

Design & Access Statement

Oracabessa, Northgate, Northwood, Middlesex

1. Site analysis and evaluation



Aerial photo

1.1. Location and context

The site is located in Northgate, Northwood. It is an established residential area to the west of Northwood town centre. Northgate has mature trees lining the road and the properties are predominantly large two storey detached houses. There is a wide variety of architectural styles including mock Tudor, Neo-Georgian and vernacular. There is also a wide range of materials used such as brick, half-timber and render. The houses have both gabled and hipped roofs and many have had substantial extensions built in recent years.

Oracabessa was built in the 1960s to a neo-Georgian design. Other properties were subsequently built nearby in a similar style using a mixture of hipped roofs (such as 3 Buttsmead) and gabled roofs (such as Edale). The adjacent property at 3 Buttsmead, to the rear of Oracabessa, has a large two storey rear extension on the far (north) side.

All parking in the area is provided off road in garages and driveways.

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View of Oracabessa with Edale beyond



Houses south of Northgate viewed from Buttsmead



View of 3 Buttsmead from Buttsmead



View of 2 & 4 Buttsmead

1.2. The existing property



View of Oracabessa from front drive



View of Oracabessa from rear garden

The existing property is a two storey, 4 bedroom house built in the Neo-Georgian style. It has red/brown multi-stock facing brick walls and interlocking concrete tiled roof. There is an existing flat roofed garage to the side and an existing flat roofed rear extension.

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Existing site plan



View 1



View 2

Oracabessa was built on Northgate before the Buttsmead development. It has a gabled pitched roof of 27.5 degree slope, like Edale, and the original footprint of the house is approximately 10m wide by 8.5m deep, also like its neighbour. But the single storey extensions to the two houses are quite different and give each a different setting. The slope of the land sets Oracabessa 0.74m below Edale. There are also

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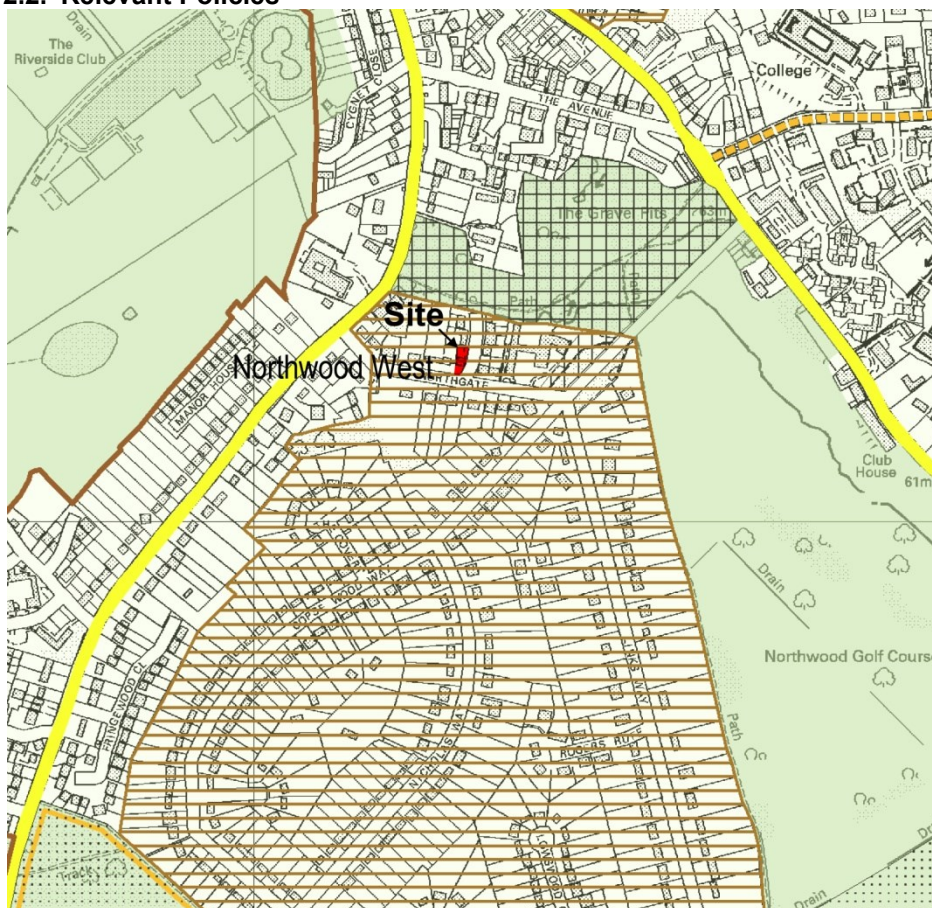
many detailed differences in the treatment of the front door, the staircase window and the original internal layouts. These differences are in keeping with the spirit of the design variety set by the rest of Northgate and referred to in the planning inspector's report on the appeal for a loft at Edale (ref APP/R5510/D/2122400): "Northgate is characterised by detached residences of individual design and appearance, albeit those immediately to the east of Buttsmead are of similar age and style."

2. The Local Plan

2.1. Outline description of proposal

The proposal is a loft conversion to the house to add another en-suite bedroom. The conversion requires raising the ridge of the existing roof in order to make a useable space within. There would be some in-line roof-lights inserted on the rear face of the roof to make the new room habitable.

2.2. Relevant Policies



Extract from local plan showing the Copsewood Estate

The site is within an area of Special Local Character, but is not a conservation zone. It is within an established residential zone. Normal development policies apply subject to further comments from Conservation Officers.

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2.3. Local Design Guidelines

- Hillingdon SPD for Residential extensions Dec 2008.
- 5.9/BE5 – “...new development should harmonise with the materials, design features, architectural style and building heights predominant in the area. Extensions to dwellings should respect the symmetry of the original buildings”.
- 5.10/BE6 – largely relates to new build developments, but significantly it acknowledges that the character of the area is of individually designed houses and encourages variety.

2.4. Planning History

There are no special covenants or restrictions on the property. It has an existing single storey rear extension and integrated garage at the side.

This application is being made to renew a previous planning consent ([60966/APP/2011/47](#)) that expired in 2014. The associated plans are identical in all respects and relate to a loft conversion to provide habitable space with the installation of 4 roof lights to the rear and raising of the ridge height by 600mm.

In making the original and successful application in 2010, particular consideration was given to two planning decisions affecting neighbouring properties: Woodhurst, a successful application to raise the existing ridge height and, Edale, an unsuccessful application to change the roof form.

1) [Woodhurst, application 34996/APP/2008/2166 - Woodhurst](#) is located next to Oracabessa's neighbouring property, Edale. This application proposed a two-storey rear and side extension including the conversion of loft space for habitable use involving the installation of 5 roof lights and alterations to roof, involving the raising of the ridge height in separate locations between c.500mm and c.650mm. Planning consent was granted in October 2008.

2) [Edale, application 23498/APP/2009/2497](#) - relates to a loft conversion that was made for the adjacent property at Edale (appeal ref APP/R5510/D/2122400). This proposed transforming the existing gable roof to a hipped crown roof design complete with flat roof. The main issues highlighted by the appeal officer were the impact on the street scene and the potential for overlooking.

The latter issue was dismissed due to the high internal cill level of the proposed rooflights. However, the proposal was turned down because of the apparent visual changes within the local context. The Inspector made reference to the Council's design guidelines for loft conversions and roof alterations in its Design and Accessibility Statement, and observed:

“The house type at issue is unforgiving in respect of roof alterations that would appear ungainly or top heavy and, whilst I do not consider that it amounts to the full effect described in paragraph 7.5 of Residential Extensions, the proposed steeply pitched and hipped roof slopes at the appeal site would, in my view appear clumsy and incongruous nevertheless.”

Therefore, the lapsed planning consent [60966/APP/2011/47](#) for Oracabessa sought to minimise the external visual changes, and also protect neighbours' privacy by setting rooflight cills above internal eye level.

The Hillingdon Planning Office and Conservation Officer were approached with an initial sketch design for a loft conversion that would keep the gable roof form, raise the ridge and place three dormers on the rear of the roof. The conservation officer commented on the proposals in their email dated 29.10.10. The client took note of these comments and the design was revised and reduced in response to them.

Initial sketch scheme proposed the following:

- Raised gable roof ridge height of 800mm;
- Three dormers on rear elevation;
- Proposed increase in volume of 40m³;
- Two new bedrooms

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In response to the advice received the proposals were amended as follows:

- Raised ridge height of 600mm (140mm below ridge of adjacent house, Edale);
- Rear dormers omitted in favour of in-line rooflights with internal cill level set 1.7m above internal floor level;
- Proposed increase in volume of 27m³;
- One new bedroom

It was felt the amended proposal was more likely to be considered favourably by the Conservation Officer and a planning application was submitted based on the revised design in expectation of a site visit to fully understand the context of the proposals. The amendments received a positive recommendation from the Design Officer and the planning application was then approved.

To complete the summary of relevant planning history, reference is made to planning consent 29004/APP/2014/556 for Craigwood in 2014, which is next to Oracabessa and occupies the opposite corner of Northgate and Buttsmead. Approval was given to a side extension to the ground and first floor, and a rear extension to the first floor. The proposed modifications were to the boundary with Buttsmead and represented a sizable increase in internal habitable space.

2.5. Summary of development principles

The local policies suggest that the design proposals should follow these principles:

- Keep the existing ridge height or seek permission if wanting to exceed it;
- Use matching external materials;
- Avoid dormers on the front of the property;
- Windows facing the side boundaries to be obscure and fixed shut to avoid overlooking;
- No structure/roof-light to project more than 150mm from existing roof plane;
- Be sympathetic to the architectural style and symmetry of the existing property;
- Be sympathetic to the context of the immediate area.

3. Design Statement

3.1. Use

The existing use is a 4 bedroom residence. There is no proposed change of use. The proposals would add another bedroom.

3.2. Size/scale

The previous successful application took into account the Conservation Officer's comments by proposing the loft conversion be designed to have a minimal impact on the size and volume of the existing house:

- Existing volume of roof: 105.5m³ (whole house is 827.5m³ including garage and rear extension, of which 574.5m³ is the original house)
- Proposed volume of roof: 132.5m³ (whole house would be 854.5m³)
- Proposed net increase in volume: 27m³ (1% increase in volume to whole house)
- The existing overall height to top of ridge is 7.77m.
- The proposed increase in the height of the ridge line is 0.6m (8.37m). This represents a 7.7% increase in height. Due to the slope on the site the proposed ridge height would still be below that of the adjacent house, Edale by 0.14m.
- Rooflights in line with the slope of the roof are proposed, rather than projecting dormers.

The intention is that this relatively small increase in volume would minimise any potential impact on the street scene or neighbouring properties.

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It is worth noting that under current Permitted Development legislation a far larger increase in volume of 50m³ would be achievable for a detached house, almost double that proposed. Such a development would normally manifest itself as a large flat roof dormer running the full width of the rear face of the roof. However, the client is aware of both the poor visual appearance and the restricted head height that such a development would entail, hence the proposal to make a small rise in ridge height instead.

3.3. Layout & massing

By keeping the same gabled roof form the proposal is designed to be sympathetic to the immediate surroundings: i.e. Edale and Craigwood on Northgate. The proposed rooflights are at the rear to avoid impact on the main front street scene. Rooflights are proposed instead of dormers so as to minimise any impact on the view from Buttsmead. The house is symmetrical and the proposed loft conversion respects this by placing the new rooflights at the rear in a symmetrical arrangement.

Although the side wall of 3 Buttsmead facing the rear of Oracabessa is blank, without windows, and therefore not subject to overlooking, nonetheless steps have been taken to avoid privacy issues. The internal sill level of the proposed rooflights would be set at least 1.7m above internal floor level to avoid any potential issue of overlooking.

An enlarged staircase window is proposed which would be facing onto the street in Buttsmead and set back by 5m from the boundary (17.9m from Craigwood).

3.4. Landscaping

The existing trees and shrubs at the front are mature and provide an effective screen to the property to the street. There are semi-mature trees in the rear garden. There are no proposed changes to the landscaping.

3.5. Appearance

Oracabessa and Edale are similar but not identical. Whilst the proposal seeks to follow the same principle of a gabled roof form the minor change in roof pitch should be in keeping with the variety seen in the wider context of Northgate. The sloping site allows a minor rise in ridge height to Oracabessa whilst still keeping below that of Edale.

Matching roof tiles and facing brickwork are proposed for the raised roof and gables. The proposed rooflights would be conservation style with central mullion and dark grey metal external finish. The rooflights are composed symmetrically to follow a similar spacing as the first floor rear windows below.

3.6. Sustainability

The proposed new loft extension will be designed to exceed Building Regulations requirements for insulation and will use water saving bathroom appliances (aerated tap nozzles and dual flush cistern). A major benefit of the loft conversion will be the improvement to the stack effect to aid natural ventilation through the house: roof-lights at high level will allow warm air to rise and draw fresh air in through the windows at the lower levels. In order to serve the enlarged property a new, efficient gas condensing boiler would be fitted.

4. Access Statement

4.1. Vehicular and transport links

There are major bus routes within 200m and 400m of the site. Northwood Metropolitan line station is just over 1km away. The site is well served by public transport.

4.2. Parking provision

There is a single garage and ample room for at least 3 cars in the carriage driveway. The planned loft extension adds one bedroom to the 4 bed house (total of 5 bedrooms proposed). The existing parking is

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more than adequate for the number of rooms served, therefore no changes are proposed to the existing parking and access arrangements.

4.3. Inclusive access

The existing house caters for inclusive access. There is plenty of room in the driveway for people with restricted mobility to get in and out of cars. There are two shallow steps to the front door. A WC is provided on the ground floor and all main facilities are provided on this principle entrance level. The proposals will not alter these provisions.

5. Summary

The proposals are identical to the lapsed planning consent 60966/APP/2011/47 that expired in 2014.

They represent a minor increase in volume and height to the existing house in order to achieve an additional bedroom. They are consistent with the style and nature of the existing properties nearby and care has been taken to avoid overlooking.