional units. Conservation and design advice was received from the LPA, dated 14 April 2020, objecting to the revised proposals, for similar reasons.

The current proposals address the concerns raised at the pre-application stage as follows:

1. By extending the facade upwards with simple brick detailing the existing facade and the character of the parade as a whole is preserved.
2. The rear building is lower than the front building once extended.
3. The rear building has a modulated facade with receding wings either side of a central bay. This breaks up the elevation into smaller units and gives a balanced architectural composition to the new building.
4. Potential issues of overlooking and privacy to the gardens at the rear of Midcroft Road are mitigated by installing fixed vertical louvres on the central windows of the new residential building directing views to give oblique views towards the south, whilst providing good levels of daylight and outlook to the new flats.
5. The flat roof above the existing shop will be used as private and communal amenity space for the flats.
6. An adequate distance is maintained as a 'back to back' distance between habitable rooms in the front and rear flats.

Appendix B - Drawings