

Planning & Design Statement

This report accompanies a Householder Planning Application for the refurbishment and extension of Elbow Cottage and its attached annexe and sets out to demonstrate that the proposed works are an appropriate addition to the existing dwelling and the wider site context.

Context

Elbow Cottage and its attached annexe occupy an isolated site of approximately one acre alongside the Kennet & Avon Canal roughly equidistant from Freshford, five hundred metres to the west, Winsley, five hundred metres to the north and Avoncliff, four hundred metres to the east. The site is accessed via a narrow eight hundred metre long unmade private track from the village of Turleigh to the northeast. Largely surrounded by open agricultural land, the nearest residential dwellings are those on the fringes of Murhill some three hundred and fifty metres to the north.

The house lies along the eastern edge of the site, cut into the slope of the land with a retaining wall running behind the rear elevation. To the west, the house addresses the large garden, which slopes gently down to the canal at its western boundary. An outbuilding, used for storage, sits alongside the entrance to the site at its northwestern corner. The rear of this now rather forlorn structure rests on a retaining wall, which supports the access track (and public bridleway) that continues over the adjacent listed canal bridge (Grade II ref. 1181033) to terminate at a field gate on the opposite side of the canal.

Although cut into the ground, the rear of the house and annexe are partially visible from the bridleway and footpath that run through the open agricultural land to the east and broken views of the front of the house are visible through the garden's numerous fruit trees from the canal path to the west.

The site is not within a Conservation Area but it is covered by the Bristol & Bath Green Belt, Special Landscape Area D1 (Limley Stoke and Westwood Limestone River Valley), and the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

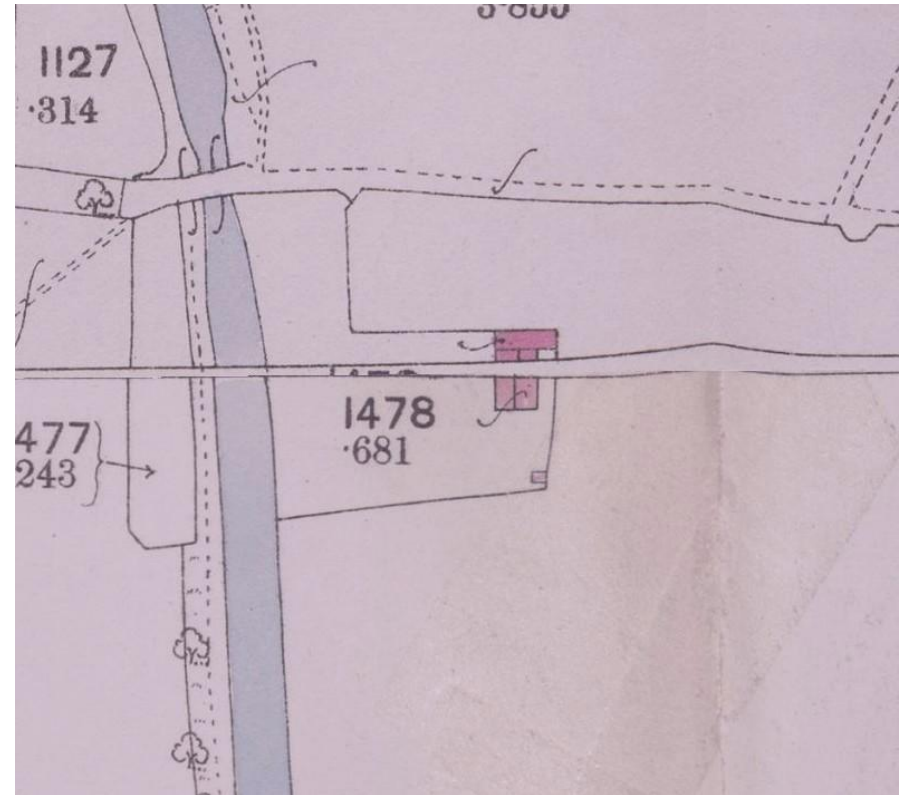


Existing House

The main Elbow Cottage dwelling is an early 19th Century two-storey four bay double pile house with an ashlar bath stone front façade and rubble stone side and rear elevations. The house appears to have been constructed shortly after the canal as it does not appear on the earliest maps, however by 1830 a substantial dwelling is clearly visible along with a large extension running east west on the northern edge of the house. This extension was largely demolished in 1985 when the annexe was constructed, but it is presumed that an element of it remained to form the current outbuilding at the rear of the house.

The annexe itself is a self-contained two storey residential unit with a pair of bedrooms and a bathroom at first floor, and a kitchen and living room at ground floor. Constructed of reconstituted stone walling beneath a concrete pantiled roof with Upvc windows and doors, the material quality of the building is a marked contrast to the host dwelling, to which it is linked with a single storey structure containing a utility room and WC.

Aside from a small lean to extension at the rear, the main dwelling itself has seemingly not been subject to any substantial alteration over its lifetime.



1830 Map showing Elbow Cottage

Proposal

The current owners of Elbow Cottage are a family who purchased the property in 2024 to facilitate multi-generational living. Whilst the split between the annexe and main house suits this purpose very well, their individual layouts are less able to meet the needs of modern family life.

In the main dwelling, these shortcomings are easily solved with the removal of the wall separating the kitchen and dining room and the installation of a run of bifold doors opening the new kitchen/dining space onto the garden. Alongside this, the proposal is to construct a new glazed green oak porch on the front elevation to provide an 'air lock' to the house and also create a more defined main entrance. To the rear, the existing poor-quality lean-to will be replaced by an enlarged extension containing a ground floor WC, boot/utility room and plant space. At first floor a slight rearrangement of the internal walls will rationalise the bedroom spaces and provide a pair of compact en-suite bathrooms.

In the annexe, not only are the existing rooms cramped and poorly laid out, but the head heights of the first floor windows are uncomfortably low, the thermal efficiency is poor and the external appearance of the building does not complement that of the host dwelling. To address this, the proposal is to open up the existing ground floor of the annexe and construct a new ground floor extension on the western face. A new staircase will be installed opposite its current position and the existing pair of bedrooms amalgamated into one large master suite. The roof of the link structure will be raised to accommodate a further bedroom at first floor and the ground floor layout will be altered to create a snug, utility room and WC. The current main roof of the annexe, which



runs north/south will be replaced by a new pitched roof with its ridge running east/west, creating gables on the front and rear elevations within which windows of an adequate head height will be installed. The existing walls will be externally insulated where practical and the northern elevation of the structure will be replaced by a new thermally efficient cavity wall. At the rear a small lean-to extension to match that proposed on the main house will be added, following demolition of the existing outbuilding.

Design

The Wiltshire Council supplementary planning guidance document covering the design of house extensions states that *'an extension should be a subservient element to the host building and not upset the symmetry of the building as a whole'*. Although the proposed works to the annexe will enlarge the existing structure, it will still be visibly and measurably subservient to the host dwelling, with the set-back and drop in ridge height of the link building still powerfully demarcating the two elements. This will be further developed in the choice of materials, with timber cladding at first floor and natural rubble stone below to act as a counterpoint to the formal ashlar stone of the main house façade. Although lower in the traditional hierarchy, timber and rubble stone are nonetheless high-quality materials, which will be entirely appropriate in this setting and harmonise well with the character of the host dwelling.

Although the annexe and main dwelling will be clearly differentiated, their composition as a whole has also been considered. On the front elevation the language of the glazed green oak frame extension to the front of the annexe will be carried over to the design of the new front porch whilst at the rear, the timber cladding, zinc roof and geometry of the proposed lean-to extension on the

main house will be shared by that on the annexe. These elements will unify the two buildings but not blur the line that distinguishes the main house as the primary structure.



Amount – Green Belt

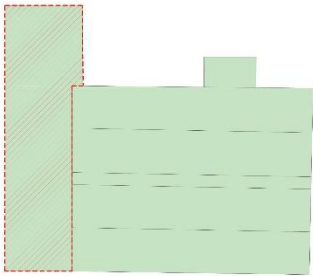
Elbow Cottage sits within the Bristol and Bath Greenbelt and as a result the proposed works are subject to paragraphs 153 – 154 of the National Planning Policy Framework, relevant clauses of which state that the extension or alteration of a building will not be inappropriate development provided it *‘does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building’*.

In this case, the ‘original building’ (as it stood in 1948) is the extant main dwelling plus the side extension that appears on maps from 1873 onwards but was largely demolished in 1985 when the annexe was constructed. Although the existing rear outbuilding, which is presumed to be the vestigial end of this extension, offers the means to make a rough calculation of the original extension’s size, scarring on the northern flank of the main dwelling suggest that its roofline was lowered and altered during the transition. As a result, the following volume calculations are subject to a certain amount of interpretation.

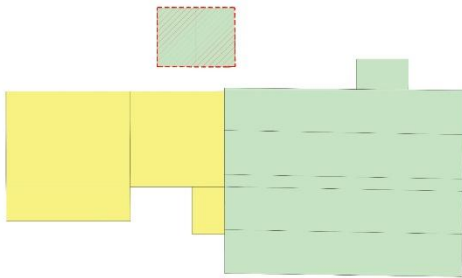
- Original house to be retained: 670m³
- Original side extension (demolished) plus outbuilding to be demolished: 165m³
- Refurbished and extended annexe: 322m³
- Refurbished and extended link building: 123m³

- Total post 1948 additional built volume following proposed work, minus demolished structures: 280m³

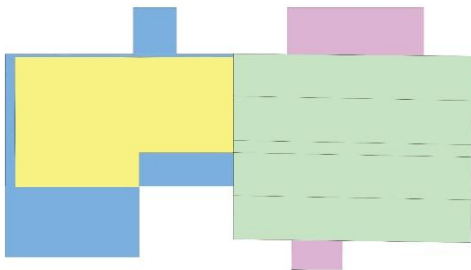
Therefore, the volume of all proposed and retained post 1948 additions would amount to an increase of 33% over the total volume



Original House (in 1948): 835m³



House as existing: 983m³



House as proposed: 1115m³

of the building as it stood in 1948 which, although the NPPF does not quantify the meaning of 'disproportionate', is within the range of what is generally considered to be acceptable additional volume. Furthermore, the numerical calculations don't take into account the deployment of the volume or the way in which the building engages with the wider landscape. In this case, the cutting at the rear of the building that swallows it into the slope of the site significantly reduces the impact of the structure on its surroundings, particularly from the open landscape to the east. The proposals will therefore not contravene the objectives of planning policy to preserve the openness of the Green Belt.

The volume calculations do not consider the replacement lean-to extension along the rear of the existing building as this falls comfortably within Class A of the Permitted Development Rights and would therefore be lawful without planning consent. The proposed porch on the front elevation of the existing dwelling falls just outside the criteria specified in Class D of the Permitted Development Rights as its footprint is 0.65m^2 over the 3m^2 specified in the PDR, however a porch of this design with a compliant footprint would have a volume only 1.5m^3 smaller than that proposed so the difference is marginal in this context.



Outbuilding

This application also seeks consent to improve the functionality and appearance of the storage building on the northwestern corner of the site. This timber framed structure has been in place in its current form for at least forty years but is now in a state of some dilapidation. Its proximity to the canal places it within the setting of a listed structure; the canal bridge, which is grade II listed (ref. 1181033) and described as follows:

Bridge over Kennet and Avon Canal, early C19, ashlar with arch, keystone, string course and parapet, parapet splayed out each end and with rounded top. Bridge carries track from Turleigh.

The proposal is to replace the existing open-sided structure with a more robust and secure building with a similar sectional profile in the same location. The replacement will be constructed of timber with a corrugated steel roof in common with the current materials, however it will be enclosed with timber cladding and rubble stone walling. As well as improving the material quality, enclosing the building will significantly neaten and formalise the appearance of this part of the site, with a commensurate improvement to the setting of the listed bridge. The existing retaining wall, which has been largely eroded by vegetation will be rebuilt as part of the works, blending into the rubble stone walls of the new building.



Conclusion

The proposed works at Elbow Cottage are the next step in the evolution of the house and site, enabling it to accommodate, for the foreseeable future, three generations of a family who have made this secluded spot their home. Alongside spatial and visual improvements, the refurbishment will also provide the opportunity to enhance the overall energy efficiency of the buildings whose fabric has been unaltered for over forty years.

