

DESIGN + ACCESS STATEMENT

Planning application for refurbishment and extension of a single detached dwelling

33 Gatehill Rd
Northwood
HA6 3QN

Planning Refs:

Pre-application advice 22910/PRC/2019/35 dated 08.02.2019

Previously refused application 22910/APP/2017/4620



*Existing East / Front Elevation onto
Gatehill Rd*



*Existing West / Rear Elevation from
garden*

Summary of the existing context and revised scheme

Gate Hill Farm Estate Area of Special Local Character, and Gatehill Rd in particular, is dominated by a well-established treescape surrounding the individual houses dispersed among them. This is the general defining character of the area from which all the properties benefit. The house is not listed.

The property is on Gate Hill Farm Estate, Northwood, and consists of a detached two storey house with an incorporated garage, built in the late 1930's and an authentic example of Arts & Crafts style. The roof is configured with chalet-style first floor accommodation housed within the long sweep of the plain tiled roof. To the rear the existing external walls rise to two storeys with a double gable above on the scale of a regular two storey house. The north boundary has a strong tree barrier separating Gatehill Rd houses from Ravenswood Park, a completely separate development beyond, with its own roadway.

The building orientations of Nos. 31 and 33 are not aligned with Gatehill Rd. like neighbouring houses but are turned to work with the contour of the land. Other neighbours are some distance away and No.31, the closest, is located at the extreme rear of its garden bordering No.33. The general dominance of rich vegetation ensures considerable privacy between houses. No.33 is unusual in Gatehill Rd; neighbouring houses tend to be larger scale and two-storey. This new proposal increases the scale of No.33 and more closely matches the floor area of its neighbours. By extending mainly to the rear, the aesthetic, scale and character it offers the street scene is retained and arguably enhanced. It is an overriding priority for the greenery to be preserved.

The painted, smooth-rendered walls of the original house are presumed to be of solid brickwork, some may have a cavity, but certainly no added insulation. Most of the house retains its original character, with only minor interventions to the rear. However the house is in general need of significant financial investment, maintenance, and refurbishment to upgrade the fabric and performance of the building as a whole, particularly to achieve acceptable energy efficiency. The aesthetic lends itself to external breathable insulation in the render treatment which is the most efficient location for it. The style of the original timber black painted windows with single glazed leaded lights will be respected aesthetically but with double or triple glazing in the proposed refurbishment, retaining the original character and spirit. The detail specifications we suggest can be negotiated and subject to planning condition.

Internally the original house has three bedrooms and a bathroom on the first floor. The proposed scheme has five bedrooms at first floor and takes advantage of the original height of central roof space to create a second loft level with an open plan games area and spare bedroom/study. All bedrooms have east, south or west aspect, none are limited to north light.

In this proposal the garage space has become incorporated into the habitable space as home office/study and utility ; driveway parking has been normal practice for many years, with the garage used for storage and utility. The new living area downstairs forms an open plan which maximises appreciation of the garden, visible throughout the ground floor. Like the first floor all ground floor spaces can receive sunlight at some time of the day; none are limited to north light. Stairs have been relocated centrally in the new configuration for efficient use of space with new access to the upper loft, utilising headroom above the ground floor stairs, beneath the front gable. The entrance hall includes a double height atrium connecting the floor levels.

The new scheme extends the original to be more proportionate to the size of the plot than the existing house, respecting the character and appearance of the original house and with consideration of the adjoining properties to mutual benefit. The footprint of the existing house is just under one-eighth of the plot area; the proposed footprint about a quarter - still a healthy balance and in keeping with others in Gatehill Rd., whose average footprint is substantially greater than the original at No.33. Existing total plot size here is c.850 sq m.; existing footprint c.100 sq m.; proposed footprint c.210 sq m.

The two storey rear elevation of the original house has a very different scale to the front. This new proposal has applied the same volumetric approach of the front elevation to the west and south, especially with the proposed two-storey west wing. The eaves are kept as low as possible to maintain roof dominance, building on the aesthetic of the front elevations. One of the two original two-storey rear gables is projected as an outrigger, retaining the profile of the existing. Smaller scale interventions like the west bay window and corner garden room give human scale and link house and garden at ground level.

The proposed scheme has been a response to site topography, orientation, neighbouring properties and landscaping. The aim has been to enlarge the existing house without losing the character and spirit of the original building. In the design process many opportunities have been taken, especially with the stepped layout, for the best interaction with the geometry of the site to maximise privacy and minimise intrusiveness to neighbouring properties. Respect for the original Arts & Crafts style has been a guiding principle in the process of meeting clients' needs; with this in mind the overall size, bulk, and scale has been reduced significantly from the previous design to be sympathetic to the original and the surrounding character of the ASLC.

General description of the property in pre-application advice from Hillingdon Planning Dept:

"The application site comprises a two-storey detached property situated on rising ground on the northwest side of Gatehill Rd. The street scene is residential in character and appearance comprising mainly large detached properties set in generous plots. The application site lies within the Gate Hill Farm Estate Area of Special Local Character (ASLC) and the 'Developed Area' as identified in the Hillingdon Local Plan : Part One - Strategic Policies (Nov 2012). The site lies within the area covered by Tree Preservation Order (TPO) 165. The proposal involves erection of two side, front and rear elevations."

Pre-application summary of planning policy, guidelines and issues involved with the previous design proposal :

"The main issues for consideration in determining this application relate to the

- effect of the proposal on the character and appearance of the original dwelling*
- impact on the visual amenities of the surrounding area*
- impact on the Gate Hill Farm Estate ASLC*
- impact on the residential amenity of the neighbouring dwellings*
- provision of acceptable residential amenity for the application property*
- availability of parking*

Main guidelines in Hillingdon Local Planning Policy : Part Two - Saved UDP Policies quoted in the pre-application advice : BE5, BE6, BE15, BE13, BE19 plus Sections 4.0, 5.0, 6.0, 7.0 of Hillingdon Design & Accessibility Statement: Residential Extensions.

Main planning issues listed in the pre-application advice 1 > 8 on the previous scheme with design responses :
[quotes from Pre-App advice in italics and previous refusal 22910/APP/2017/4620 unless otherwise stated]

1. Principle of development:

"Extension is acceptable in principle subject to detailed development management considerations including impact on the ASLC".

2. Design:

"This is a detached chalet-style property built in the late 1930's and uniquely orientated... whilst the property has been altered in the past it does retain Arts and Crafts style evident elsewhere in the area" (mitigated by more recent development). It is important new development that relates to established local distinctiveness in accordance with the National Policy Planning Framework. The loss of the original dwelling form would be considered regrettable."

"the [previous] proposal... completely obscure[s] and change[s] the form of the original building"

BE5 : "requires new developments in an Area of Special Local Character to harmonise with the materials, design features, architectural style and building heights predominant in the area".

The existing house has retained more of its original character than many houses in the area, which have been built and modified to a wide range of standards and criteria over the years, not always sensitively. The bulk and form of this proposal generally and especially the roof, has been comprehensively reworked and scaled down from the previous proposal with the aim of enhancing the character of the original rather than imposing an alien aesthetic. In the process the building materials, design features, architectural style and building heights have all been addressed sympathetically.

BE6 : " new developments must reflect the materials, design features and architectural style predominant in the area and sufficient architectural variety must be achieved within new development in order to retain the area's characteristics of large individually designed houses".

In this proposal, revised in response to the pre-application advice, the aim has been to carefully build on and enhance the building's specific and unique character to accommodate current needs without diminishing the appeal and architectural merit of the original. The property is approximately 85 years old and due an upgrade in building standards, particularly its energy efficiency. To this end, the construction and insulation of the house envelope will significantly reduce energy consumption whilst retaining the material and design aesthetic.

BE15 : “alterations and extensions to existing buildings (are) to harmonise with the scale, form and architectural composition of the original building

This revision respects the spaciousness of the frontage and the horizontality of the low eaves; it retains the generous sweep of roof plane which is one of the most striking characteristics of this house. The ground-hugging concept of low eaves is maintained with the original volumetric interaction on different levels between roof and wall massing, rather than scaling up to a regular two-storey house concept. The new proposal strongly reasserts the existing architectural composition - increasing the internal space but retaining the spirit of the original.

**BE13 : “layout and appearance of extensions are to harmonise with the existing street scene
BE19 : “new development to complement or improve the amenity and character of the area”**

[previous refusal]

This revised scheme has been carefully considered to achieve a solution that keeps the character of the original in a sympathetic architectural form. The result retains a strong resonance with its 1930's history, more so than many of the surrounding houses. The net effect harmonises with the original and arguably blends well with the local vernacular. If this is true the street scene will be enhanced by its slightly elevated position, amongst the abundance of surrounding vegetation and trees.

BE22 : “two-storey side extensions should retain a minimum 1.5m set-in from the boundary on the Gate Hill Farm Estate”

The block plan has been thoroughly checked in total context and now accurately delineates the site boundaries and their relationship to the building, existing and proposed. The north and south wings are both single storey with chalet type rooms in the roofs, rather than full two-storey extensions. Those two ends of the building closest to the boundary north and south still exceed the 1.5m minimum guidance. There is a distance of c.1.92m to the north boundary rather than the apparent 1.2m in the previous proposal (an existing wall was assumed to be the boundary in error - the true boundary runs adjacent and beyond), and 4.4m to the south boundary. There is approximately 4m between the rear west wing corner (two storey) and the north boundary, at their closest point.

**Hillingdon Design & Accessibility Statement - Residential Extensions:
“extensions should appear subordinate in scale to the original building”.**

The previous ridge and crown roofs to the north and south wings have been lowered by a storey, removing the habitable loft space in those locations, leaving only the central ridge on an east-west axis which maintains the original massing and proportion. Cladding, door and window design have all been scaled down from the previous scheme to be closer to the original. The loft space internally is much reduced but to an appropriate degree for a more modest extension to the original site and house. There is a small crown roof to the first floor south wing.

HDAS Res. Ext. Para 7.2, “front dormers will not be acceptable ... for most buildings of two or more storeys unless this is an original character of the area”.

The original chalet has two key dormer windows: one on the front east elevation, a second within the south flank roof. The proposal retains both features. They give light and ventilation to make the roof space habitable in a chalet form. Aesthetically in this case they work well in the long sweep of roof, punctuating with a domestic scale of reference. New dormers are also within these guidelines where it is “an original character of the area”. The new proposal includes a new dormer to the rear west wing loftspace, on the south flank, with obscure glazing.

“To the north the existing boundary treatment will prevent any material overlooking”

“There are no properties to the East that would be adversely affected. This is frontage to frontage development and the proposal does not materially affect the distance between the properties”

[Pre-App 3 : Amenity]

The same conditions obtain for both these elevations in the revised proposal ; existing depth and density of vegetation and trees screening the north boundary and surrounding the eastern frontage will be retained throughout; the frontage footprint is no greater than the previous proposal.

Ref: south and west boundaries shared with No.31:

BE21, BE24 “the development would adversely affect the amenities of the adjoining properties....” proximity to the drive [to No.31], no opportunity for meaningful landscape and potential loss of existing landscape could mean that it has an overbearing impact and visual intrusion”

[Pre-App 3 : Amenity]

No 31

No.33



No.29

No.29, 31 and 33 Gatehill Rd have an unusual triangular relationship, each with a different orientation; No.33 and No.29 closest to the road, and No.31 unusually set to the extreme rear of the property behind No.33. All three are c. 25 to 30 metres apart, including the proposed build. The privacy of all three is achieved principally with the treescape. The front elevation and windows to No.31 face the rear of No.29 diagonally, and is screened by the trees, in the same way the rear of No.33 is screened from No.31. No.31 has no windows facing No.33. No.33 is the furthest distance from the other two, both of which have a footprint considerably larger than No.33.

No.29 has an original two storey outrigger to the rear which extends further back than the No.33 proposal. The proposed No.33 final footprint will be more comparable in size to Nos.29 and 31, but without the same two-storey scale to the frontage. Neither rear extension, the existing one to No.29 nor the proposed to No.33, is visible from Gatehill Rd. and all vegetation would be retained or increased, especially to the south for enhanced privacy. Any change in appearance from the road is thereby minimal and subordinate to the greenery.

BE38 : The proposal fails to make adequate provision for the protection and long-term retention of protected trees and other vegetation within the site. The retention of trees is required for their amenity and screening value. The retention of trees and vegetation within the front garden is also required so as to retain the character of the area...”

[previous refusal]

The proposed footprint is stepped in response to the tapered site geometry and existing vegetation, maintaining maximum distance from the boundary vegetation and between buildings. This allows for the nurturing of the well-established landscaping and planting. By stepping the building away from the mature planting to the south the garden is more interactive with the house: it flows organically with the interior and creates strong visual connections with the garden from inside. The west wing is located closest to the northern blindsided boundary, which means it is set well back from the south boundary shared with No.31. This allows the mature planting on the south boundary to be developed, mutually enhancing privacy between Nos.31 and 33. An appropriate arboricultural proposal for maintenance and improvement of existing landscape can be a condition of approval especially for this south side of the site, to improve the screening of the driveway to No.31 for mutual benefit as necessary.

Ref: Arboricultural Impact Assessment, Method Statement, Tree Protection Plan, Tree Constraints Plan to BS 5837 : 2012 by Trevor Heaps Arboricultural Consultancy Ltd.

Summary and key excerpts:

The proposals will require the removal of four small Cypress trees in the front garden and a Cotoneaster and Sycamore from the northern side. Several privets will be planted post-development to improve screening.

Some basic tree protection measures and working methodology (in accordance with BS 5837:2012) will ensure the retained trees are not detrimentally affected during construction.

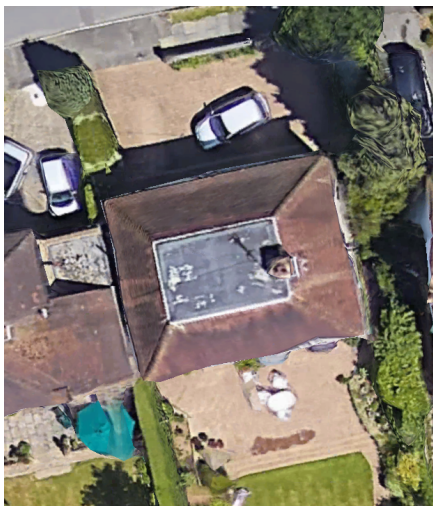
Provided the recommendation laid out in this report are followed, the proposals will not detrimentally affect the trees or the character / appearance of the local area.

BE21, BE24...it will be necessary to demonstrate that [side facing windows] will not result in material loss of privacy and compliance..” [Pre-App 3 : Amenity]

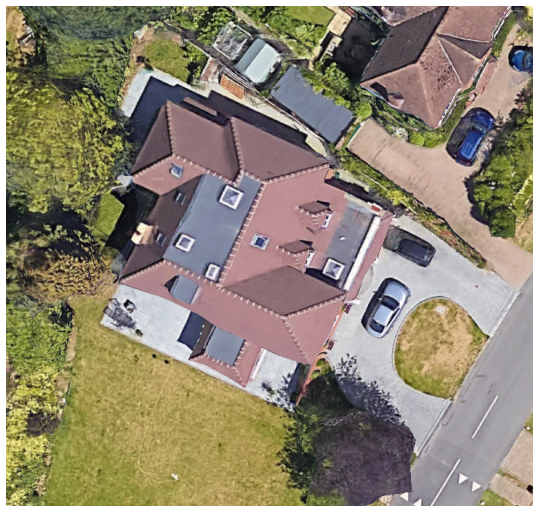
The key side/south facing first and second floor windows are ensuite bathrooms which would have obscured glazing. The other first floor window is supplementary to the main bedroom window facing west so can be conditional: either obscure glazed or removed. Ground floor fenestration extends the existing arrangement for better garden interaction. The existing south facing bay window is replaced with a west facing bay from the new snug which takes advantage of a view of the length of the main garden rather than towards the south boundary and driveway to No31. The ground level is masked by vegetation which can also be enhanced and landscaped to the south boundary as a condition of approval.

“The roof is also substantially changed, introducing large crown roof elements which are not characteristic of the area”. [Pre-App : Conservation and Urban Design Officer]

The scale of crown roofs in this revised proposal has been significantly reduced from the previous design and is now similar to other local examples. There is in fact a pattern of crown roofs in Gatehill Rd and the local area. Aerial photos of two close examples in Gatehill Rd are shown below and there are many others nearby e.g. at Wieland Rd.



10 Gatehill Rd



15 Gatehill Rd

B38 [cont] “... the lack of a garage within the proposed development may result in increased pressure for additional hard standing to the front garden area which would be unacceptable and adversely affect the setting of the building, the character of the area and the streetscene”.

[previous refusal]

AM14 “There is ample space to provide two parking spaces which could be secured by condition... The proposal would comply with Policy AM14 of the UDP”. [Pre-App : Highways Dept.]

There is no need for additional hard standing for parking, so compliance with the UDP would be achieved. The existing garage has not been used to house a vehicle for many years, in common with most houses locally and within Gate Hill Farm Estate. Two-car driveway parking is the pattern and use of the existing driveway at No.33 is no exception. Maintaining the existing amount of driveway, treescape and vegetation to the front garden can be a condition of approval.

3. Amenity

Noted that *“there are no properties to the East that would be adversely affected”*

[pre-app : 3]

The bulk of the south extension roof has been significantly reduced, in height and in proximity to the boundary, by removing a complete storey and replacing the gable with a lower hip and crown roof, set back. The south boundary planting is well established and can be landscaped and expanded as a condition of approval to enhance mutual privacy vis-a-vis the front driveway of No.31.

4. Highways

“There is ample space to provide two parking spaces which could be secured by condition....The proposal would comply with Policy AM14 of the UDP”

[pre-app : 4]

The same condition obtains in this revised version.

5. Other

- Trees & Landscaping

See Arboricultural Impact Assessment etc by **Trevor Heaps Arboricultural Consultancy Ltd** submitted with application. This includes the tree survey, preservation of mature greenery and landscaping.

Quote “ This is an arboriculturally defensible scheme and there are no [arboricultural] reasons why planning consent should not be granted”.

- Living conditions for future occupiers

“... proposed accommodation would provide adequate level of living accommodation...and comply with local and national policy.

“The garden of more than 100 sq m would be retained and comply with Policy BE23”.

The revised proposal retains compliance in both respects

6. CIL - see separate document

7. Application submission now includes the tree survey, block plan and landscape scheme as noted.



8. Conclusion

PROPOSED FRONT ELEVATION OF REVISED PROPOSAL

“The [former] proposal involves substantial rebuilding of the existing dwelling which will result in the complete loss of the form of an attractive dwelling which forms an important and prominent part of the character of the area” [Pre-app : 8]

Following the pre-application advice the scaled down interventions in this revision are now subordinate to the original building whose depth of character is respected and reaffirmed in this proposal. The crown roofs have been substantially reduced in line with similar crown roofs in the area; both existing dormers have been retained. The proposed modifications to the original east front elevation are relatively minor aesthetically in an organic and sympathetic expansion of the original house. By removing the bulky three-storey flat roof elements from habitable roof space the profile and composition of the original frontage is retained; only the central portion of roof space is made habitable at the upper level.

The third storey north and south wings have been removed completely, restoring the scale of the dominant pitched roof design, with the lowered ridges giving a spacious and horizontal balance to the building. The central roof gable signature profile is retained. Behind the main ridge a crown roof is incorporated centrally in common with other dwellings locally.

Further reduction in footprint was seriously considered but it was thought a disproportionate and unnecessary price to pay in the reduction of living conditions internally for a relatively insignificant difference externally. The proposal now leaves the closest distances of c.1.9m to the north boundary and 4.4m to the south boundary. Both distances exceed the 1.5m minimum Hillingdon guidance. By following the planning advice regarding the roofs, overall policy guidelines regarding massing and scale to preserve the character of the ASLC appear to have been met.

The clients wish to extend the house to enjoy the generous and leafy garden without compromising or diminishing the rich landscaping and vegetation. This is essential to preserve the character of the property and the area generally. The design we believe to be a sensitive enhancement of the street scene and surrounding area whilst achieving the necessary modernisation and upgrade in energy efficiency to the original house.

We have reason to be confident that the impact on the character and visual amenities of the Gate Hill Farm Estate Northwood Area of Special Local Character will be positive and in accordance with the policies cited (BE5, BE6, BE13,

BE15, BE19 and BE22 of the Hillingdon UDP and sections 4.0, 5.0, 6.0 and 7.0 of the Hillingdon D&A Statement: Residential Extensions).