

# 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 and more recently on the Hounslow Design Review Panel.
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.



*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*

7. An application was made in September 2020 [ref 1983/APP/2020/2657] for: *Extension at the front of the property above the shopfront to provide 1 self contained flat above (use class C3) at second floor level, and erection of a new three storey building at the rear of the property to provide 2 x self contained flats (use class C3) above an open loading bay and associated bin and cycle store.* The application was refused on 6 November 2020 for the reasons which can be summarised as:

- The development to the rear was considered to be incongruous and fail to preserve or enhance the character of the Conservation area.
- The front extension ditto.
- The central bedroom at the rear of the site would have inadequate outlook.
- The rear facing windows within the site would have less than 21m separation distance, resulting in loss of privacy.

The design has been revised and the report explains the design modifications and the thinking behind them.

8. Please read this report in conjunction with the drawings listed at appendix B, and the accompanying Planning Statement.

#### The site

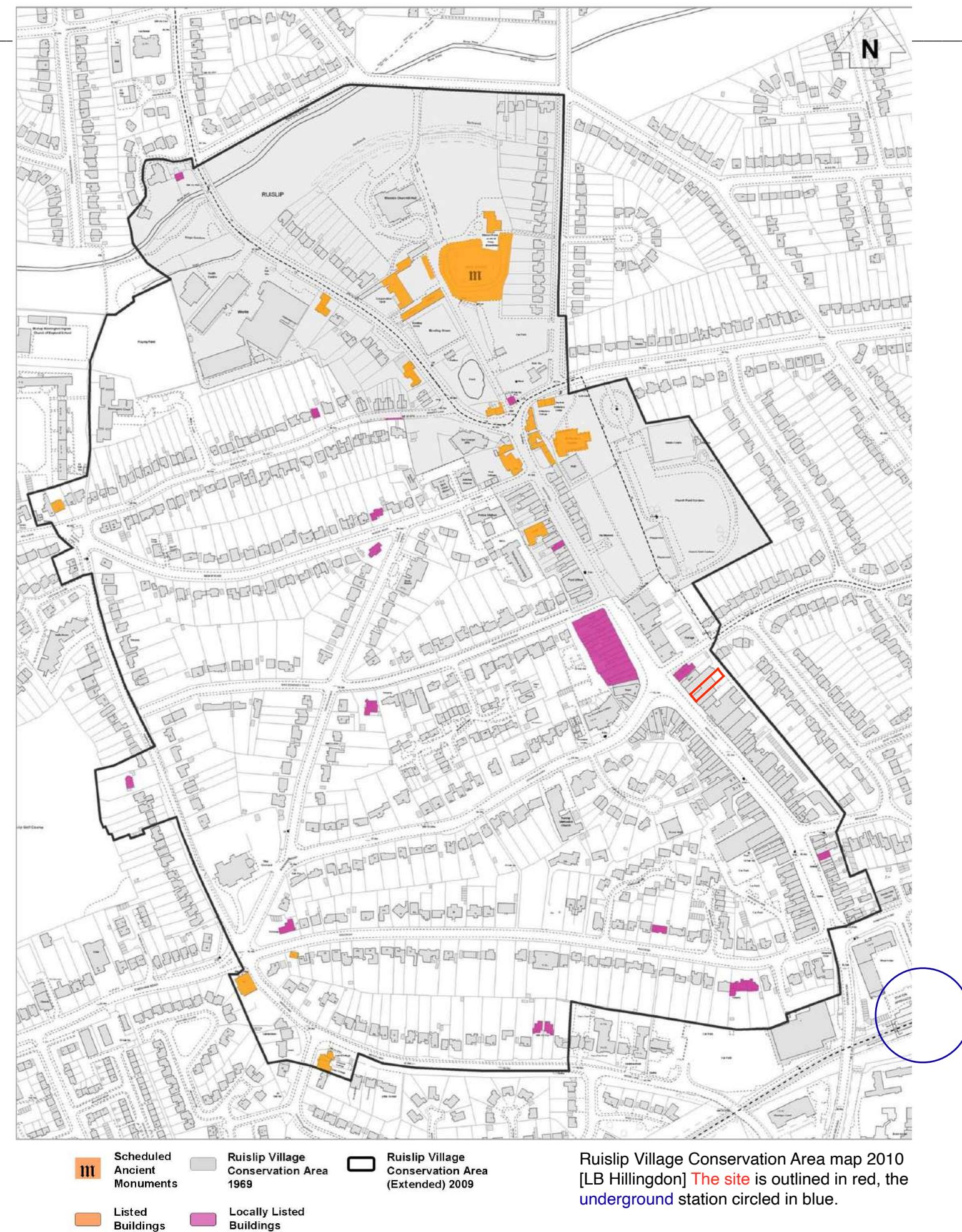
9. The application site is part of a shopping parade built in the 1930s on the east side of Ruislip High Street, near to its junction with Ickenham Road.

10. 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.

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

12. 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.

13. 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**

14. 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.<sup>1</sup>*

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

16. 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.<sup>2</sup>*

*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.*

17. 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 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.<sup>3</sup>*

18. 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.

19. 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*

<sup>3</sup> Ruislip CA Appraisal page 31

20. 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.

21. 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.

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

23. 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.

24. 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].

25. 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 of the corner, diagonally opposite the site, of Ruislip High Street and Ickenham Road. Note the three full storeys in the contemporaneous 1930s building at 82-84 High Street, which sets a precedent for how to extend upwards harmoniously.*



*The application site viewed from the west. Each unit is treated differently and the units either side of no 69 are lower than their surroundings at only 2 storeys.*

*View looking west towards Ickenham Road from Midcroft Road opposite the service road, showing the rendered elevation of the bank.*



*View looking north west showing the group of buildings diagonally opposite the application site, illustrating the varying size and styles. The predominate height is three storeys, with modern buildings taller still.*



26. East of the site is a service road serving the back entrances and loading bays for the whole parade of shops. Although part of the Conservation Area, it is not at present welcoming, safe or an attractive area. The roadway itself is under-maintained. There is little passive surveillance from adjoining buildings, although the side windows at no. 75 give some overlooking. A metal-clad staircase gives the impression that the area is not secure. The back of the parade has less aesthetic significance than the High Street frontage. Cheaper materials were used, Fletton bricks rather than red facing bricks, and there are no architectural 'features', rather the buildings are strictly utilitarian, with metal windows and concrete cills. There is a contrast between the 'architectural' front elevation and the purely functional areas to the rear.

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.



## 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.

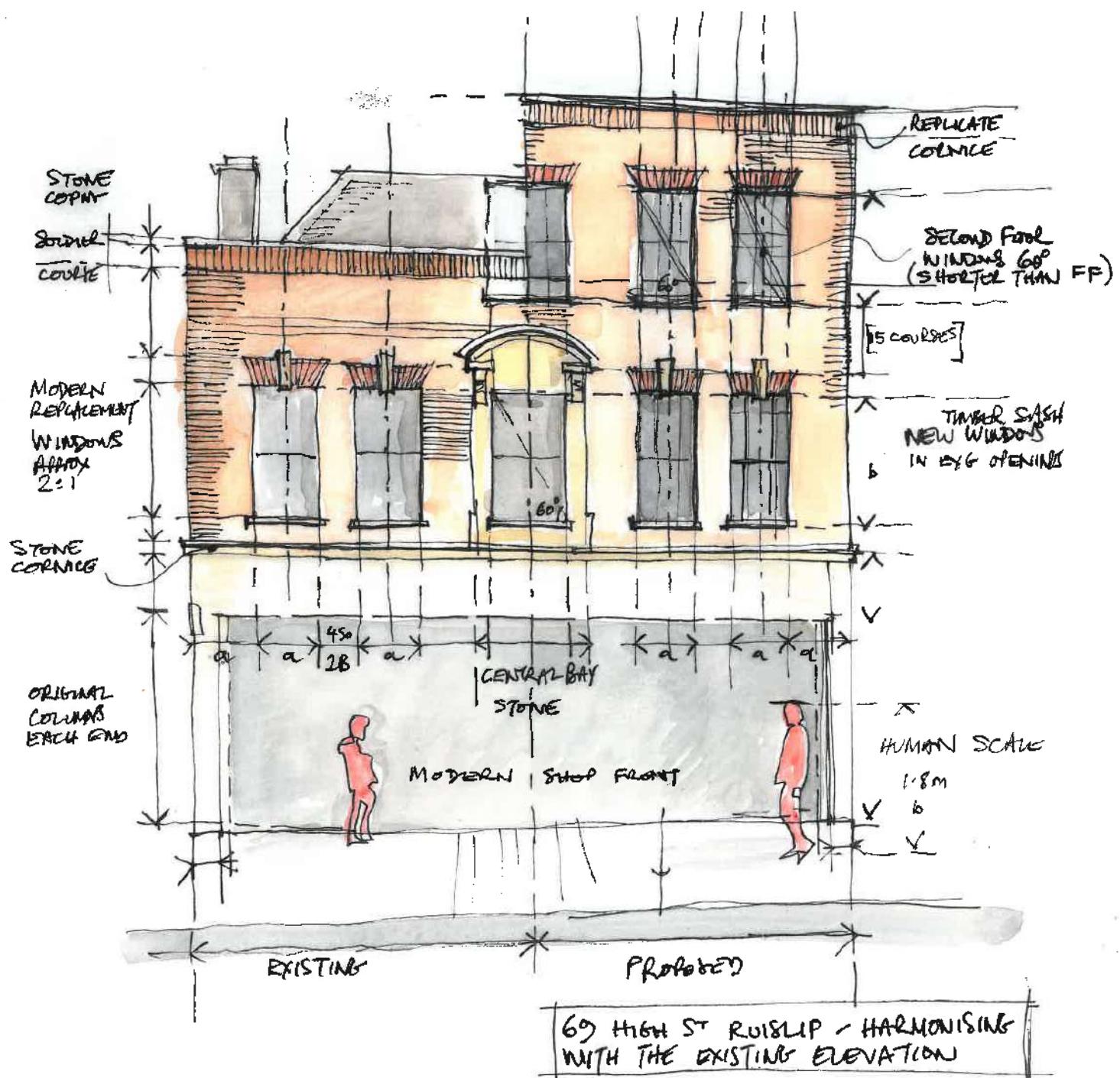
34. The extended building will be taller than its immediate neighbours, but lower than the parade from no. 75 southwards. Many of the buildings in the area are three storeys high.

### 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.



High Street elevation showing the proposals in context



### ***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.

39. The distance between the rear of the front building and the new flats is about 20m,<sup>4</sup> 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. Because the back to back distance is slightly less than the required 21m, the second floor inward facing windows are angled southwards. This will prevent overlooking and loss of privacy within the courtyard.

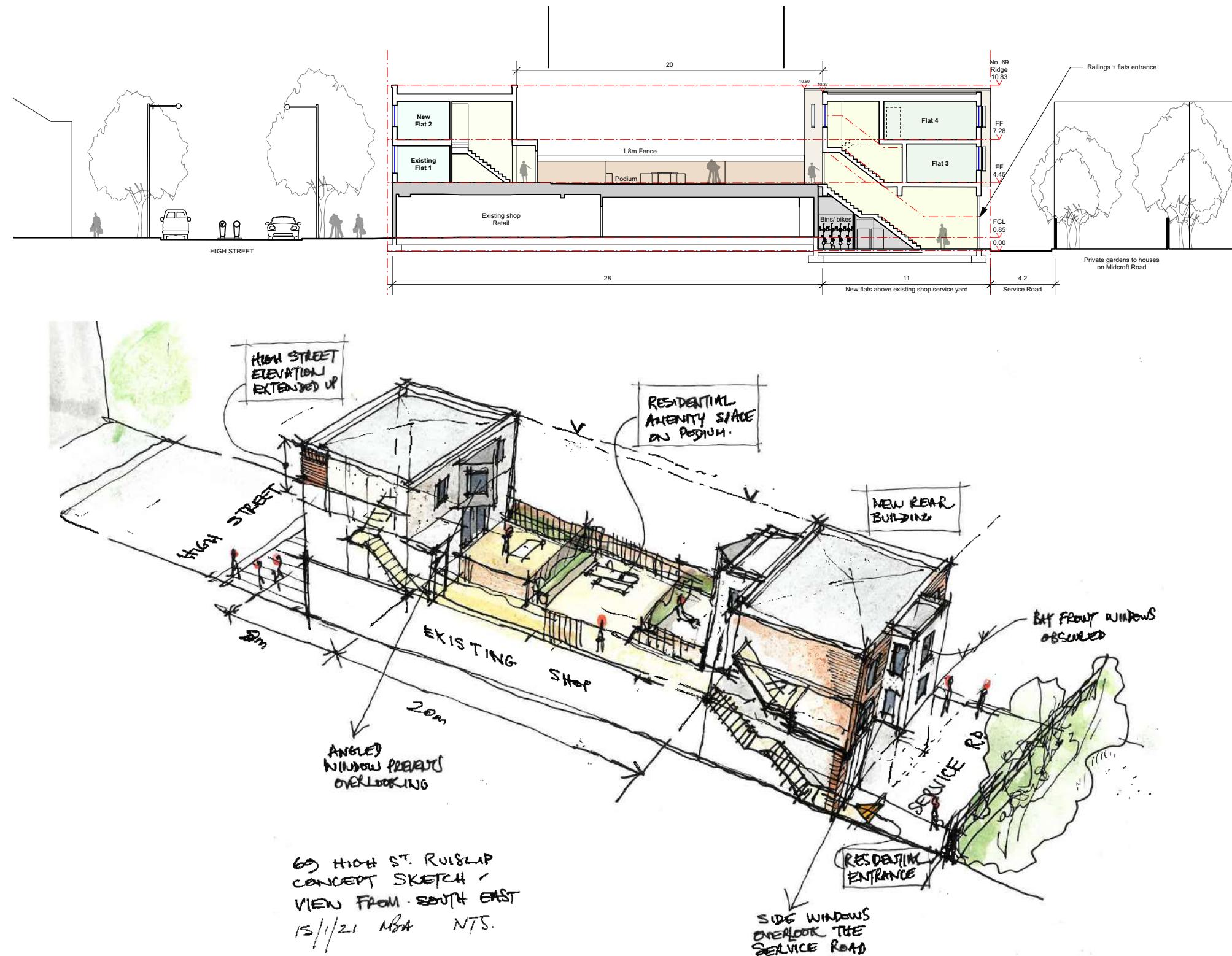
### *Amount of accommodation*

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 65m<sup>2</sup>,  
1 x 2 bed flat of 68m<sup>2</sup>  
1 x 2 bed flat of 73m<sup>2</sup> [approx.]

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

## **Materials**

41. Materials will be brick for the external elevations and render for the internal elevations. The reason for proposing render for the internal elevations is because the walls will be lightweight, and brick would not 'honestly' express the construction. Render is a characteristic material within the Conservation Area. On the High Street frontage, sash windows will be provided to match the existing. Elsewhere the windows will be composite, with PPC aluminium exterior, relating the the existing metal windows nearby and timber internally to give a domestic feel to the flat interiors.



<sup>4</sup> They are not exactly parallel.

### ***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.

### ***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 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. The frontage as a whole would benefit from the sympathetic upward extension of the lower buildings. The development would therefore create good precedent.

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. There is therefore no harm to the aesthetic or historic significance of the High Street within the Conservation Area. The character of the impact is minor positive.



*View of the proposals from the south*

### ***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. The rear facing windows on the central bay will be obscured, as will the bathroom windows to their right. The bay will have side windows looking north and south over the service road, which will give a good quality of light and outlook for the flats. This will give a greater sense of privacy to the residential gardens.

### ***Impact on the rear of the parade and service road***

50. The rear elevation will be stepped in plan, with 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 dramatically increased by overlooking from the new flats, improving the safety and security of the area. Side windows in the central bay allow 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 High Street frontage. The impact on the rear elevations of the shopping parade and the service road will be positive, an improvement in what is currently a poor quality urban environment. The development is of a similar scale, mass and materiality to other existing buildings within the parade.



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

## 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.

54. The proposals accord with the Government's overarching planning policies: housing growth, the effective and efficient use of sustainably located land, and the re-use of brownfield land for housing. Furthermore, the Government acknowledges that building upwards to use the airspace above existing buildings can play an important role in delivering new homes both in town centres and elsewhere - Paragraph 118(e) of the NPPF, for example, is clear that Council's should respond positively to suitable opportunities to deliver additional new homes above existing residential and commercial premises.

We therefore commend these proposals for your approval.

### **Marcus Beale**

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For MBA

## Appendix A - Recent Planning History

### Pre-application

Development proposals had 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 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 obscuring the central windows of the new residential building and providing side windows to the central bay.
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.

### Planning application

In August 2020 planning permission was sought for an earlier version of this scheme. [Ref: 1983/APP/2020/2657]. The application was refused for the following reasons:

1. The proposed development to the rear of the site, by reason of its siting, size, scale, bulk and design, would result in an incongruous and visually intrusive form of development, which would fail to harmonise with the architectural composition of the original property, would be detrimental to the character, appearance and visual amenities of the street scene and would fail to either preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the surrounding Ruislip Village Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies BE1 and HE1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One - Strategic Policies (November 2012), Policies DMHB 1, DMHB 4, DMHB 11 and DMHB 12 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part Two - Development Management Policies (January 2020), Policy 7.8 of the London Plan (2016) and the NPPF.
2. The proposed front extension, by reason of its design and use of materials, would result in an incongruous and visually intrusive form of development, which would fail to harmonise with the architectural composition of the original property, would be detrimental to the character, appearance and visual amenities of the street scene and would fail to either preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the surrounding Ruislip Village Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies BE1 and HE1 of the Hillingdon Local Plan: Part One - Strategic Policies (November 2012), Policies DMHB 1, DMHB 4, DMHB 11 and DMHB 12 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part Two - Development Management Policies (January 2020), Policy 7.8 of the London Plan (2016) and the NPPF.
3. The proposal would provide inadequate outlook for the central bedrooms in the rear three storey element of the proposal and would therefore give rise to a substandard form of living accommodation to the detriment of the amenity of future occupiers. The proposal is thus contrary to, Policy DMHB 11 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part Two - Development Management Policies (January 2020) and Policy 3.5 of the London Plan (2016).
4. The development, by virtue of its rear facing windows of both the front and rear elevations of the proposed units having less than the minimum 21 metres separation distance between windows of habitable rooms, would be detrimental to the amenities of any future occupiers by reason of loss of privacy. Therefore the proposal would be contrary to Policy DMHB 11 of the Hillingdon Local Plan Part Two - Development Management Policies (January 2020).

**Responses to the reasons for refusal:**

In response to reason 4, the internal second floor windows have been angled so that there are no longer any direct lines of sight between unobscured windows less than 21 metres apart.

In response to reason 3, the rear wall line on the service road has been stepped back to allow enough room for side windows from the central bay, which will be unobscured.

In response to reason 2, we submit sketches showing how the design and use of materials harmonise with the architectural composition of the original property.

In response to reason 1:

The rear wall has been brought back slightly and the parapet lowered. The fixed louvres have been omitted. This has resulted in a smaller, simpler and better modulated rear elevation. The rear of the parade is typically of utilitarian warehouse type structures in Fletton bricks. The proposal will introduce a building of similar scale and size to the earlier warehouse extensions, but will significantly improve surveillance and safety in the service road. The rear elevation, as amended, does harmonise with the existing properties and makes a positive contribution to what is at present an unwelcoming urban environment. The materials: brick and render are characteristic of the area. Rendered properties in close proximity to the applications site include:

63 High Street a prominent building on the corner of Midcroft Road, which is rendered at front, side and rear,

65 High Street, rendered at the front,

83 High Street, rendered at the front,

1 Midcroft Road, next to the service road, which is pebble dashed.

**The principle of the extensions: optimising the use of brownfield sites and promoting local regeneration:**

Allowing no. 69 to extend up would set a precedent for the shops either side 67 and 71 to also extend up. This is in line with government policy: to provide additional good quality housing and to support the High Street. Both buildings adjoining the application site are of poor design and through planning the council could control how these are extended and improve these buildings. The officer's report accompanying the planning refusal states that the service road would benefit from a tidy up. The development will go some way to achieving this. Following this development, hopefully other owners will follow suit and invest money to regenerate the service road.

This has happened locally in Ruislip Manor, at 34/36 Victoria Road HA4 0AG, where flats were built at the back of 2 shops where the service road was in decay and residents found the road unusable after heavy rain. Now other people have also built and the road has been resurfaced at the expense of the shop owners leading to a general enhancement of the area.

We would also point out the improvements to 178/182 High Street [ref: 28388/app/2017/1447 & 28388/app/2016/3332] illustrated on p.2 of this report, which have greatly benefited the surrounding area, despite being objected heavily by the officers at the time as something which would have a negative effect. This development was allowed at appeal and later the 2nd application was granted by Hillingdon. It involved an extension to the rear at 2nd and 3rd floor which was only 4 metres from the garden of 4 Kingsend, and a considerable change to the frontage by adding dormer windows.

**Appendix B - Drawings**