

**DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

**83 Lawn Road, London NW3 2XB:**

**Householder Application for Planning Permission:  
*Construction of single-storey rear extension***

October 2021

**Design Statement**

**1. Introduction**

The property is an Edwardian semi-detached family house on the west side of Lawn Road, within the Parkhill Conservation Area. Dating from 1912, the house is a late example of the Arts and Crafts style of domestic architecture and was one of the first to be built on the west side of Lawn Road where more extensive development continued through the inter-war years.

In Camden's appraisal document for the Parkhill Conservation Area the house is identified as a building which makes a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the conservation area.

**2. The house and its contribution to Parkhill Conservation Area**

The architecture of the house is in many ways typical of the Arts and Crafts movement, with its bold, irregular massing, asymmetrical composition and variety of architectural elements.

In particular, it is characterised by the following features, typical of domestic Arts and Crafts architecture:

a) Complex roofscape

The house is dominated by the complex form and the long, clay-tiled expanses of its roof, combined with smaller elements of lead flat roofing and valley gutters.

Typical features include:

- Below the main ridge line (which is continuous across the two adjoining houses) there are a variety of ridge and eaves heights to the various elements of the roof (fig. 1)
- Over the front entrance, the roof pitch extends all the way down from the main ridge to the eaves of the porch (fig. 2)
- At the front and side of the house there are deep, over-hanging eaves at first and second floor levels (figs. 1-4)
- The front elevation over the bay windows features a distinctive hipped gable with sprockets (figs. 2-4) while the rear is characterised by a pair of brick gables at first floor level (fig. 5)

b) Prominent chimneys

There are two highly articulated chimney stacks (fig. 1):

- One, emerging from the top of the main roof at the centre of the house, is a powerfully sculptural form, stepped in both plan and section, with corbelled brickwork detailing
- The other, at the side of the house, is plainer in design and provides a striking vertical element in the architectural composition. Below the main eaves level, this broadens as it approaches the ground in two steps, each capped by a small tiled roof

c) Varied fenestration

There is a notable variety in the detail of the windows around the building

- Some window openings have arched heads while others have flat heads
- While most windows are all painted timber, some have metal casements within timber frames (such as the front bay windows)
- Some casements have timber glazing bars while others are plain, and in one – the window to the top stairway – the glass is leaded.

It is these strong architectural characteristics that give the house its distinctive character, which, in turn, contributes so notably to the character of the street and the wider conservation area.

### **3. The proposed development and the Parkhill Conservation Area**

The proposed development is the construction of a single storey extension across the rear of the house, following the demolition of the existing Garden Room extension and the bay window to the Rear Reception Room.

The existing Garden Room is so small as to be of very limited use and it effectively blocks the main living accommodation off from the garden.

The proposed extension provides some much-needed additional space, allowing the rooms to be reconfigured and inter-linked in a family-friendly way and providing a direct connection with the garden.

In order to ensure the extension is subordinate to the original house and sits comfortably alongside its distinctive architecture, the proposed design is low-key in character and modest in scale.

The rear wall of the proposed extension is slightly stepped, extending a modest 3.38m from the main rear wall of the house on one side and 3.28m on the other. It adds 16 square metres of floor area to the property.

The brickwork of the external walls is to match that of the original house, while the proposed green (sedum) roof not only feels appropriate for the garden side of the house but also avoids the unrelieved expanse of roofing membrane or sheet metal which so often characterises flat roofs.

The proposed fenestration is in white-painted timber to match the colour and material of the windows and external doors in the existing house, and the design has been carefully considered to relate closely to the original windows without resorting to historical pastiche.

Crucially, no changes are proposed to the front or the side of the original house so that the valuable architectural characteristics on display there, that determine the building's positive contribution to the conservation area, are maintained undisturbed.

Our assessment of the effect of the proposed extension on the character of the conservation area included particular consideration of the bay window at the rear of the house (figs. 5 and 6) that would be lost as a result of the extension.

We concluded that the loss of the bay window should be considered acceptable for the following reasons:

It is discreetly located at the rear of the property and further shielded by the existing Garden Room extension on one side and the boundary fence on the other. So not only is it not visible from the public realm but it cannot be seen (as far as we can tell) from any of the neighbouring properties. For this reason, the loss of the window cannot reasonably be said to have a detrimental effect on the character of the conservation area.

While the bay window could be considered a characteristic feature of the original house (though even this is perhaps arguable, given the variety of window designs and details noted above) we would submit that it is not something of special architectural interest or intrinsic historical value in the same way that an element of a listed building might be considered.

Our understanding of the planning legislation governing conservation areas is that it is not intended as blanket protection for all original architectural features within a conservation area. Rather, it is concerned with preventing the loss of important and prominent features which positively contribute to the character or appearance of a conservation area. And although this building is rightly identified as one making a positive contribution to the Parkhill Conservation Area, the rear bay window, being visible only from close range within the property's own back garden, cannot be said to play a part in that positive contribution.

As a final point with regard to the rear bay window, it is also worth noting that alternative design options for half-width extensions that left the bay window in place were found to be unsatisfactory. Already the outside space in the angle between the bay window wall and the flank wall of the existing Garden Room extension feels uncomfortably cut off from the garden, largely due to the fact that the garden extends away from the house at an angle. Any attempt to increase the footprint of the existing extension while maintaining the bay window only exacerbates that problem and creates an unusable 'dead space' beyond the bay window. A full-width extension with a limited projection into the garden (as in the current proposal) overcomes this problem and offers a far more satisfactory solution architecturally.

#### **4. Planning precedent**

It is evident that the rear elevations of most of the houses on the west side of Lawn Road have been subject to extensions and alteration works in recent years.

A review of the recent planning history of the eleven houses along from no.83 on the west side of Lawn Road (no.s 72 to 82) shows that planning permission has been granted for rear extensions to no fewer than seven of them in the last six years (no.s 72, 73, 75, 76, 77, 79 and 81).

Like no.83, all of these houses are all identified in the Parkhill Conservation Area appraisal document as making a positive contribution to the character or appearance of the conservation area.

Many of these consented developments appear to be of a larger scale, and involving more extensive alteration work to the original buildings, than this current application for a rear extension to no.83

#### **5. Alternative approaches**

In considering with the owner the possibilities for adding space to the house, we have looked at two alternative extension approaches to the ground floor rear extension that is the subject of this application.

a) A rear ground floor extension under permitted development

The options are limited here due to the reduced permitted development rights in conservation areas, but we did establish with some certainty that an extension directly off the rear wall of the Garden Room extension (which appears on pre-1948 maps) could be built under permitted development, projecting 3 metres into the garden and rising to a height of 4 metres above the adjacent ground level.

This is illustrated diagrammatically in Figs. 7-9.

Such a development would constitute a distinctly uncomfortable addition to the property and would threaten both the character of the conservation area and the amenity of the neighbouring properties in ways which the current proposal has been designed to avoid.

b) A basement excavation

Although this remains on the table as a potential alternative approach, the expense, technical challenges and risks associated with such developments, not to mention the prolonged distress and disturbance it can cause to neighbours and other users of the street, mean that the owners would much prefer to avoid it if the additional space can be gained in a more straightforward and satisfactory way with a ground floor extension at the rear.

We therefore concluded that the current approach of seeking planning approval for a rear ground floor extension would achieve a better outcome than either of these alternatives, not only in terms of the owner's needs, but also the interests of the wider community and surrounding built environment.

## 6. Summary

It is our contention that:

- The proposed extension, being located at the rear of the house, modest in scale and respectful to the existing house and garden, would preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- The strong architectural characteristics of the original house that contribute positively to the character of the conservation area are maintained unaltered.
- The one original feature of the house that would be lost as a result of the proposed extension – the rear bay window – is tucked away from public view and is not visible from neighbouring properties. Its loss cannot therefore be said to have any discernible effect on the character of the conservation area.
- The proposed extension is consistent with a pattern of consented development to the rear of houses on the west side of Lawn Road undertaken in recent years.
- The extension is a well-considered, reasonable and proportionate proposal for creating some extra living space for the owner and is preferable in a great many respects to the alternative approaches of either building an unsatisfactory extension under permitted development or a highly disruptive basement extension.

## Access Statement

The proposals have been carefully considered to ensure there will be no detrimental effect on access to the site or to the building itself.

**FIGURE 1: VIEW OF SIDE ELEVATION AND ROOFSCAPE**



**FIGURE 2: VIEW OF FRONT OF HOUSE, INCLUDING MAIN ENTRANCE**



**FIGURE 3: VIEW OF FRONT OF HOUSE (FIRST FLOOR BAY WINDOW AND HIPPED GABLE)**



**FIGURE 4:** VIEW OF FRONT OF HOUSE FROM STREET



**FIGURE 5: VIEW OF REAR OF HOUSE FROM GARDEN**

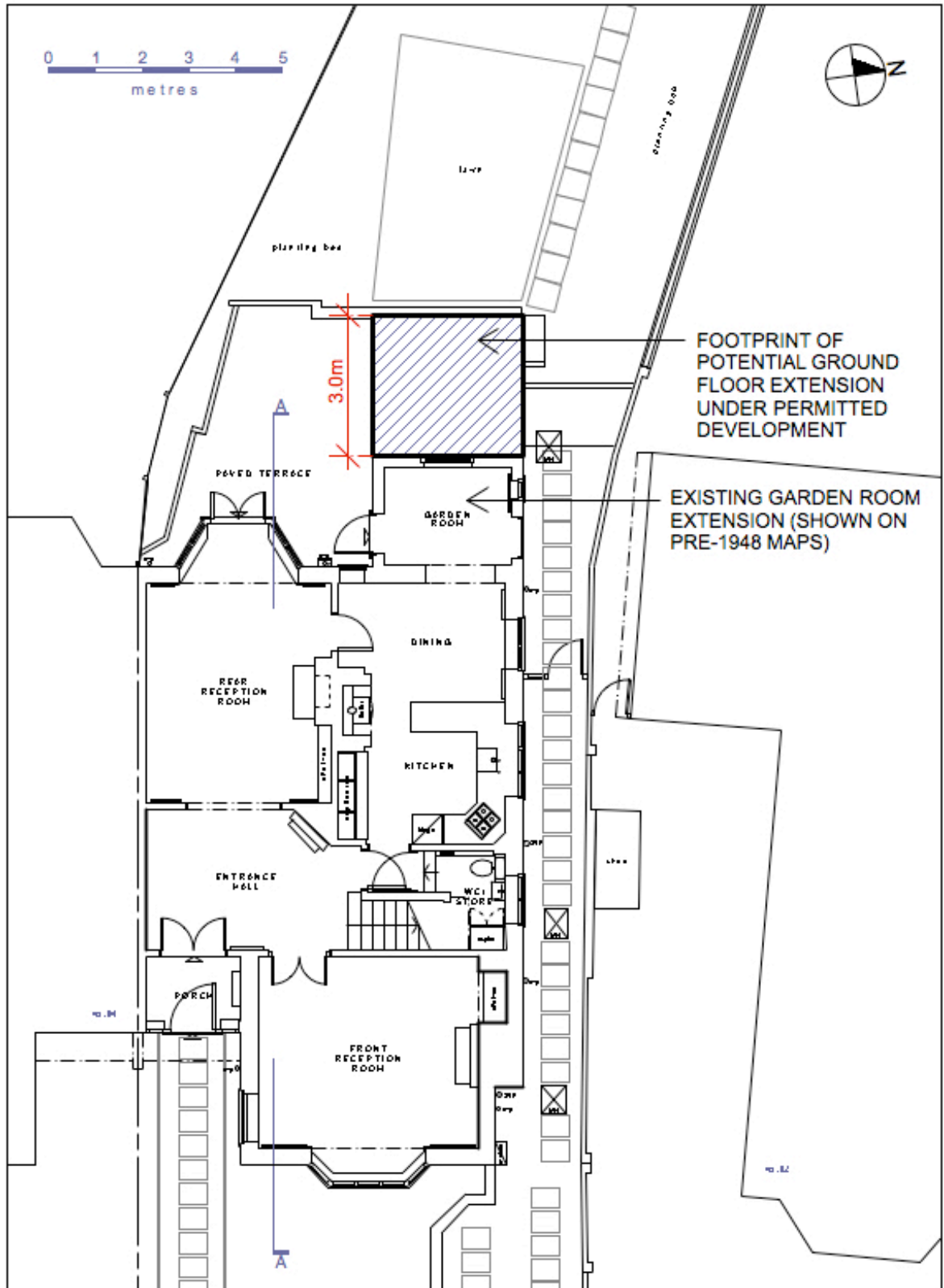


**FIGURE 6: REAR BAY WINDOW**

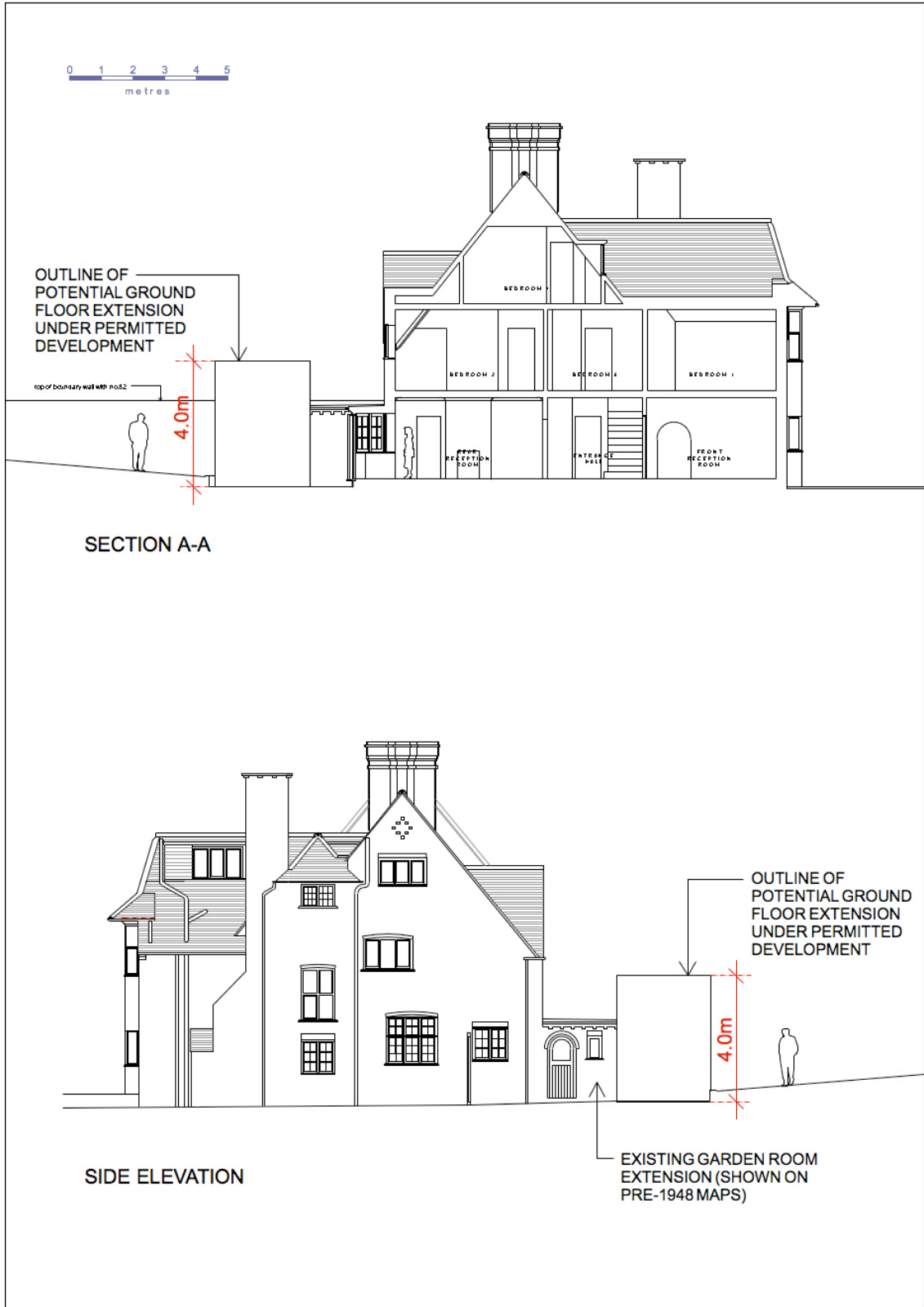




**FIGURE 7:**  
GROUND FLOOR PLAN SHOWING FOOTPRINT OF POTENTIAL GROUND FLOOR EXTENSION UNDER PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT



**FIGURE 8:**  
SECTION A-A AND SIDE ELEVATION SHOWING OUTLINE OF POTENTIAL GROUND FLOOR EXTENSION UNDER PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT



**FIGURE 9:**  
REAR ELEVATION SHOWING OUTLINE OF POTENTIAL GROUND FLOOR EXTENSION UNDER PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT

