Appeal Statement for DC25/0394

Background

Our appeal is being made partly due to our frustration with the lack of communication and collaboration with the local authority on our initial application, and secondly, as we feel that the decision was made purely on maintaining the aesthetic vernacular of our street scene, and did not give weight to the reasoning behind our application and our aspiration to extend our property to future proof our home and enable us to live there as long as possible with the lowest carbon footprint we could reasonably achieve within our budget.

We have continued to collaborate with the local authority and have also submitted a revised application that will run in parallel to this appeal, but with a significantly reduced roofline to address the local authorities' sole reason for the refusal. Whilst our case officer has indicated their support for our revised design, upon reflection it significantly compromises our original ambitions by reducing the available exterior roof areas to accommodate sufficient Photovoltaic (PV) panels in order for us to achieve a net zero home (or as close to as possible) due to the imposition of dormer windows on both the front and rear elevations. The revised application also does not provide any loft storage to accommodate the infrastructure needed to support the buildings systems which is why we seek to build a full height "roof lift" rather than a "roof conversion."

During the consultation period we received a number of objections, mostly generated through the efforts of a single neighbour who runs the local resident's association - many were not planning related and those that remained were dismissed by the local authority with the exception of the impact and scale of our development would have on the street scene.

Some neighbours cited loss of amenity from our intention to convert the building from a bungalow to a house – although none that did object actually live in a bungalow - but live in a house of a similar scale to the size we intended to construct and are significantly older than ourselves. When this property came up for sale, interest was only from families or 'down-sizers' like us seeking to acquire the bungalow and improve it to meet their specific needs. Our design addressed the loss of amenity in that we wanted to provide a Day-Room / Bed 4 on the ground floor to enable us in later life to live on a single floor, but whilst we are still active – (please see article from Pilgrim's Friend Society) we still require space for our children's families to stay with us (with our grandchildren) – the upper floor would be a modest 3 bedrooms. We also must consider that we have three surviving Octogenarian parents, and the Dayroom would also give us options should their future care requirements change.

Our desire to build a House rather than a Roof Conversion is also based on efficiency. HDC also has stated in the HDPF that whilst there is an aging population in the district, with the planned growth - greater provision is needed to be made for family dwellings – we believe our application addressed this provision whilst providing for later life living due to the ground floor layout we had submitted. Had our intention been to just build a house – we would have adopted a quite different design to the lower floor. A bungalow by its very single floor design is not an efficient use of space and land utilisation and our design had the ambition to get the benefits of both single and dual level living in one property.

History of area

Trundle Mead is a residential road and when construction was started in the late 1950's was once a cul-de-sac that was opened into a through road when the adjoining houses in Old Millmeads were constructed approx. 15 years later (mid 1970's). The first houses built were bungalows and as you progressively move into the estate the style and mix of building increases to predominantly 2 storey detached homes. Our home was originally built in the late 50's / early 60's as a simple hipped roof bungalow design and various owners have made minor improvements to the property (Double Glazing, upgraded insulation and conservatory) over the past decades.

Current Condition

Decoratively and cosmetically the bungalow is to a good standard but is now in need of significant renovation as it had not had any investment for over 20 years. Whilst the kitchen and bathrooms are still functional, they are not conducive to modern living requirements and current standards required for elderly living. More immediate concern is the internal screed flooring that has dropped in many rooms leaving uneven floors due to the method used at the time of construction. Our intention was to significantly improve both the interior and exterior to provide an extension to the buildings life whilst meeting our immediate accommodation requirements and medium- and long-term needs. We wanted to address the current floor defects as the opportunity to install under-floor heating (linked to an air source heat pump) as this presents itself during the building works due to the disruption it causes.

Recent Development that sets precedent in the area.

Trundle Mead is similar in age and style to a nearby residential area (walking distance) - Cottingham Avenue / Cavendish Close. These are predominantly Bungalows which have had various levels of loft conversions over their lifetime, but none had ever had a significant lift to the roof line. Part of our original planning application cited the conversion of the No 11 – DC21/2261 which in terms of scale is similar in size to our original application and set in a similar street scene. This was discounted by the planning officer and our appeal asks that the parallels from this and our development be re-considered.

Planning Framework

Horsham District Council make reference to the HDPF – a dated planning framework document that identifies planning need as well as guidance and direction for major development. It also provides for local neighbourhood and small-scale developments with a broad range of overall objectives it wishes to achieve. Whilst the HDPF covers a number of topics that do not directly impact our application, there are a number of policies that could and should have had more bearing on our application decision – and were not detailed in the council's decision letter. At a

meeting with the planning officer on site, we made a number of statements as to the long-term intentions for the use of our home.

Personal Links to Horsham and the local community.

We had chosen to move within Horsham due to our long-standing ties with the town. I served as a Firefighter for 15 years in Horsham early in my career and my wife now works for the NHS at Horsham Hospital having previously worked for the past 20 years in Horsham schools and the local college. Our extended family is also within the Horsham District.

I also stressed that this project is for our impending retirement and will be our forever home and bring together all my contacts from within the construction industry and utilise local materials (the Atrium porch will use Sussex Oak and will be fabricated by a sawmill less than 10 miles from our home) and use leading materials from manufacturers I have worked with since leaving the fire service 20 years ago. All of the contractors will be local tradespeople – some of them neighbours.

With the exception of the roof sections (these will be pre-fabricated off-site to minimise the impact of the building works on the neighbourhood, increase the speed of build and provide superior performance in terms of thermal and air-tightness) - all other materials will be sourced through local businesses to support the local economy.

Lack of Self-Build Options

As I have worked with the building materials sector over the last 25 years, it has always been our ambition to have a self-build or a significant renovation / upgrade project that would deliver a home to a high standard in terms of build quality and energy performance.

HDC have failed to deliver any significant plots or provisions under the Right to Build scheme, and whilst we were registered for a number of years, the introduction of fees by HDC to administer a "simple list of interested parties with no guarantee of any outcome", pushed us towards a renovation.

Whilst we were excited to learn that the developer was creating Self build plots at North Horsham in the Mowbray housing development, although mentioned in much of the marketing, it was not a condition of planning being granted, despite local demand. Since initial enquires were made, we were told that potential self-build plots would only be considered in the last phase of the building programme in approx. 10 years time. As this did not fit in with our timescale due to wanting to downsize from the family home, this further pushed us towards finding a project.

Seeking a compromise to the design without compromising our original intentions

Whilst overturning the decision would provide us with the freedom to build our original design, the lack of interaction and communication from Horsham District Council led to us being unable to engage and seek a compromise on this initial application.

Whilst many neighbours have stopped and spoken to us personally – many were unaware of their ability to support our design, whereas the campaign against us was only about raising objections – some of which were not planning related and were made against incorrect assumptions. At no

point was a conversation entered into with any of the respondents (except our direct neighbours) giving us the opportunity to explain our situation and needs.

We have received a mix of comments – mostly positive on how our proposals would revive and refresh the street scene, modernising a tired looking bungalow and repurposing it as others had done in the neighbourhood. However, there were some negative comments regarding the front porch and something we were always willing to re-visit had we been given the opportunity.

Had HDC communicated with our designer / ourselves and responded to the additional designs that would have been more sympathetic to the look of a bungalow – a compromise could have been agreed.

Other areas our application meets and exceeds the HDPF – but not considered in the planning decision.

Policy 1 – Sustainable Development – "When considering development proposals, the council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption of favour in sustainable development".

Our design submitted was based on a simple large south facing roof elevation that could accommodate sufficient PV panels to over-produce power and feed back into the power networks or storage in power banks. The Roof design was not to provide further accommodation (as one of the comments submitted in the planning consultation inferred - as there would have been insufficient headroom except under the ridgeline) but storage and space for the associated utilities and systems in order to run the energy management. Whilst we had put forward options to reduce the pitch and to incorporate dormers in the front elevation to reduce impact (whilst retaining the rear elevation of the original design to maintain the number of PV's) – this was ignored by the planning officer despite an early meeting on site and further outline concepts being submitted. Our subsequent and latest planning submission now has a complicated roof design with dormers front and rear that significantly reduces the area for PV, removes the loft storage area, and adds significant cost due to the complexity of the junction details.

It will always work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.

This was not our experience – we had zero communication back from the planning team – despite chasing for their opinion and whilst initial discussion on site and initial concept designs submitted to them were made in a timely manner to adapt our design and address the case officer concerns – we were not answered and it was only in the final days of the process were we told that "we had run out of time and the refusal was being recommended" . We enclose copies of the revised designs sent over after our early site meeting which did not receive any reply.

Policy 35 – Climate Change

Development will be supported where it makes a clear contribution to mitigating and adapting to the impacts of climate change.

Improved energy efficiency in new developments, including influencing the behaviour of occupants to reduce energy use -

The house will be thermally modelled using SAP / U-Value software and upgraded in excess of Building regulations required for Existing Buildings. All mixer taps will have cold start technology as well as flow restrictors to bring water consumption to less than 110Litres per person per day. Hot Water heating will come from the Air Source Heat pump and optimised at 55 DegC and boosted by PV generated electricity stored in the battery / power banks.

Use of green infrastructure and dual use SUDS to help absorb heat, reduce surface water runoff, provide flood storage capacity, and assist habitat migration –

Driveway will incorporate a SUDS system to collect run-off surface water and guttering from the front elevations. Rear elevations will utilise a SUDS storage to provide re-cycled water for irrigation.

Use of site layout, design measures and construction techniques that provide resilience to climate change (opportunities for natural ventilation and solar gain). Glass atrium porch is positioned on the north facing elevation and will provide solar gain in the winter and have adequate openings at the upper level to provide a central ventilation to the main hall / first floor landing area.

Policy 36 – Appropriate Energy Use

All development will be required to contribute to clean, efficient energy in Horsham based on the following hierarchy:

1.**Lean – use less energy – e.g. through demand reduction** –

House will be well insulated and air-tight, reducing heat loss and energy demand.

2.**Clean – supply energy efficiently –**

Using an over-sized battery storage any excess capacity generated from the PV panels will be stored to provide a 95% self-sufficiency.

3.**Green – use renewable energy –**

Will maximise the area of PV generation with the original roof design to utilise the south facing elevations.

Individual building renewable heating

Policy 37 – Sustainable Design and Construction.

1. **Maximise energy efficiency and integrate the use of decentralised, renewable, and low carbon energy; -**

Roof will have maximum capacity available PV panels and power bank battery storage along with an Air Source Heat Pump.

2.**Limit water use to 110 litres/person/day** –

All toilets will be dual flush and brassware plumbing will be fitted with flow restrictors.

3.**Use design measures to minimise vulnerability to flooding and heatwave events**.

SUDS system to reduce flooding and additional insulation / thermal mass to reduce over heating from external heat source.

4.**Be designed to encourage the use of natural lighting and ventilation**.

Glass Atrium porch and roof lights to reduce the need for lighting. All roof windows can be used to create additional ventilation and allow heat escape. Upper bedrooms will be fitted with low energy ceiling fans to provide natural airflow.

5.**Be designed to encourage walking, cycling, cycle storage and accessibility to sustainable forms of transport; -**

We have moved to this address as it allows (one of us) to walk to work (Horsham Hospital) and walk/cycle to the local park (we attend an Outdoor Gym Class every Sunday). The widening of the garage also provides storage for our cycles.

6.**Minimise construction and demolition waste and utilise recycled and low impact materials.**

With this design there will be minimal waste. Any Hardcore from the removal of internal walls will be used for the sub-base for the patio and driveway areas. The tiles from the roof will be used to roof the garden sheds and any surplus will be sold to a local reclaim merchant in Billingshurst. The roof joists will be re-purposed at a local sawmill to provide the stud partitioning to the first-floor bedrooms. The palette of new materials for the new roof and the facade has all been chosen for their longevity (50+ years).

7.**Be flexible to allow future modification of use or layout, facilitating future adaptation, refurbishment, and retrofitting.**

The provision of a Day Room / Bed 4 /Office on the ground floor with en-suite will allow us in later life to move down from the primary bedroom without the need for stairs. However, whilst we are both fit and healthy we will utilise the upper main bedroom until such time as we cannot physically manage with the stairs. As the rest of the ground floor layout is open plan it would provide for limited mobility access in the future.