

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT CULTURE & SPORT  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 24 April 2013

ITEM NO.14

**Ward:** Peppard  
**App No.:** 13/00150/FUL  
**Address:** 7 School Lane, Emmer Green, Caversham  
**Proposal:** Demolition of existing dwelling and detached garage and construction of a new dwelling and detached garage  
**Applicant:** Mr. C. Goodall  
**Date received:** February 2013  
**Major Application:** 8 week target decision date: 3 April 2013

### RECOMMENDATION

Delegate to the Head of Planning and Building Control to i) **GRANT** permission subject to the submission of appropriate bat survey(s) and mitigation measures (if necessary), and to the receipt of satisfactory proposals for the provision of and/or contribution towards affordable housing, but (ii) to **REFUSE** permission should the bat survey(s) not be submitted by the applicant by 31 May (unless the Head of Planning and Building Control agrees to a later date).

#### **Conditions to include:**

- 1 - Time limit - three years
- 2 - Plans
- 3 - Materials to be approved
- 4 - Existing bricks and timbers to be reused or made available for salvage and reuse elsewhere
- 5 - Levels
- 6 - Removal of Permitted Development Rights - Class A & B, Part 1, Schedule 2 of GPDO
- 7 - Construction method statement - to be approved
- 8 - Access and parking in accordance with approved plans
- 9 - Tree protective fencing
- 10 - Control of construction noise and dust
- 11 - Hours of working
- 12 - No bonfires
- 13 - BREEAM - Very Good rating to be achieved
- 14 - Provision of bat mitigation measures as necessary

#### **Informatives to include:**

- Reason for approval
- Compliance with approved plans & details
- Positive and proactive
- Construction and demolition nuisance
- Building regulations
- Party wall issues

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site comprises a two storey cottage (known as Pond Cottage) which is located off School Lane, an unadopted track that runs between Grove Road and Peppard Road. The northern section is useable by vehicles whilst the southern part is a footpath only.
- 1.2 The site has an access and frontage width onto School Lane of some 23m and then doglegs to the north-west where the cottage is positioned in the furthest part of the site. The site also bounds and looks over an oval shaped pond to the south east which provides separation to Peppard Road.
- 1.3 Pond Cottage is a half-timber, red brick building with a red clay tile roof. It has a low height (some 6.3m to the roof ridge) with the first floor windows set within eaves level. The cottage was re built in the 1950's, although it retains some older timbers. It has also been extended to the rear and incorporates part of an old stable building which is divided between neighbouring properties.
- 1.4 The cottage forms part of a cluster of buildings each of which is different in form and appearance. Adjacent to the north is No.7 Grove Road - a larger and taller house, with more vertical proportions, and double side gables which support a double ridged roof, valley gutter and four chimney stacks. To the south is No.5 School Lane - a two storey house with a hipped roof which has been extended to adjoin Pond Cottage. To the rear (north west) are a pair of smaller semi-detached cottages (Nos.1 & 3 School Lane) which have been significantly extended to the side and rear and also incorporate part of the shared stable building. Pond Cottage and these neighbouring properties have little space to their rear, instead benefitting from space and setting either to the front or side.
- 1.5 There is a brick-built, detached garage building positioned towards the School Lane frontage of the site.
- 1.6 The site is not within a conservation area. None of the properties within the group of buildings are listed
- 1.7 The application has been called in by Cllrs. Stanford-Beale and Willis because of the level of public opinion in the local area.

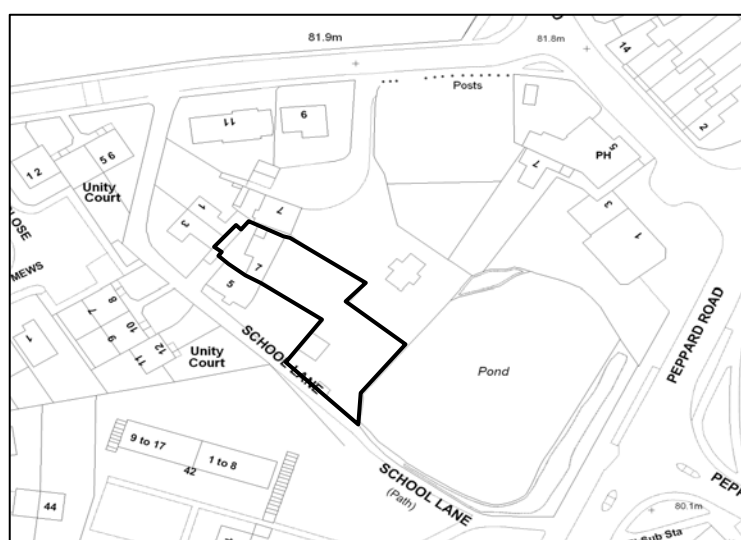


Figure 1.1 - Location



Figure 1.2 - Aerial view of application site from the south

## 2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 Planning permission is sought for the demolition of the existing cottage and the erection of a replacement two-storey dwelling. The proposed house would have a width of 10.7m, maximum depth of 11m, with a series of pitched roofs over - a main front to rear ridge (height of 7.2m) along the south-western side with projecting gables, a secondary ridge (with lower height of 6.9m) across the front of the house with a flank gable, and two hipped roofs over a lower section in the angle between the main front and side roofs. A small basement would be provided.
- 2.2 Within the plot, the proposed building would be located some 2m further forward (towards the pond) than the existing cottage. To the rear, the new building would have a square shaped floor plan rather than the existing 'T' shape; therefore, the southern end of the rear elevation would be some 4m closer to the rear boundary, similarly the northern end at first floor level (the existing house has a single storey extension that fills this space). The centre part of the rear elevation would be some 1.5m closer to the boundary.
- 2.3 The eastern part of the stable building, owned by the applicant, would be demolished back to the party wall that runs in line with the roof ridge in order to provide additional space to the rear.
- 2.4 The proposed house would have an oak frame, with an exposed timber construction, and features that are in keeping with a traditional vernacular. Materials would reinforce this through the use of hand-made clay bricks, lime rendered infill panels, timber weatherboarding, clay tiles to match the existing, and timber windows and doors.

- 2.5 The existing detached garage would be replaced with a new brick and timber clad outbuilding, measuring 6m by 9.5m, with a pitched roof over to a ridge height of 5.6m. This would incorporate a carport and domestic workshop on the ground floor with some storage in the roof space served by an external staircase.
- 2.6 The existing access from School Lane would be widened to 4m, maintaining the curved walls, set-back pillars and gates.
- 2.7 Submitted plans and documents:
- Location plan
  - Survey
  - Site plan
  - Proposed elevations and floor plans
  - Existing elevations and floor plans
  - View from south east
  - Design and Access Statement
  - Bat Survey
  - Code for Sustainable Home Pre Assessment and Analysis
  - SAP Rating
  - Statement of Heritage Significance



Figure 2.1 - Visual impression of proposed house from across the pond

### 3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 None relevant.

### 4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 Non statutory consultation  
**Transport Strategy:** No objections.

#### **Conservation Officer:**

- The cottage does not have sufficient interest to be statutorily listed.
- It appears too altered despite being picturesque.
- The replacement house is of a suitable style, scale, architectural type and quality.
- Existing materials should be reused or salvaged.

#### **Ecology Officer:**

- A further bat survey is required to confirm whether bats are present. This survey work can only be undertaken between May and September when any bats would be active.
- All bats are protected; and it is illegal to deliberately or recklessly disturb or obstruct access to any bat roost or to disturb a bat using such a place without first obtaining the relevant licence from Natural England.
- It is essential that the presence or otherwise of bats, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before planning permission can be granted.
- The application cannot be determined until further surveys to determine the presence or absence of bats have been undertaken. An objection is raised.

#### **Tree and Landscape Officer:**

- There are no trees on site subject to TPO.
- A weeping willow and pine tree on adjacent land will need protecting during construction.
- The shed previously shown to be within the root protection area of the Willow is now omitted from the proposal.

#### **Environmental Protection:**

- Construction noise and dust can be controlled through conditions.
- Informative recommended concerning safe working practices regarding potential of land contamination.

#### **Building Control:**

- Demolition notice required. Building regulations application required.

#### **Leisure:**

- No objection.

#### Public/local consultation and comments received

4.2 Five neighbouring properties have been consulted by neighbour notification letter.

4.3 Two letters of objection have been received:

1. The development would overlook Nos.1 & 3 School Lane.
2. The demolition of part of the shared barn/stable building could increase noise to a ground floor bedroom at No.1.

3. Previous applications on other properties have been refused due to the close proximity of buildings.
  4. Concern about the loss of a historic property and the impact to the character of the area. The original cottage dates back to 1563.
  5. Concern over the scale and massing of the house and garage.
  6. Should permission be granted, hours of work should be limited to 9-5 Monday to Friday.
  7. Concern about damage to School Lane during construction works.
  8. Neither the Council nor residents accepts responsibility for School Lane.
  9. RBC should adopt School Lane, add lighting and resurface it.
- 4.4 One letter of support has been received
- 4.5 A letter of objection from CADRA has been received:
1. Pond Cottage is an iconic and historical building which is important to the history and character of the area.
  2. Demolition would be a great loss. An alternative option should be found.
- 4.6 A statement has been received from Emmer Green Residents' Association (EGRA) which raises the following comments:
1. School Lane is unadopted and in a poor condition and need repair.
  2. Much of Emmer Green is post war suburban development, but with some pockets of heritage remaining. This may make what is left more precious.
  3. Research carried out in the mid 1960s, soon after the house was restored, states that the previous building on the site was about 500 years old, thatched and originally two cottages.
  4. EGRA has no academic evidence to verify the age of the house.
  5. The new house appears to be of high quality, with use of materials sympathetic to the setting, and aesthetically pleasing.
  6. The present house appears habitable and could be restored.
  7. EGRA is not unanimous in its views - opinions range from not minding, to disbelief, to aghast at the loss of the landmark building.
  8. The Planning Committee must take careful consideration of all the facts before making a decision.

## 5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

### Legal and Planning Policy Context

- 5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).
- 5.2 In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Core Strategy and Sites and Detailed Policies Document) according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).
- 5.3 Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

- 5.4 Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy (Adopted January 2008)  
CS1 Sustainable Construction and Design  
CS7 Design and the Public Realm  
CS16 Affordable Housing  
CS24 Car/Cycle Parking  
CS33 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment  
CS36 Biodiversity and Geology  
CS38 Trees, Hedges and Woodlands
- 5.5 Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD) - (Adopted October 2012)  
DM4 Safeguarding Amenity  
DM6 Affordable Housing  
DM10 Private and Communal Outdoor Space  
DM11 Development of Private Residential gardens  
DM12 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- 5.6 Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents  
SPD - Sustainable Design and Construction (adopted 2011)  
SPD - Parking Standards and Design (adopted 2011)

## 6. APPRAISAL

### Principle

- 6.1 The existing cottage on the site is a building with an attractive setting that contributes to the character of the surrounding cluster of properties. However, the applicant sets out that the building is in a poor structural state and has a poor layout that could not be sustained when looking at improving the standard of accommodation.
- 6.2 Given the historic appearance of the cottage, it has been considered whether or not it should be statutorily listed and thus protected from demolition (other than in the most exceptional of circumstances). In this regard, the applicant has submitted a Statement of Heritage Significance that examines the architectural and historical background of the building. It is reported that the original structure, except for some of the timber framing in the front elevation, was condemned and demolished in the 1950s. The cottage was then reconstructed and did not use the original materials. Thus, the property is a 'mock' replica of the original and has significantly diminished heritage value. The cottage has also been significantly extended to the rear, both with two storey and single storey additions.
- 6.3 The issue of listing has also been considered by the Council's conservation officer. She considers that whilst the reconstruction and re use of some of the old oak beams is of some interest, the cottage has been too altered for it to be worthy of listing. Advice from English Heritage has also been sought; and they confirm the view of the conservation officer that the building should not be listed.
- 6.4 The Sites and Detailed Policies Document (SDPD) advocates that there are occasions where a building (that is not of such historical or architectural importance as to warrant national listing) could be added to a list of locally important heritage assets. Criteria for selection are set out in the SDPD. For such a building, considered to be post 1939 in age (albeit containing limited amounts of older material), the qualifying criterion is that the building must be *'of exceptional significance and wholly complete and unaffected by*

*inappropriate changes*'. On this test, given that the building has been significantly altered and extended, it is considered that it should not be locally listed.

6.5 Notwithstanding, it is considered still useful to have regard to the other (secondary) criteria relating to local listing (which would normally be considered if the first qualifying criterion were to be satisfied). These provide some guidance on the group and townscape value of a building. In this respect, it is considered that the building does make a significant contribution to the cluster of closely positioned houses which have a particularly historical appearance and character. The building also plays an important function in providing a distinctive sense of place and local identity when seen in views across the pond from Peppard Road and the School Lane footpath.

6.6 However, it is considered that these qualities in themselves do not provide a reason why the cottage cannot be demolished; but, rather, should be used to influence the design merits of any proposed redevelopment. (Indeed, even if the building were to be locally listed this could not prevent demolition.) Any replacement house must be of an appropriate size and scale, and have a form, appearance and vernacular of architecture that would maintain the character and charm of the surrounding cluster of buildings and the setting of the pond.

#### Design and character

6.7 Viewed from the front (from the south east by the pond), it is considered the proposed house would relate well to the two adjacent properties. It would retain the general siting of the existing house, so to maintain the adjacency with the two flanking properties and the distinctive cluster of buildings. Although the main elevation of the house would be positioned some 2m further forward, with regard to the area of space and setting available to the front and the robust boundary wall treatments along the side boundaries, it is considered that this siting would be acceptable.

6.8 The replacement house would be similar in height to the existing cottage. The ridge across the width of the building would be at 6.9m compared with an existing level of 6.3m; and the front eaves would maintain a height of 3.5m with the first floor windows being set within it. The applicant shows that the height would be similar to the adjacent house at No.7 Grove Road to the north. On the southern side, the proposed house would have a more prominent front gable with an apex of 7.1m. Although this would be taller than the adjacent lower section of No.5, the proposed roof would be pitched away and so, it is considered, would provide sufficient separation to accommodate the step in level.

6.9 The proposed house would have a greater depth than the existing building; but the scale (height and massing) of the building is kept to a minimum though the use of a number of hipped and gabled pitched roofs.

6.10 To the rear, the proposal would maintain the rather congested arrangement of properties. Although this arrangement is unusual, in respect the context of this already tight relationship, it is considered that the new house would not be out of keeping with the existing characteristics of the cluster.

6.11 The replacement house would be constructed with an exposed oak frame, and would have a very traditional form and vernacular. The applicant details that traditional materials would be used - hand-made clay bricks, lime rendered infill panels, timber weatherboarding, clay tiles to match the existing, and timber windows and doors - which

would provide an appropriate appearance in keeping with its setting and neighbouring properties.

- 6.12 As such, it is considered that the design of the proposed house would maintain the character and group value of the cluster of surrounding houses, and would preserve the attractive setting and appearance of the pond. Accordingly, it is considered that Core Strategy Policies CS7 and CS33 are satisfied.

#### Amenities

- 6.13 None of the adjacent houses have habitable upper floor windows that face into the courtyard at the rear of the application site or towards the increased mass of the proposed house. The semi-detached cottages to the rear are unusual in that they do not have any rear facing windows.
- 6.14 To the front, the replacement house would not project so far forward as to appear unduly dominant from the front outlook of No.5 School Lane or No.7 Grove Road. As such, it is considered that the proposal would not appear unduly overbearing from these adjacent properties.
- 6.15 With regard to overlooking, two first floor bedroom windows are proposed on either end of the rear elevation with a bathroom window in the middle. These bedroom windows would be positioned much closer to the rear of the site than the existing windows; and consideration is given to whether or not this would result in a significant level of overlooking and loss of amenity to Nos.1 & 3 School Lane.
- 6.16 With regard to No.1, it is noted that its amenity space to the side of the house is already overlooked by the upper floor rear windows of No.7 Grove Road. Therefore, it is considered that the additional bedroom window, which would have some aspect over the side of No.1, would not result in a significant loss of residential amenity.
- 6.17 With regard to No.3, the existing amenity space at the side is more private. It is considered that the southernmost bedroom window would have an increased aspect towards No.3. However, the actual view that would be seen from this bedroom window (as created for the purpose of this application with the use of a raised platform) would be greatly screened by southern part of the stable building on the common rear boundary and the single storey extension on the north-western side of No.5 School Lane. As such, the afforded view would only be into the north-westernmost part of the side amenity space of No.3, onto a garden shed. It is considered that this would not result in a significantly harmful loss of amenity.
- 6.18 Given that proposed house is only marginally taller than the existing, it is considered that there would not be a significantly harmful increase in overshadowing from the development across neighbouring properties.
- 6.19 Regard is given to the amenities of the new house. Two ground floor rear windows would face onto the rear boundary wall at a distance of some 4m. However, the rear kitchen would also be served by large French windows on the front elevation with a south eastern aspect; the other room is a study, which is in addition to a sitting room and dining room both with a generous front outlook. As such, the lack of aspect of the study would not, it is considered, be detrimental to the amenities of the house as a whole.
- 6.20 Ample outdoor amenity space would be maintained to the front.

6.21 It is considered that SDPD Policies DM4 and DM10 are satisfied.

#### Garage

6.22 With regard to the replacement garage (in the same location as the existing), although it would be larger in footprint and taller, it is considered that the new building would have a form and appearance (timber and brick construction with a tiled roof) that would maintain the general character and amenities of the area. The replacement garage would have a lower slab level than the existing, in order to minimise its visual impact on School Lane, and the new ridge would only be 0.6m higher.

#### Bats

6.23 The applicant has submitted a bat survey which establishes that the buildings to be demolished have features suitable for crevice-dwelling bats. Bats are a protected species and, with regard to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 and the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2010, it is necessary to carry out further survey work to establish whether or not crevice-dwelling bats are present. If they are, a mitigation strategy can be devised and carried out in order to ensure that the favourable conservation status of the bats is maintained.

6.24 However, due to the fact that bats hibernate in the winter months, it is not possible to carry out this survey work before May at the earliest. The ecology officer advises that it is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species (bats in this case), and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before planning permission is granted. Only where there are exceptional circumstances can such survey work be secured by planning conditions; this is because the surveys should inform what, if any, mitigation is required.

6.25 Therefore, in this instance, given the start of May is very close to the date of this Committee and that all other matters are considered acceptable, it is recommended that the Head of Planning and Building Control be allowed to determine this application subject to the further bat surveys being submitted. This approach would allow the impact of the development on bats to be known before the planning decision is finally made, would comply with the appropriate wildlife legislation, and ensure that the favourable conservation status of the bats is maintained. Any mitigation measures identified by the new surveys can be secured by condition.

#### Other matters

6.26 It is confirmed in the submitted pre-assessment estimator that the new house would be designed and constructed, in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS1, to meet a Code for Sustainable Homes Level 3 standard.

6.27 SDPD Policy DM6 states that for developments of one house a financial contribution to enable an equivalent of 10% of the housing to be provided as affordable housing shall be provided unless the applicant can demonstrate that such a level would make the development financially unviable. The draft SPD on Affordable Housing states that the policy is to be applied to the total gross number of dwellings. There is no allowance for the replacement of the existing dwelling on site. This proposal is therefore required to make provision for affordable housing in order to comply with the policy.

6.28 The applicant has not made any such provision and a Viability Assessment is awaited. This issue will therefore be addressed in an update report to your meeting.

6.29 Transport advises that adequate access and parking would be retained on the site. A construction method statement would be secured by condition if planning permission were to be granted.

Equality impact

6.30 In determining this application the Committee is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation.

6.31 The applicant confirms that the access to the house would have a main access that meets building regulations, and Lifetime Home Standards. There would be a level threshold, doorways are wide enough to ensure inclusive access on the ground floor, and the staircase is designed to accommodate a future stair lift if required. As such, it is considered that the development would not result in a significant adverse impact on the key equalities protected characteristic of age or disability.

6.32 Otherwise, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that other protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities as a result of the development.

Discussions with applicant

6.33 Where planning permission is either approved or refused, the Council’s decision notice must include a statement in explaining how the LPA has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner based on seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to the planning application.

Planning issue requiring resolution	Issue resolved at pre-app stage	Issue resolved at application stage	Comments
Revised access	Revised access not shown	Yes	The proposed access has been revised to ensure adequate visibility splays are retained.
Trees	Shed not shown	Under discussion	The shed previously shown in the RPA of the Willow tree has been omitted from the application.
Bats	Advised that a bat survey was required.	Yes	The situation regarding when additional bat surveys can be carried out has been resolved by allowing time for them to be carried out in May and for the Head of Planning and Building Control to have delegated authority to determine the application.

6.34 It is considered that officers have taken a positive and proactive approach in dealing with this application.

Conclusion

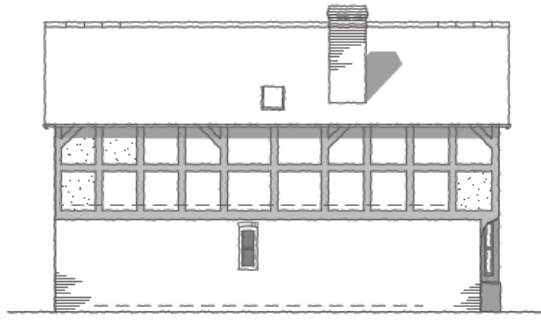
6.35 In conclusion, it is considered that:

- The existing cottage is not worthy of statutory listing, nor does it meet criteria for local listing.
- The criteria for local listing provide qualities against which the design merits of a replacement house can be considered against.
- The proposed house would have an acceptable siting, scale, form and appearance.
- The design of the proposed house would maintain the character and group value of the cluster of surrounding houses, and would preserve the attractive setting and appearance of the pond.
- The residential amenities of neighbouring properties would not be significantly harmed.
- Adequate amenities for the proposed house would be provided.
- The enlarged replacement garage would have an acceptable impact on the character and visual amenities of the area.
- In further bat surveys can be carried out at the appropriate time of year.
- Adequate access and parking would be provided.

#### 6.36 Plans

- D1195.1 F Proposed plans
- D1195.3 F Proposed elevations
- D1195.4 C Site Plan
- Amended site plan
- D1195.5 D Garage plan and elevations
- D1195.6 A Existing plans and elevations
- D1195.7 A Illustrative view

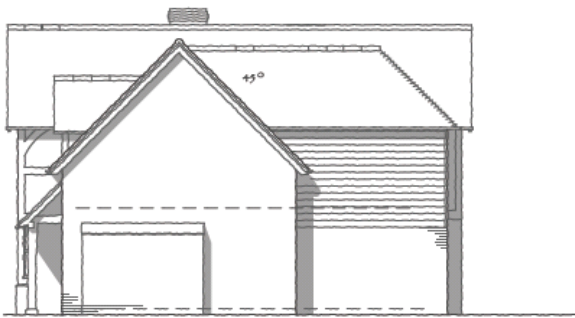
Case Officer: Andrew Somerville



SOUTH



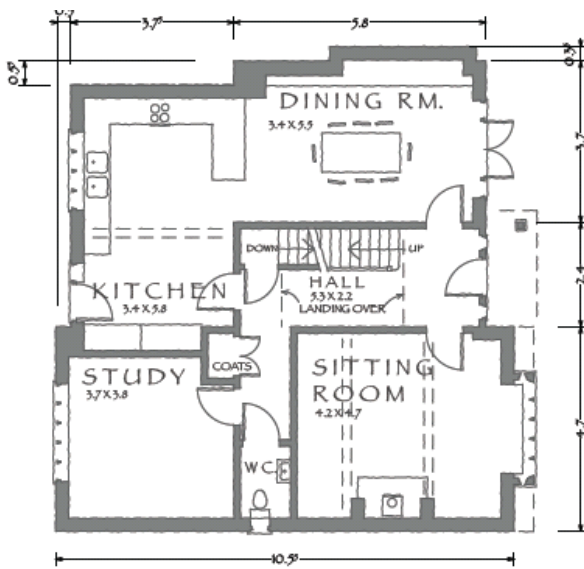
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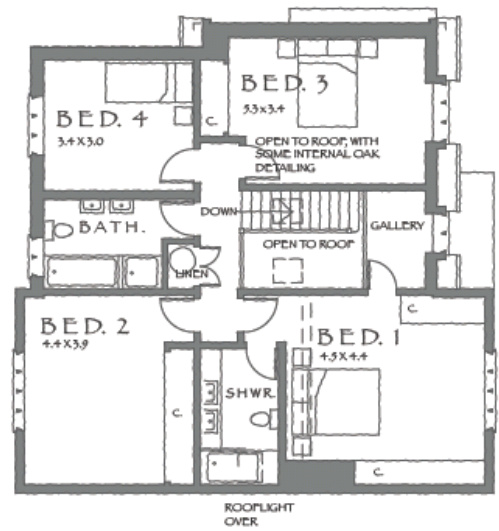
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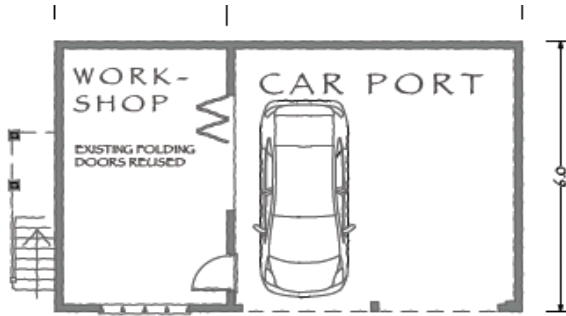
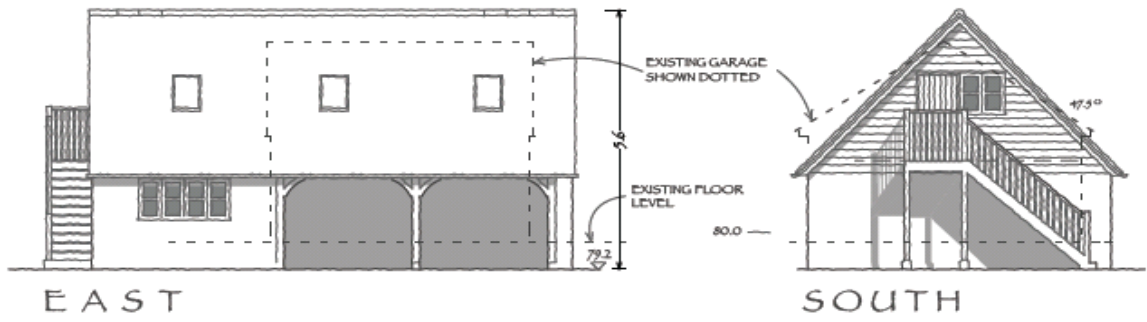
EAST



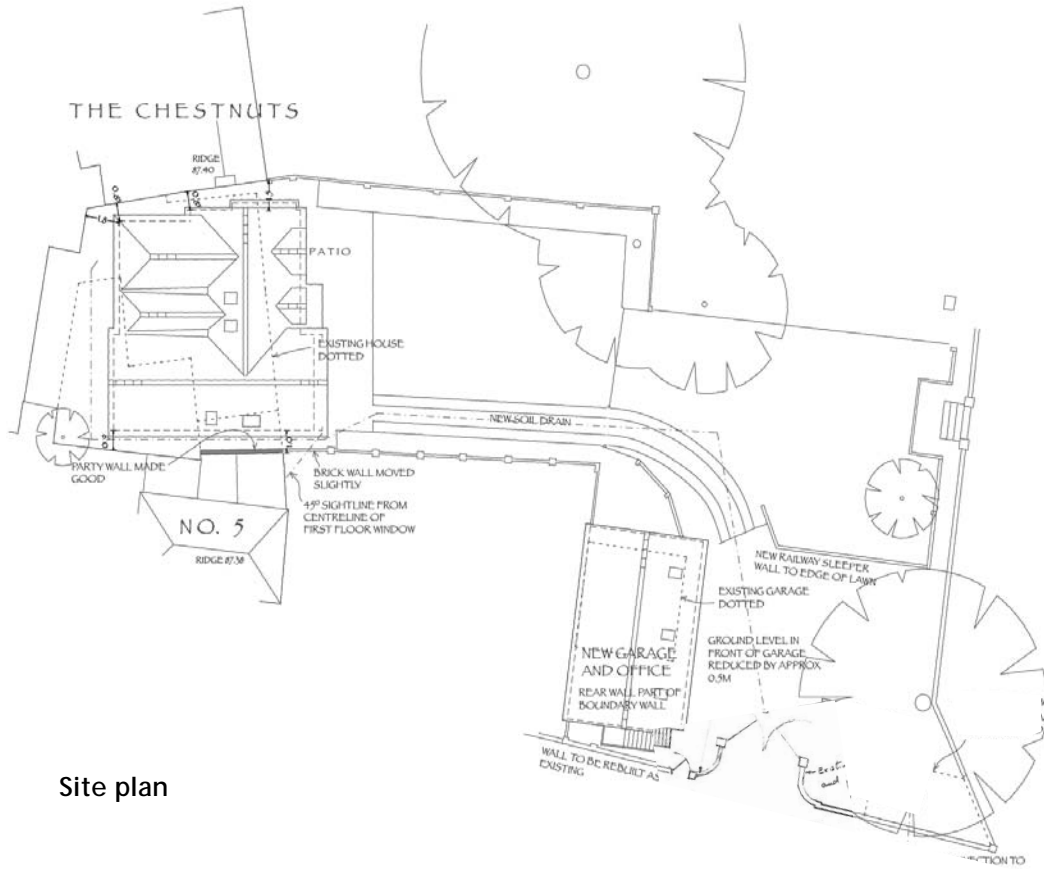
GROUND FLOOR PLAN



FIRST FLOOR PLAN



GROUND FLOOR PLAN



Site plan