Garden-room Office

Design & Access Statement

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RIBA Chartered Practice

arb Architects Registration Board
The architects within this company are registered as such under the Architects Act 1997.

AECB the sustainable building association
Member of the Association of Environment Conscious Building

CO-OPERATIVES UK Member

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Design & Access Statement is in support of the planning application submitted to Manchester City Council (MCC) on behalf of the owner-occupier client Dharman Jeyasingham for the erection of a new Garden Room/Office to the rear of the existing property at 11College Drive, Whalley Range.

The main aim for this project is to create a small, separate building to expand the property to cater for work that the owner undertakes in a private capacity from home.

The design has been in development for approximately 6 months with involvement from the Planning Team since mid November with the aim of arriving at a solution that fulfils the client's requirements but does not dominate the existing garden or detrimentally effect the surrounding area. This has resulted in a design that responds to the existing buildings and respects its setting.

This report has been prepared in parallel with the planning application and refers to information included as part of the Planning Application.

Through a process of continual design development and pre-planning discussion, we believe that the proposal that is now being submitted for Planning Approval is an appropriate resolution of the clients aspirations and the site.

Stephen McCusker
Director

Loop Systems Limited



2.0 The Process

2.1 Assessment

The existing building is located at 11 College Drive, Whalley Range, Manchester, M16 0AD.

The existing buildings comprise a two-storey, semi-detached dwelling house and a single-storey, semi-detached shed in the garden at the rear. Both buildings are brick, load-bearing structures and have not been extended. The existing shed has been partly demolished.

2.2 Physical Context

The existing buildings are are of similar materials and scale to the other houses in the area, it therefore blends in with its context. The existing buildings are not listed, and are not located within a Conservation Area. The building is located in an area that is suburban in character, dominated by residential property that are mostly houses.

The existing building is situated within walking distance of both Chorlton and Whalley Range districts with their variety of amenities. There is a local bus stop nearby on Upper Chorlton Road.

The site is larger than the existing building footprint with gardens to the front and rear (East and West). We are not aware of any existing rights of way for neighbouring buildings or owners across the site.

2.3 Social & Economic Context

Chorlton and Whalley range are popular residential areas within South Manchester approximately five miles from the city centre with vibrant shopping and entertainment facilities within walking distance.

Whalley Range is one of Manchester's oldest suburbs, still mainly residential in nature. The property is located in the Northern part of the area which has retained its early Victorian character with larger properties, some fine buildings, and mature trees.

The proposed addition to the property would allow our client to do more work from their home location in South Manchester, increasing their contribution to the local economy and reduce their own carbon footprint by decreasing the need for them to travel to undertake some of their work.

2.5 Planning policy

Although the local council has produced guidance specific to local conservation areas within Whalley Range, these are not relevant to the referenced location within this application. However we have referenced some parts of the conservation area principles as it is nearby and the proposed dwelling shares some of conservation area qualities/features which have influenced the development of this design. We have also referred to the Manchester Unitary Development Plan 1995 (UDP), specifically subsection Area 10 – Whalley Range.

Under WR1 the UDP highlights that in deciding its attitudes to proposals within Whalley Range the Council will have regard to the general policies in Part 1 of the Plan in order to:-
a) improve the area as a place to live by encouraging the upgrading and renewal of housing in the area and improving the appearance of the streets;
b) improve local shopping facilities;
c) encourage commercial development on Withington Road and Upper Chorlton Road to expand the number and types of jobs within the area (the unemployment rate is well above the City average);
d) provide for a range of living accommodation suitable for all sectors of the community;
e) upgrade the physical environment through the provision of more open space, protection of trees and traffic management schemes;
f) improve access to the range of sporting and leisure facilities within the area.

Development control in Whalley Range is aimed at encouraging the area to flourish whilst paying attention to its special architectural and visual qualities. The existing property appears to be in close proximity of the boundary of Whalley Range Conservation Area which has been designated to ensure that the character and quality of both the buildings and the spaces between them is retained. Attention must be paid to maintaining harmony with regard to building heights and materials.

When submitting an application for a new building, designers should look at the wider area rather than just the site. It is important to see how the proposal fits into its context.

All trees in conservation areas are protected by legislation. Those planted in the gardens and pavements of the Whalley Range conservation area have matured and they make a significant contribution to the character of the area, providing an interesting interplay with the brick and stone buildings. Formal consent is usually required for pruning or felling trees to ensure that action can be agreed on the most appropriate ways to carry out work in a sympathetic manner.

2.6 Involvement

Various design options were explored with the client between July and October 2012. The initial intention was to develop a design that remained within permitted development limits. However the roof pitch and height were increased beyond 2.5m to improve headroom and admission of natural light to the proposed office area. The building has been located near the adjacent property boundary to minimise its impact on the setting and be in keeping with the location of the original garden sheds. This has resulted in a structure that exceeds 2.5m in height within 2 metres of the property boundary. The client therefore opted to proceed with this design option after some amendment, aware that this solution would require Planning Consent.

As part of our appointment we therefore undertook to issue design proposals to the Local Planning Authority for comment, as part of a pre-application process. MCC Planning's South Area Team have therefore been approached a number of times. These discussions can be summarised as follows:

Planning advised that there may be concerns regarding the overall height of the outbuilding. It was suggested that if the height was reduced, the proposal would in principle be acceptable and it may be possible to achieve permitted development limits if no part of the building exceeds 2.5 metres if within 2 metres of the boundary.

This led to further conversations highlighting that permitted development options had been explored as set out above and were not thought to be satisfactory I terms of personal comfort.

Discussions further highlighted that the maximum height was approx 1.2m above the existing shed, at the thin end of the roof with the extended edge - the bulkier part of the building is further back and shorter.

Following consideration by the client, the design heights and levels etc have been adjusted as suggested by Planning resulting in an overall height approximately 900mm taller than the existing shed at the tallest part of the roof

Planning have also highlighted that if any trees are to be affected by the proposal, a tree age and condition survey is required. If not, then no other information will be required. At this point it is hoped that existing trees will not be affected. There are 2 existing trees within the clients property that may be affected by the work. These are identified on the plans and photographs provided however, we aim to retain and build around these as indicated on proposals.

2.7 Evaluation

In developing the design proposals, the following opportunities and constraints were explored:

2.7.1 Client Brief (Outline)

- To increase available dwelling accommodation by providing a dedicated office/study area
- Consideration of WC provision with visitability potential as Part M of Building Regulations
- Proposals should prioritise options that will not alter the lower floors of the existing house nearby and consider the kitchen window and views from there.
- Proposals should not alter appearance of the existing house from the street at the front
- Entrance should be separate from the main house, accessed via the side gate.
- Materials to be considered are masonry/brick towards the house to reflect the existing materials and timber joinery/glass to open out onto the garden at the other end.
- The creation of a well proportioned room
- Maximising natural light as much as possible.
- The energy efficiency of the proposals.
- Neighbours & consideration of party wall issues

2.7.2 Regulatory Requirements

- To comply with Building and Fire Regulations.
- To consider accessibility at the ground floor level of the property
- To consider issues raised by the local Planning Team during design development

2.7.3 Aspirations

- To compliment the existing building and garden
- To respect and enhance the local setting

3.0 USE

The existing use of the main building as a dwelling is to be maintained and is in keeping with the predominant use of the other buildings in the immediate vicinity.

However, at least 2 rooms in the existing house are used to provide office/study facilities and the client wishes to re-establish their intended use as living and bedroom accommodation by decanting the office/study areas yo the proposed new-build garden room.

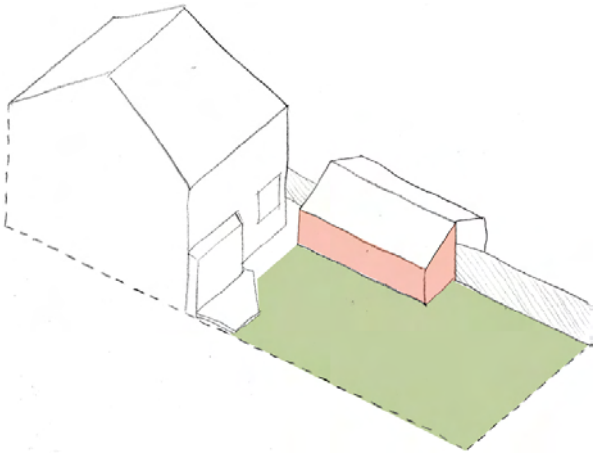
In addition, they wish to provide toilet accommodation in the proposed new-build to provide ground level WC facilities for the dwelling to improve visitability.

The existing use of the external shed as a storage area is also to be maintained and is in keeping with the predominant use of the other buildings in the immediate vicinity.

4.0 DESIGN

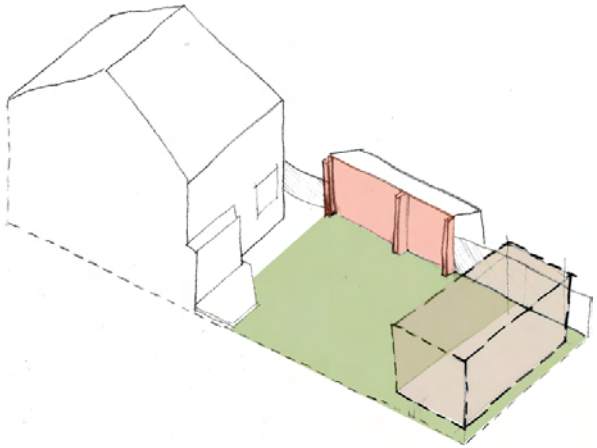
For all following text, please refer to the Plan, Section and Elevation drawings alongside the 3D sketch model (Appendix 02).

4.1 Layout



We have developed the design in response to the client requirements. The initial approach reviewed the possibility of refurbishing/extending the existing shed as set out below:

- Most of the Garden is North or West facing is quite narrow
- Height & design restrictions may be caused by working next to the neighbours shed
- Structural alterations would be required including solutions to prop neighbours shed
- More Budget would be required to address interface of new and existing buildings
- Close to main house resulting in less costly drains
- Height privacy and light to kitchen window may be restricted by proximity to house
- Overall limited design flexibility



Following this review, we considered the project further and concluded that the client may achieve better value by locating the proposed structure to the bottom of the garden as described below and illustrated on the adjacent sketch:

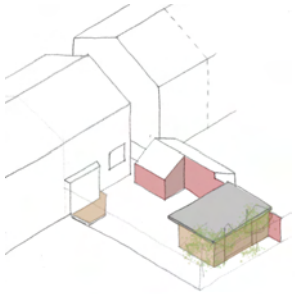
- This option opens up the garden more with South facing aspect
- New structure could be better proportioned without requiring planning but developing taller designs (that would require planning) could enable more interesting solutions.
- Structural alterations/demolition required to prop neighbours shed
- Less Budget will be required to address existing buildings
- Further from main house resulting in more costly drains
- Height privacy and light to kitchen window may be restricted by proximity to house
- Overall more design flexibility



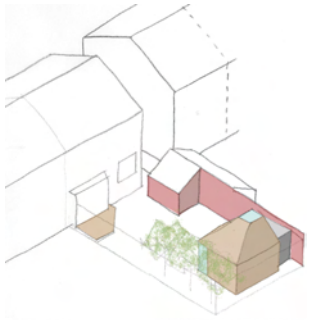
After further discussions the client opted to proceed with a combination of these options by partly demolishing the existing shed and locating the new proposals at the bottom of the garden as can be seen in the adjacent image.

Following this decision, options were developed with a plan arrangement with the WC room located to the North East boundary as it requires less light and will keep all the drainage/services to the top side of the garden where they could extend from the existing house services.

The office space is located to make best use of light moving around the garden









4.2 Scale

The adjacent images illustrate initial design proposals for locating the building within the garden and in relation to neighbouring properties. Option 1 favours a flat roof and overhang to provide some privacy whereas Option 2 uses a rooflight at high level to provide natural light and ventilation. It has less glazing around the walls to provide more privacy.

Options explored various roof forms and options including the flat roof and steep-pitched -pyramid. Projecting eaves were used to shade the main room in Option 1 and timber shingles on the pitched roof. Other roof options and materials were considered such as a green roof or solar panels etc.

In both options we have retained the brick section of the current shed to provide some privacy from the next door neighbours and storage section.

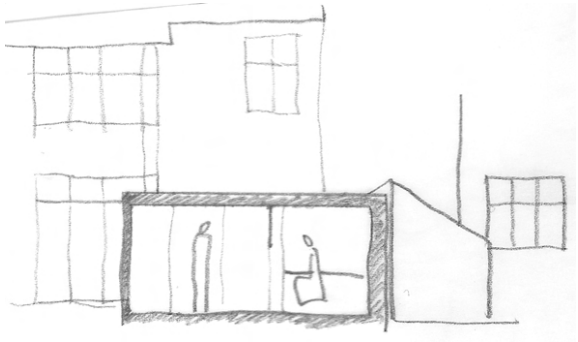
The selected location and proximity to the boundary with the neighbours has also affect the material selection due to fire regulations. Therefore while we have illustrated both options with timber this has been altered this to brick/masonry/render etc. for areas close to the neighbours' property boundaries.

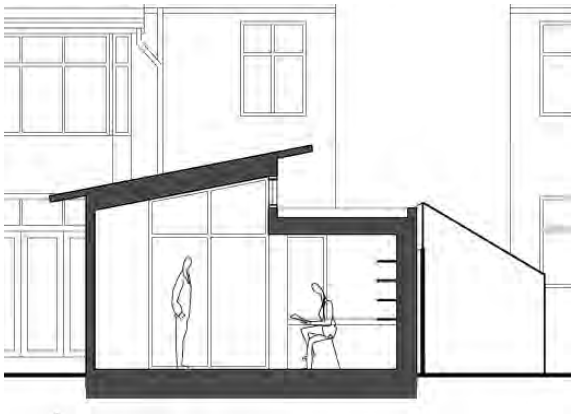
Both options aim to create a small 'courtyard' garden protected between the 3 buildings and there is scope for various garden/landscaping layouts with these.

Regarding the trees at the back of the garden, these options illustrate different explorations. Option 1 illustrates a more 'see-through' building with existing trees behind it, dividing the garden into smaller areas whereas Option 2 illustrates trees more to the side, pushing the building towards the back of the garden more and 'facing' the house/garden.

Option 1 is generally within the parameters of permitted development rights and probably would not require Planning permission, however unless Option 2 is pulled more towards the centre of your garden, something like this will certainly require Planning Permission.







Following further discussion and reflection Option 3 was developed as illustrated in the adjacent images with a slimmer study/WC block with sufficient width to ensure the toilet space functions properly.

We also reduced it more at the front around the desk area as requested to reduce the impact on the garden at the same time as it matches the width of the shed at the front and perspective will mean people will generally not be aware the the width increases at the back due to the office box to the side. This also creates a better space at the rear around the existing trees.

The roof and building heights are minimised to be within the limits permissible under the permitted development rules for outbuildings. As the building is within 2m of the neighbours boundary this is the maximum height we can have the whole building without applying for planning and consequently limits the roof to flat options. Making reasonable allowances for lifting it off the ground and some structure and insulation in the roof, this results in an internal ceiling height of approx 2.1m.

We've illustrated windows/doors as desired by the client with the toilet/study 'box' shown as rendered with timber panels on the rest of the seating/office area.

Overall it's simple, slimmer and more economical than some previous options however the client had concerns about ceiling heights in the office area illustrated in the adjacent sketch section. While these may be sufficient for sitting in the study area they wanted more natural light and headroom in the office to benefit from the garden nearby.

Consequently, it was decided to proceed with a design with a pitched roof over the office area as per the adjacent proposed section, accepting that Planning Permission would be required for this but overall producing a better quality design and more functional spaces internally with clerestory windows to allow more north light into the office area.

4.3 Appearance

The revised design utilises the same materials as proposed during pre-application discussions.

It is proposed that the appearance of the existing buildings are not altered. The new-build office/study will comprise the following materials:

- External timber frame walls and roof
- Single ply roofing membrane and exterior board with render system over timber frame to study/WC block

- Profiled Cement-fibre roofing sheet and external timber cladding on vertical battens over timber frame to Office area
- Double-glazed, exterior quality, timber-framed windows and sliding doors
- Rainwater down-pipes to be determined

4.4 Environmental Impact

The design has been carefully considered to reduce any negative impact on the global and the local environment, and to promote a healthy indoor environment. We have therefore focused on conserving energy by considering how the areas affected by the works could be improved.

We have developed this design with a ‘green’ 'low embodied energy' specification and environmentally friendly building products where possible. For example, the proposed design allows for timber frame and wood fibre infill that locks up carbon in the construction unlike alternative products which may be highly polluting and energy intensive in their manufacture.

5.0 Access

Accessibility will not be reduced by the proposals as there are no layout changes proposed to the ground or first floors of the existing house. However there is currently no WC provision on the ground floor of the dwelling.

The proposed alterations to the garden layout and provision of an office/study garden room with WC accommodation will compliment the accommodation within the existing dwelling, extending it to provide a WC located on the same level as the principal entrance level of the house. To minimise the size of the block the WC has been designed in accordance with Approved Document Part M of the Building Regulations, which deals with access to and use of buildings.

As all thresholds should ideally be flush, the landscape proposals include adjustment of the existing ground levels around the building to ease access into the proposed office/study.

Once inside there is level access throughout the ground floor.

Transport

The dwelling is conveniently located within walking distance of bus stops, so the dwelling can be easily reached by public transport by the owners and visitors.

On-street car parking remains in existence to the front of the dwelling.

Appendix 01: Photographs



College Drive streetview



View to sheds



Rear of house from garden



shed/house



Existing garden view from house

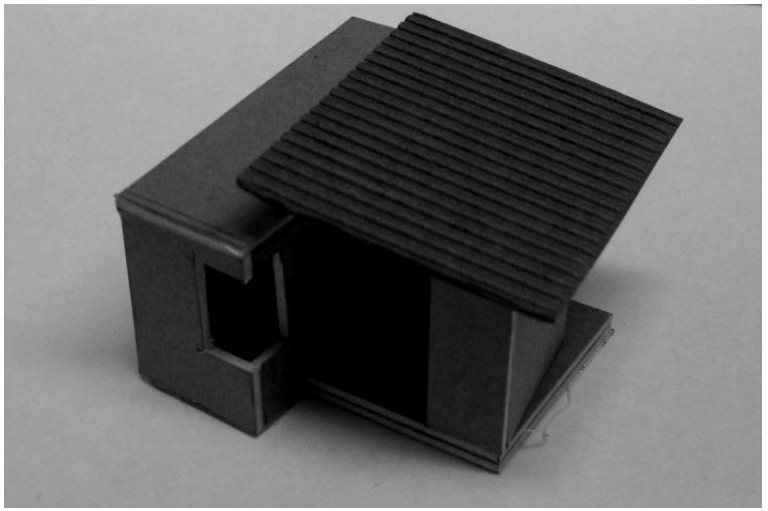


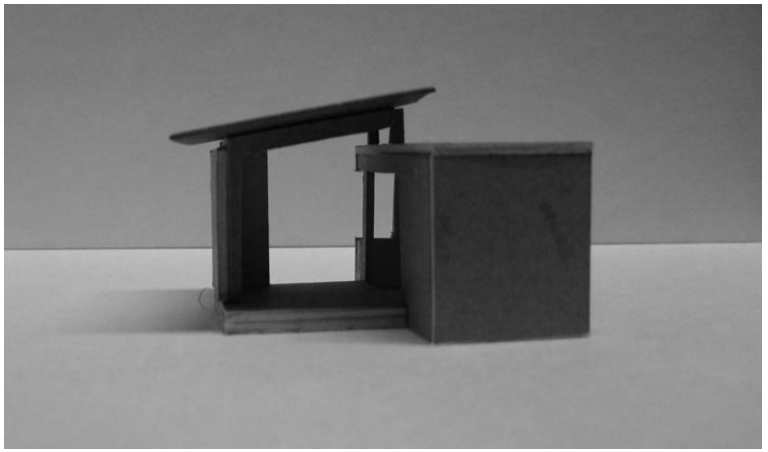
Existing shed



Side of shed

Appendix 02: Model Photos





Sketch model to illustrate form, apertures and texture