

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

33 Willian Way,
Letchworth Garden City,
Hertfordshire,
SG6 2HQ

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Revision E

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INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared by MDP Architects to accompany an application to North Hertfordshire Council and Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation for planning permission and SOM consent for the extension and alteration of 33 Willian Way, Letchworth Garden City. This report has been prepared to provide guidance and information on the proposals, and to discuss the key principles that have informed their development.

Appendix A details the responses to previous feedback received in December 2024 from the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (LGCHF).

Appendix B details the materials proposed for use in the development.

This statement has been prepared within the context of the following key sources of advice and guidance:

- *'Design and access statements: How to write, read and use them'*. CABE, 2006
- *www.planningguidance.communities.gov.uk (as substituted for archived document 'Guidance on information requirements and validation'*. Department for Communities and Local Government, March 2010)
- *The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015*

The planning documents that have been considered in developing the proposals are:

- National Planning Policy Framework (2021)
- North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 (adopted November 2022)
- Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation – Heritage Character Area Guide
- Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation – Scheme of Management

Within these, the specific policies and SPDs considered to be relevant to the proposals are:

- D1- Sustainable Design
- D2- House extensions, replacement dwellings and outbuildings
- D3- Protected living conditions
- SECN12 – Achieving well-designed places
- NHLP Appendix 4- Car Parking Standards
- NHLP Appendix 5- Letchworth Garden City Design Principles

SITE APPRAISAL

The application site is situated on the northern side of Willian Way, which runs on a roughly north-south axis from the centre of Letchworth Garden City. Willian Way was originally envisaged as a connection to the village of Willian to the south, but this was never fully realised.

The application site does not sit within the Letchworth conservation area but does sit within a 'Heritage Character Area' as defined by the Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation. The property itself is not locally listed, but is included as a 'Home of Special Interest' in appendix A of the LGCHF Heritage Character Area Guide. Houses along Willian Way are almost exclusively larger detached properties, set back from the road behind defined grass verges. There are a variety of styles and ages of property, with the earlier properties generally situated towards the northern end towards the junction with Baldock Road.

The existing property is a double fronted four-bedroom detached house, built in a neo-Georgian style which matches that of no.15 to the north, set behind a generous front drive. The symmetrical street-facing façade features a semi-porticoed front door between two half-octagonal bays at ground floor, above which sit five six-over-six sliding sash windows. The main plain tiled roof is hipped on all four sides with sprocketed eaves, flanked by a pair of chimneys to either end. To the rear is a generous garden, with the property sitting in a site of just over 0.1ha. Within the garden sits the remaining floor slab of a previous outbuilding, which was removed by the previous owners following enforcement action against a planning breach.



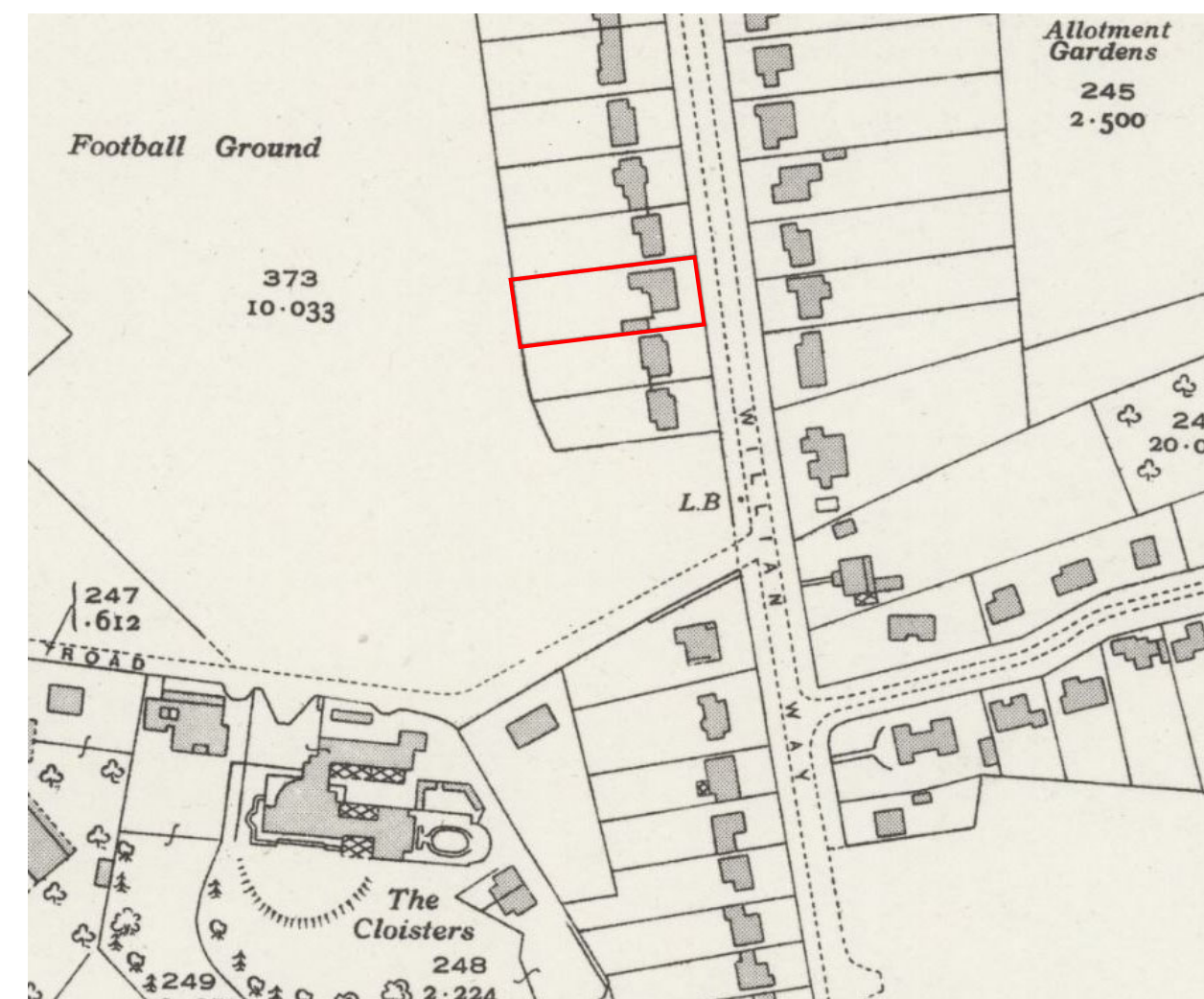
Aerial image of the site (bounded by red line) showing the generally suburban immediate context, with Willian Way running north-south. The outbuilding seen along the southern boundary of the site no longer exists, following enforcement action served on the previous owners.

Image © Google

SITE PROPOSAL

The proposals seek to extend the property to the south side and rear with a single storey extension, and to also extend the existing rear offshoot at first floor level to the south. The proposals are primarily intended to provide additional living accommodation, rebalancing the sequencing of spaces whilst also improving the current connection with the garden.

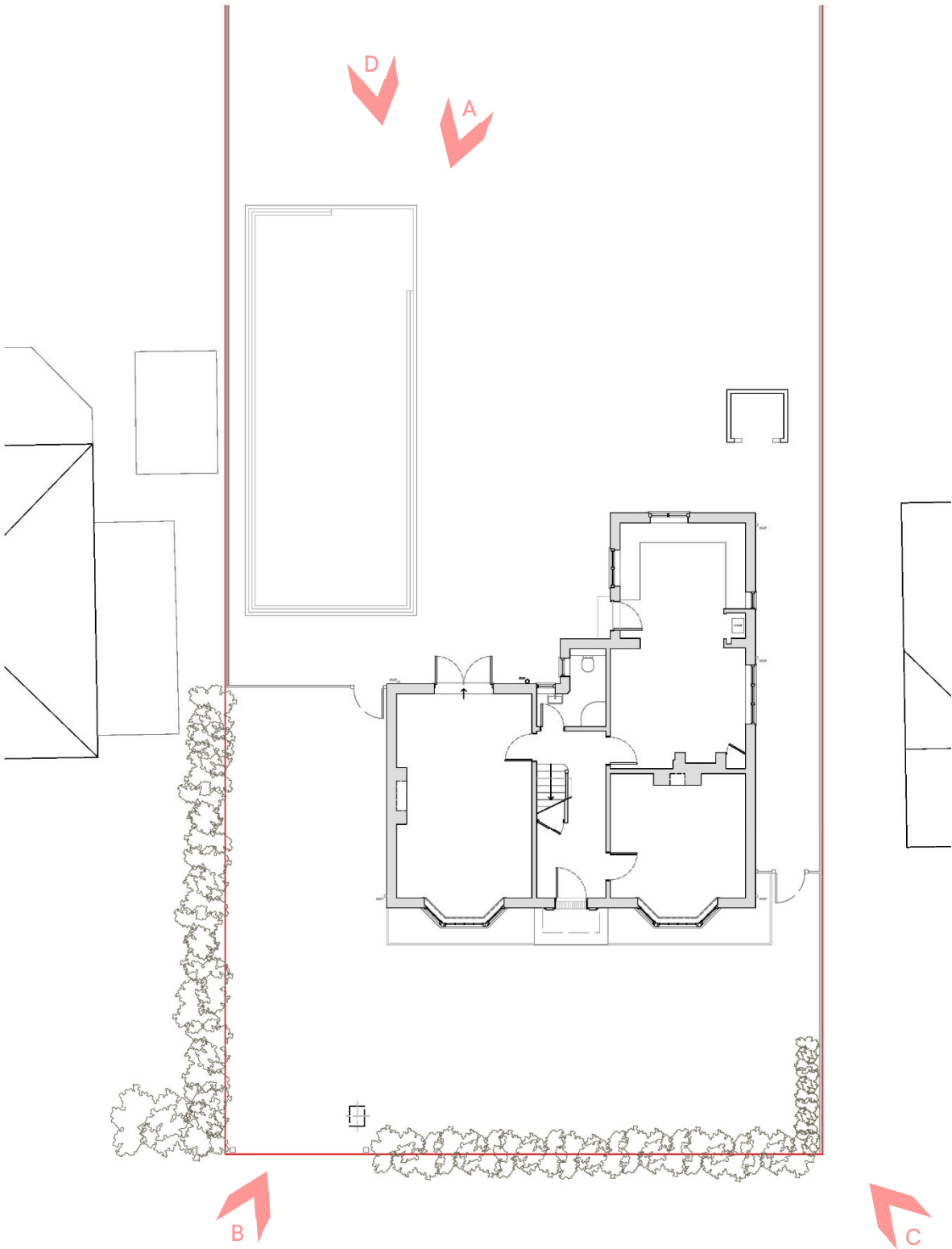
The single storey extension to the rear extends parallel to the southern boundary of the site, providing a new kitchen and dining space. This extends in to a side extension towards the front of the property along the side of the main house, to include functional laundry and toilet spaces as well as a new side entrance. To the rear of the property, a new garden room has been created to link the existing reception rooms and main body of the house with the newly created spaces. At first floor, the small extension allows for the reconfiguration of the two rear bedrooms, one of which is currently accessed off the other, to create a master suite with dressing space and en suite.



The property first appears on the 1938 OS revision, as part of an early phase of the Garden City development. The original garage, now demolished, is seen on the southern boundary.

Image © National Library of Scotland

EXISTING SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Existing site plan showing the current property, including the remaining floor slab from the previous outbuilding, now demolished (Not to scale)



EXTERNAL APPEARANCE

FORM

The driving influence for the project was the character of the existing property, notably the neo-Georgian front façade, as well as the generally more traditional nature of the local area. Many of the properties along Willian Way have been extended to varying degrees although the road, despite the variety of architectural styles, retains a cohesiveness which meant that development to the front of the property was likely to be more sensitive. To the rear, away from the public realm, it was felt that the scope for development was much greater, and this is supported by the number of nearby side and rear extensions.

Initially, a key consideration was incorporating an existing ground floor slab that remains in the garden, a remnant of a former outbuilding which was built and subsequently demolished by the previous owners. It was considered desirable to reuse this, if possible, both to reduce cost but also to minimise the embodied carbon of the proposals. However, initial proposals to this effect presented to LGCHF were resisted as they did not technically comply with some elements of their design guidance.

Therefore, the current proposals have been revised to adjust for these requirements, taking precedent from proposals approved at no.15, the sister house of no.33, which were approved in 2021 under the current Design Guide. The proposals retain a 1m gap to the boundary, along which outbuildings within the site of no.35 are built. The depth of the rear extension has also been reduced, to bring the proposals in line with that approved at no.15, and the overall footprint of the proposals reduced. The extension continues to wrap around the side of the building, creating space for more functional spaces to be housed away from the main living spaces. A secondary entrance door is proposed into the more utilitarian spaces to the side of the house, with the side extension stepped back from the main front façade to reinforce a level of subservience.

The side and rear extension mimics the roof form of the main house with matching overhanging eaves. Earlier iterations of the proposals included two different roof forms, with a parapet cornice utilised to harmonise the two differing roof forms and to avoid any awkward detailing between the two. This parapet detail referenced the neo-Georgian style of the main house, whilst also differentiating the extension from the plainer detailing evident on the rear of the property in order that the phasing of the property’s development is more readable. However, following consultation with the LGCHF, this element of the proposals was omitted. The discussions held with the LGCHF and the applicant’s responses to these points are included in Appendix A.

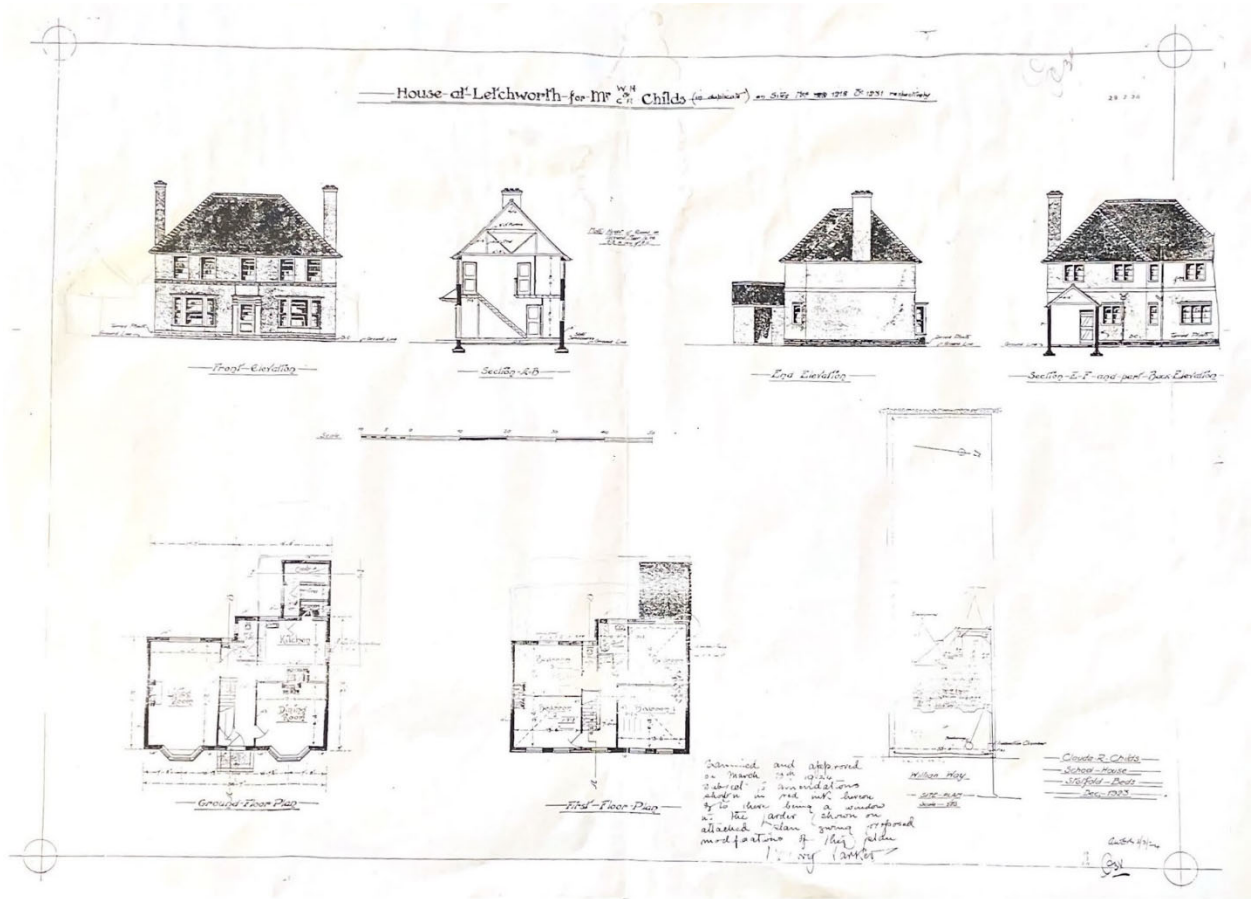
Elsewhere, the first floor extension seeks to improve upon the current first floor layout which significantly impacts upon the amenity of the rear bedrooms. Currently the rearmost bedroom is accessed off another bedroom, which in turn is accessed off the entrance hall. This means that the two bedrooms cannot be used independently of one another. This layout is the result of a previous extension, which added the current rearmost bedroom. It is not clear when this extension was completed; however, plans dating from 1923 possessed by the applicants show how the original layout did not include this first floor addition, which the rear of the house stopping at the current step out. This is supported by the differing size and colouring of the brickwork at first floor as well as the construction of the roof, which is built off of the rear roof with layboards rather than replicating the purlined rafter arrangement of the main house.

The LGCHF Heritage Character Area Design Principles state “when considering proposals for alterations we would support applications that reintroduce original designs and detailing that have been lost over time” (page 2). Therefore, the first floor extension seeks to take the form of the property at the rear closer to that of the original by ‘squaring off’ the current double step arrangement. By doing so, this allows for separate access to be provided to the rear bedroom, significantly improving the amenity of the first floor layout. In addition, it also allows for the first floor window layout to be rebalanced, incorporating a triple and a single casement to balance with the south side of the rear elevation.



ABOVE: Image of no.15 to the north, built in an identical style but featuring 3no. dormer windows to the front elevation. *Image © Google*

BELOW: Original plans of no. 15 and no.33, dating from 1923, showing how the existing rear section of the house has been extended at first floor to provide an additional bedroom.





Existing (top) and proposed (bottom) street scene drawings showing the proposals' relationship to the neighbouring properties. The side extension retains a level of subservience to the main house. (Not to scale)

MATERIALS

The current property features a very limited palette of materials, with facing brick external walls and a plain tiled roof, with white painted eaves and soffits and black uPVC rainwater goods. Windows are generally white uPVC, featuring sliding sashes to the front elevation and storm casements to the side and rear. Elsewhere along Willian Way, the palette of materials is similarly restrained, generally restricted to facing brickwork or painted roughcast render to walls and almost exclusively plain tiles to roofs.

The proposals do not seek to depart from this significantly, seeking a cohesive aesthetic with the existing property and general street scene. External walls are proposed in facing brickwork to match the existing, whilst the new pitched roofs are proposed in plain tiles with existing tiles to be reused where possible. The new flat roof over the garden roof, hidden behind the proposed parapet, will be covered in a lead grey single ply membrane to mimic the appearance of a traditional lead roof. The parapet itself will be constructed out of painted timber.

Although the existing windows are white uPVC- either sliding sashes to the front or storm casements elsewhere- the applicant's long term aim is to replace these entirely with good quality timber flush casements. Therefore, whilst the windows to the front elevation are not proposed to be replaced as part of this application, new windows where proposed are to be painted timber flush casements. These will be in an off-white colour, to match other fenestration such as the proposed parapet.

OVERLOOKING & RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

As the site is situated in a residential area, it is also important to acknowledge and mitigate the potential impact of the works on the residential amenities of neighbouring properties, particularly with regards to overlooking and visual impact. No new first floor windows are proposed on either the north or south flank elevations which face the neighbouring properties, with the exception of the replacement windows to the north elevation to serve the new family bathroom and en suite- these windows will be fitted with obscured glazing.

The position of the extension in relation to the south boundary has been discussed previously. The boundary treatment here is generally a 1.8m high close boarded fence, which transitions to decorative hedgerow between the two properties to a height of approximately 3m. It is acknowledged that, with a proposed eaves height of approximately 2.4m, the proposed eaves of the single storey extension will be slightly visible above the existing fence line. However, it is also noted that there is an existing shed/outbuilding within the garden of no.35, the ridgeline and eaves of which already sits above the line of the fence, which will sit directly adjacent to the proposed extension. The extension also does not extend beyond the position of this outbuilding, meaning that this will largely block any views of the proposed extension, however limited, and as such it is felt that there is no impact on neighbouring amenity.

The two-storey extension to the existing offshoot is limited in size and is restricted to the southern elevation of this section, meaning it is almost entirely obscured from the neighbouring property to the north. Although the ridge line of this extension will be raised slightly, by around 750mm, it is not felt that this is sufficient enough to significantly reduce the daylight of the neighbours to the north- particular as the rear elevations of the two properties are more or less level with one another.

APPENDIX A

The Scheme of Management (incorporated into the original title deeds of the property) from which the LGCHF derives its authority provide:

Objective (para 2): The object of the Scheme is to ensure for the benefit of tenants of houses buildings and land on the Estate (whether tenants holding under long tenancies at low rents within the meaning of the Act or not) and of freeholders of such houses buildings and land that the Estate and the standards of appearance and amenity (whether existing or in future) on the Estate shall be preserved and not deteriorate by reason of any tenant of a house in the Scheme area acquiring the freehold of the house either under the enfranchisement provisions of the Act or otherwise

Schedule 1, para 6: Any owner shall not carry out any development redevelopment or alteration materially affecting external appearance of the enfranchised property or of any building or structure thereon save with the written consent of the Corporation (which shall not be unreasonably withheld) and in accordance with plans drawings and specifications previously submitted to and approved by the Corporation.

The below summarises the feedback received from LGCHF in December 2024 and our response to these points. This also follows an on site meeting with LGCHF in January 2025.

- We do not support the dormers as proposed on the principal elevation of the building. We would prefer to not see any dormers here. The scale, massing, design and position of the proposed dormer on the rear is not considered to be appropriate either.*

Following the feedback from LGCHF, and in order to fully consider the proposals in more detail, the applicants have chosen to omit the proposed dormer windows and loft conversion from the current plans, with a view to revisiting these at a later date. However, we would note at this stage that the proposals for the front dormers are virtually indistinguishable from those approved and built at no.15, and we are yet to receive any compelling evidence as to why these were previously deemed acceptable but are now seemingly not.

- The proposed rear single storey extension is over 12m in depth from the original rear building line. Our Design Principles state that single-storey rear extensions should not exceed 5m in depth from the original rear building line, so you are significantly beyond this. A single-storey extension should also be at least 1m away from the adjacent boundary, which the current scheme does not conform to. We do not consider there to be sufficient justification here to deviate from this.*

Although the Design Principles state that extensions should not exceed 5m, they also subsequently state that "*Extensions to houses on very large plots may exceed 5 metres from the original main rear building line, if it can be demonstrated that there is negligible effect on the neighbouring property and is not detrimental to the character of the dwelling or its setting.*" As the property sits on what is presumably considered a very large plot, extending to just over 0.1Ha, and that the proposal will have negligible impact upon neighbouring properties given it's height and relative position to neighbouring outbuildings, it could be argued that the original proposals fully complied with this.

Nevertheless, the applicants have significantly reduced the depth of the rear extension, bringing it in line with the proposals approved and built at no.15 which, having been approved under the current Design Principles, is considered to be a logical precedent for what might be considered acceptable, and in turn withholding such consent would not be reasonable in accordance with Sch 1, para 6 of the Scheme of Management. As previously discussed, the proposals have also been adjusted to increase 1m of separation to the boundary.

- The proposed single-storey extension presents a very long, black (sic) elevation to the side. The depth is going to need to be significantly reduced, but I would also suggest adding some interest to this elevation.*

As discussed above, the proposals have been reduced in depth meaning that this elevation has subsequently reduced in length. However, it should also be noted that- due to the position in relation to the boundary and the position of neighbouring structures and vegetation- this side extension will not be visible from any viewpoint. Therefore, we do not consider it appropriate to include additional 'interest' along this elevation as it would in any case not be visible. It was suggested during the meeting that this could include windows; however, given the extremely limited outlook and light levels, such an addition would offer no additional amenity and would appear somewhat superfluous.

- We would not support the increase in width and height of the existing stepped hipped rear wing. This is an original feature that would need to be retained in its current form.*

As discussed above, the current rearmost section at first floor is not original, and this is supported by several pieces of evidence, including original plans of the property, the layout and construction of the existing roof structure, and the size and age of the brickwork used here. The proposals seek to mirror more closely the original design of the property. The LGCHF Design Principles state "*when considering proposals for alterations we would support applications that reintroduce original designs and detailing that have been lost over time*" (page 2). Assuming that the objection to the first floor extension is purely based on the alteration of a feature considered original, we presume that this comment is no longer applicable.

- We're not convinced that the amount of glazing that is proposed along the ground floor at the rear and side is appropriate and would suggest that this be reduced/broken up. The style and proportions of all new doors/full height windows does not quite reflect the existing building.*

Large areas of glazing are a typical feature of Georgian architecture, a style that the application property looks to reference. Typically, glazing units were broken up into smaller panes, reflective of the manufacturing cost of larger panes of glass at the time, and were arranged in symmetrical layouts. It is not clear why it is felt that larger areas of glazing are considered inappropriate when viewed in the context of the neo-Georgian style of the existing building. However, the proposed windows reference the style of the existing building, breaking up larger areas of glazing in to smaller modules with glazing bars and in all cases retaining a symmetry where an assembly is comprised of window and door modules.

- The height of the single storey extension looks excessively high, which is particularly evident from the front. I would suggest that the height be reduced.*

The height of the side extension is informed by the pitch of the roof, which itself mimics the pitch of the main roof. This approach is required in the Design Principles, which state that "*...proposed roof pitches shall be consistent with the original roof design of the house.*" It is not felt that it is appropriate to adopt a slacker pitch in order to reduce the overall height of the extension. In any case, the height of the side extension is broadly comparable (approx..300mm higher) to the similar extension at no.15, approved in 2021.

- I do not support the roof form at the rear of the single-storey extension where the hipped roof transitions to a cornice/parapet. I would suggest that the hipped roof is used all the way around this element. A more traditional Letchworth parapet detail would be a brick on edge with tile creasing.*

As stated earlier, the style of the property is neo-Georgian rather than the colloquial Arts & Crafts style that is more prevalent elsewhere in Letchworth. It is presumed that the property is included as a Home of Special Interest in order to preserve this neo-Georgian character. Decorative parapets and cornices were a defining feature of the Georgian period, often retrofitted on to older buildings as it became fashionable to emphasize the strength of facades and to conceal the pitched roofs behind.

Therefore, it is not clear why a brick on edge with tile course detail has been suggested, given that this is very much a traditional Arts and Crafts detail rather than Georgian. The LGCHF Design Principles state that, for extensions, "*Design shall respond to and harmonise with the individual qualities of the host building and its setting.*" The proposed detail

takes its cue from the neo-Georgian style of the main dwelling, utilising this in a way that also avoids any awkward eaves detailing at the junctions between the flat and pitched roofs. However, we have acted upon this comment by reducing the depth of the parapet cornice, and by introducing a brick soldier course above the new openings, referencing the treatment of existing window openings on the rear elevation.

- *Is the proposed lantern rooflight at the rear really low profile and hidden behind a parapet, or has this just not been shown on the rear elevation?*

The proposed lantern rooflight is now shown on the rear elevation. However, it should be noted that, because of the parapet detail, views of the lantern will be restricted from most viewpoints.

- *The footprint of the previous outbuilding will not be given any weight in the consideration of any future works as this was an unauthorised structure that was subsequently removed. The original garage structure here was much smaller and further forward.*

This comment is understood and, as discussed above, the proposals have been adjusted to reflect this.

- *I can see no reference to materials and finishes etc. However, we would expect materials and detailing to generally match that of the existing property. During the course of any application, we would require detailed specifications on materials, finishes, windows/doors etc. to ensure appropriate and high quality design.*

Materials and details will, with the exception of the proposed timber windows, match the main dwelling as discussed above. Details of proposed materials are included in Appendix B of this document.

The below summarises the further feedback received from LGCHF in February 2025 and our response to these points.

- *The team agreed with my previous comments on the proposed parapet around the side/rear extension and advised that they would like to see the roof/eaves detail at the front and side of the side extension continued around this whole element. The 'linking' section in the centre could then still have the parapet detail.*

From this comment, it is still not clear on what basis the objection to the parapet detail is from. It has been established that views of the south side elevation are so limited to the point of being almost non-existent. The continuation of the parapet detail is to harmonise the two differing roof elements of the extension and to reference the Neo-Georgian style of the original property. Whilst it is acknowledged that a more 'traditional' eaves detail is appropriate at the front, where the property must also harmonise with other dwellings along the street, it is not clear from the feedback or from the design principles why the parapet could not continue around the whole extension as shown.

Indeed, by doing so, it avoids an awkward corner transition detail between the parapet and the pitched roof at the rear on the key rear elevation. Continuing the parapet around as shown on the drawings allows for the transition weathering detail to be on the obscured side elevation where it cannot be seen. Using a combination of traditional eaves and parapet means that this weathering details will be in the centre of the rear elevation, where it will clearly be seen. It will also be more difficult to effectively weather the detail around the mouldings of the parapet where these intersect with the tiled roof. It also means that the rear extension can be 'read' more easily, in the context of the development of the building.

Please see the reference images below:



This parapet detail is a key design element which the applicants are keen to retain. Whilst they have been happy to adjust their plans and expectations to reach a compromise on other points, they wish to retain this detail and cannot see that the feedback has any basis in the written design principles.

- *The only other comment the team had was with regards to the end elevation of the widened two-storey rear wing. We would prefer to see the existing first floor window retained at its current width, centralised over the door below. You could then put a single casement to the right-hand side of this if additional light is required. It would be best to see a single door and window centralised on this wing, as the current one does, but we realise this would involve making further alterations to the existing wall and openings, so we understand why this may not prove possible. As you have demonstrated that the existing rear wing (at least the second stepped section) is not original, we can't see a reason to object to this increasing in width to be in line with the original wing, in principle.*

As acknowledged, it is not possible to centralise the ground floor doors as the internal layout does not allow this- however, they have been aligned with the upper floor window.

The inclusion of two double casements was to reference the original design of the property, as this had previously been a key concern of the LGCHF. Previously, and as discussed above, concerns had been raised during pre-application discussions that the proposed design altered what was (at that time) considered to be an original feature, and that the LGCHF held a preference for original features to be retained or, where these had been lost, reinstated. This had informed the proposed layout of the first-floor windows, as the original design had included two double casements on this rear element.

However, if a departure from the original layout is now preferred, the applicants are content to agree to it and the submitted designs reflect the requested arrangement.

APPENDIX B

This section details the materials proposed for the development.

EXTERNAL WALLS

External walls are proposed to be facing brickwork to match the existing. The existing bricks appear to be handmade and are traditionally fired clay bricks which range from a lighter orange colour to a darker well-fired appearance, stopping short of full vitrification.

Proposed bricks are likely to be from the 'Light Multi' range sourced from HG Matthews, blended to match the existing.

EXTERNAL ROOF

The existing roof is formed of dark clay plain tiles with bonnet hips and cut tiles at verges, and half round ridge tiles. Existing eaves and soffits are all painted timber, with eaves boards painted in black and soffits in white

The proposed new pitched roof will be finished in Keymer Goxhill clay plain tiles, with matching bonnet hip tiles to new hipped elements and half round ridge tiles. Existing tiles will be retained for re-use where practical. The new flat roof over the garden room will be finished in a lead grey single ply membrane.

RAINWATER GOODS

Existing gutters and downpipes are black uPVC throughout in round/half-round profiles.

Proposed gutters and downpipes will be in black uPVC with round/half-round profiles to match the existing.

EXTERNAL DOORS & WINDOWS

Existing doors and windows are generally white uPVC, comprising storm casement profiles to the rear and sliding sashes with sash horns to the front elevation, with astragal glazing bars throughout. The principal front door and existing rear door to the kitchen are painted timber. Although the original plans show that the rear windows were divided by three, the existing windows are generally divided in to six panes per casement.

New and replacement doors and windows will be white painted timber and will be double glazed with astragal glazing bars. Although there are no original windows remaining, glazing bars will have an ovolo inner profile and a tapered external profile to mimic a sprig and putty construction. New casement windows where proposed will be flush casements, and glazing will be divided into six panes each. New external doors and sidelights will match the profiles and detailing of the new proposed casement windows.

ROOFLIGHTS & ROOF WINDOWS

There are no rooflights on the existing property.

New rooflights will be Velux conservation style rooflights, with recessed flashings and a single dividing glazing bar, finished in black. The new lantern rooflight above the garden room will be a traditional white painted hardwood roof lantern with aluminium cappings as shown on the drawings.