

Planning Support Statement

**Proposed 2-Storey Side Extension to 'Seaforth Cottage',
Upper Culham Road, nr. Henley-on-Thames, RG10 8NR**

Prepared by:

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Contents

		Page No
1	Introduction	1
2	Site Description	2
3	Planning History	3
4	The Proposal	4
5	National & Regional Planning Policy	5
6	Development Plan Policy	7
7	Conclusions	9

1 Introduction

- 1.1 AB Planning & Development Limited has been instructed by Lord Anthony & Lady Nicky Colwyn to prepare this Planning Support Statement to accompany a detailed planning application to Wokingham Borough Council for a two-storey side extension to 'Seaforth Cottage', which lies on the western side of Upper Culham Road, near Remenham Hill, about 2½ miles east of Henley-on-Thames.
- 1.2 The application seeks full planning permission for the creation of a two-storey side extension. The proposed extension would precisely echo the design and material finish of the existing dwelling, with a matching eaves height and the ridge height would echo that of the existing hipped roof dormer windows to front and rear, which stand below the main roof ridge.
- 1.3 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Design & Access Statement prepared separately by the architect David Everest of DJE Project Services.

2 Site Description

The Site

- 2.1 The 0.158ha subject site is roughly rectangular in shape; having a width of about 34m and extends back between 41-46m from the south-western side of Upper Culham Road. It comprises the northernmost property of a small ribbon of houses that lie at Upper Culham, in Wargrave Parish and lies about half a mile south of Remenham Hill. Seaforth Cottage comprises the northern half of a pair of semi-detached Victorian cottages of red brick and white painted render walls with plain clay tiled roof. The two dwellings lie about 7.5m back from the roadside behind a low hedge. The other dwellings in the small hamlet of Upper Culham are all of broadly similar design and scale and Wokingham Borough Council has identified the settlement as an Area of Special Character.
- 2.2 The surrounding open countryside all forms part of the designated Metropolitan Green Belt and the property backs onto the extensive private landscaped grounds of Park Place Estate.
- 2.3 The site and its immediate surroundings are quite extensively landscaped such that only the main frontage element onto Upper Culham Road is visible to public vantage. All the surrounding landscape has been designated an Area of Special Landscape Importance/ Character.

3 Planning History

- 3.1 Planning permission has been granted previously for a small ground floor rear extension to form a Dining Room (WBC Ref: 17851) and an open first floor Balcony projecting from the Master Bedroom at the back of the dwelling (WBC Ref: F/2011/0969).
- 3.2 The previously permitted extension and balcony have been constructed. Neither structure is obtrusive. Both have been designed in complementary style to the original dwelling and both are at the rear of the property, where they are only seen from a limited number of private views from immediate neighbouring properties.

4 The Proposal

- 4.1 Lord and Lady Colwyn, as the new owners of 'Seaforth Cottage', are seeking to extend their new home to the side, in order to provide a new Family Room and Study at Ground Floor and a new Dressing Room and En-Suite Bathroom for the Master Bedroom plus a new En-Suite Bathroom for the Guest Bedroom all at First Floor level.
- 4.2 The development would comprise the creation of a two-storey side extension measuring 3.8m wide and extending back 7.3m at ground floor and 6.3m at first floor. The proposed extension would be set back from the main frontage wall, would be flush with the rear elevation at ground floor and would have a matching eaves height. The proposed ridge height for the side extension would echo that of the existing hipped roof dormer windows to front and rear. Overall, the extension ridge would stand approximately 0.45m below the main roof ridge height.
- 4.3 The proposed extension would be constructed of matching red brick and white painted render, with reclaimed plain clay tiles on the roof. The proposed windows would be of matching white painted timber design to those already existing.
- 4.4 As explained in the accompanying Design & Access Statement, the cumulative volumetric increase of the proposed extension combined with the earlier structures would amount to 34.75% of the total volume of the original Victorian dwelling.

5 National & Regional Planning Policy

Planning Policy Statement 1 – Delivering Sustainable Development

- 5.1 Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 1 was published by the ODPM in January 2005. It sets out the Government's key objectives and principles for the planning system, outlining the key issues and considerations for all stakeholders in the process.
- 5.2 PPS1 reinforces the principle of sustainable development as the cornerstone of the planning system, and notes the role the planning system should play in facilitating and promoting sustainable development.
- 5.3 Paragraph 5 of the statement sets out five fundamental functions of the planning system in facilitating sustainable development:
- Making suitable land available for development in line with economic and, social and environmental objectives to improve people's quality of life;
 - Contributing to sustainable economic development;
 - Protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities;
 - Ensuring high quality development through good and inclusive design, and the efficient use of resources; and,
 - Ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.
- 5.4 The Statement goes on to advise that these fundamental objectives should be carried forward in the Development Plan process, whereby the policies contained within the Plan should put into practice national and regional planning guidance. Paragraph 8 of reinforces the important role of the Development Plan:

“[The plan-led system] is central to planning and plays the key role in integrating sustainable development objectives. Where the development plan contains relevant policies, applications for planning permission should be determined in line with the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”

- 5.5 Clearly therefore the Development Plan maintains an important function in the planning process, with PPS1 emphasising that decisions on applications for planning permission should be based upon the policies contained within the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The present proposal directly accords with the Development Plan, as will be discussed in later sections.
- 5.6 PPS1 also stresses the importance of designing new development to protect and enhance the natural and built environment, in both urban and rural locations. The present proposal would comprise matching design and material finish and be of subservient scale to the original dwelling and as such would complement the appearance of the extended dwelling. Outwardly, the proposed extension would be barely noticeable from the surrounding countryside and, consequently, the special character and appearance of the hamlet of Upper Culham and of the surrounding countryside would be preserved without harm.

Planning Policy Statement 7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

- 5.7 Planning Policy Statement (PPS) 7 states at paragraph 1, part 4 that the countryside should be protected for its 'own intrinsic value'. By virtue of the fact that the proposed extension will be of matching design and subservient scale to the existing dwelling to which it will attach and be partially screened by existing mature landscape vegetation to the front and side, the extension will be unobtrusive and the attractive appearance and special character of the surrounding hamlet and wider countryside setting will be preserved.

Regional Planning Guidance

- 5.8 Although it is the Government's stated desire to abolish regional planning, for the time being at least the South East Plan (2006-2026) remains in force and relevant, in part, to the proposals. Policies CC1 and CC6 echo the general national advice contained in PPS1 and PPS3 (Housing) by seeking to encourage sustainable development and sustainable communities. Insofar as the advice is relevant, the proposed two-storey side extension to Seaforth Cottage is consistent with regional planning policy guidance.

6 Development Plan Policy

- 6.1 The Development Plan for the area currently consists of the Wokingham District Local Plan (1991-2006), as supplemented by Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) and also the Adopted Core Strategy DPD to the emerging Wokingham Local Development Framework (2010), as also supplemented by Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD). The adopted and emerging policies for the site and area are consistent and are examined below in this section.

The Adopted Wokingham District Local Plan (1996 - 2006)

- 6.2 The adopted Wokingham District Local Plan has now been largely superseded by replacement policies in the Core Strategy Development Plan Document (DPD) but a number of saved policies are still preserved and relevant. The only saved policy that remains pertinent in any way to this particular proposal is policy WBE5, relating to the protection of trees during new developments. The proposed extension will sit behind and to the side of existing frontage trees on the plot. However, none of the root protection zones to any of the nearby trees would be in any way affected by the proposals and as such there would be no conflict with this policy.

Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG)

- 6.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance policies SPGB2 and SPGB5 are relevant to these particular proposals. SPGB2 provides guidelines for the design of extensions to dwellings and requires designs to complement their site and surroundings and SPGB5 offers volume guidance for extensions to dwellings in the countryside. SPGB5 suggests that the overall volume of dwellings in the countryside should not normally be increased by more than 35% of their original volume. In this instance, the cumulative effect of the current proposal combined with earlier built developments would be to extend the original dwelling by 34.75%, which accords with the Council's adopted SPG guidance.

The Adopted Wokingham LDF Core Strategy (2010)

- 6.4 Core Strategy DPD policies relevant to this extension proposal are policies CP1 – sustainable development; CP3 – general development principles; CP6 – managing travel demand; CP11 – proposals outside of settlements; and CP12 – Green Belt.

- 6.5 The application site is situated within the Metropolitan Green Belt; where there is a need to maintain and where possible enhance the openness of the Green Belt area. Core Strategy policy CP12 states that permission will not be granted for inappropriate development in the Green Belt and in all cases development should not cause detriment to visual amenity.
- 6.6 The proposal is also situated in the open countryside and therefore within the remit of Core Strategy policy CP11, which states that development outside of defined settlement boundaries will be strictly controlled. The hamlet of Upper Culham is not a defined settlement in the Core Strategy. Where acceptable in principle (as residential extensions normally are), the countryside can accommodate some forms of development provided that the development type, form and design are all sensitive to their location.
- 6.7 Core Strategy policy CP3 states that development must be appropriate in scale and character to the area in which it is located and must be integrated into its local context without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land uses and occupiers.
- 6.8 In seeking to apply the above mentioned policy guidance and in general accordance with the national planning policy guidance aims contained in PPS1 and PPS7, Wokingham Borough Council applies its SPGB5 guidance to limit the size of extensions to dwellings in the open countryside to no more than 35% of the original size of any dwelling in order to preserve openness and attractiveness. These application proposals take the volumetric size of the extended dwelling up to but not beyond that 35% threshold and the proposals are therefore consistent with the policies and guidance.
- 6.9 Insofar as the proposed development may potentially impact upon the character of the surrounding hamlet of Upper Culham and the wider countryside setting that surrounds the site, the proposed extension would be located on the northern side of the property. That side of the property is already screened quite extensively by a large number of mature trees that sit forward and to the side of the dwelling. As such, the proposed extension would be barely visible from the countryside to the north or east and only a narrow glimpsed vista would be available at an oblique angle from immediately in front of the property on Upper Culham Road. The existing dwelling would shield from view the proposed extension from all the other properties to the south in Upper Culham and only a couple of immediate neighbours would have glimpse views afforded from the shared driveway that runs behind and to the west of the dwellings on the roadside frontage. The proposed side extension would represent only a relatively minor addition to an elevation that is barely visible from the road. It would be of a design and use materials that match those on the existing dwelling, which are considered appropriate in this context and there would be no potential for any overlooking. Accordingly, therefore, it is our contention that the proposal would not have a material effect on the character of the area or the residential amenities of neighbouring property occupiers.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The broad principle of accommodating small extensions to residential properties is generally acceptable, even in small rural hamlets such as Upper Culham, in accordance with all recognised national (PPS1 and PPS7), regional (South East Plan) and local (Wokingham District Local Plan & Wokingham LDF Core Strategy) planning policies – particularly Core Strategy policies CP1, CP3 and CP6. It is also generally acceptable in accordance with all relevant local supplementary planning guidance (Wokingham’s SPG guidelines on extending homes and extensions in the countryside – SPGB2 & SPGB5 and its SPD guidance on design – the Wokingham Borough Design Guide).
- 7.2 The proposal would not increase in volume the host dwelling beyond 35% of its original volume, even with the earlier small rear extension and balcony and therefore it is our contention that the proposal would not cause significant impact to the openness of the Green Belt and would therefore be consistent with Core Strategy policies CP11 and CP12.
- 7.3 We maintain that the proposal would be of appropriate form in relation to its locality and host structure and as such we maintain that the proposal would comply with Core Strategy policy CP3 and SPG guideline SPGB5 of the Wokingham Borough Design Guide (BDG).
- 7.4 Applying a Section 54a test, one is able to draw the conclusion that the proposed scheme for a small two-storey side extension complies with all relevant planning policy. There are no other material considerations that cause the presumption in favour of the development to be set aside and therefore we respectfully urge Wokingham Borough Council to grant planning permission for the proposal.

