

Planning Statement incorporating Design & Access Statement

Thistle Dous, Sandhurst Road, Tunbridge Wells TN2 3JU

**Demolition of Existing Bungalow and Construction of Two Detached 3 Storey Houses
together with Ancillary Associated External Works**



For and on behalf of

Mr. S. Littlechild

Thistle Dous, Sandhurst Road, Tunbridge Wells TN2 3JU

dgjparchitecture

Cockmount Studio | Jonas Lane | Wadhurst | TN5 6UJ

T: 01892 537688 | E: post@dgjp.co.uk

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1. Introduction:

- 1.1. Thistle Dous is an existing dwellinghouse located behind other residential properties and reached via Sandhurst Road. The site is an elongated parcel of land with a significant fall in gradient from the entrance on the narrower northeast boundary and widening as the ground falls to the southwest.
- 1.2. Part of the site includes an area of woodland containing numerous protected species. The woodland is connected to the Hilberts Wood LNR and is considered to comprise ancient woodland. That part of the site will be separated from the development whilst remaining within the site curtilage.

2. Planning Policy Considerations

- 2.1. A request for Pre-Application Advice was submitted in November 2016, a copy of which is attached as an Appendix to this Statement.
- 2.2. The design of the proposed houses is considered to reflect the advice given by the Council, and the recommended specialist surveys and reports have been obtained and accompany the application for planning permission.
- 2.3. The site is within the development boundaries of Tunbridge Wells, and is considered to be a sustainable site where redevelopment is considered to be acceptable in principle.
- 2.4. The Pre-Application Advice received from the Council covers the principal policy considerations and the proposals do not present any obvious controversial aspects.

3. Design & Access Statement

3.1. Use

The site is in residential use and surrounded on three sides by residential properties in various configurations. The proposed development continues the residential use which is a compatible use in this location.

3.2. Amount

The development comprises the removal of one outdated bungalow and its replacement with two detached houses. The internal areas of each house are 232.6m² over three floors.

The ground floor provides 91.06m² plus a garage of 21.6m², the first floor provides 97.23m² excluding balconies and the top floor provides 44.3m² excluding balconies.

The scheme is a low density development, appropriate for the site. Approximately half of the site is not developable, due either to the ancient woodland to the southwest or to the narrow and steep approach to the proposed houses.

3.3. Layout

The houses have been designed to make the best use of the site potential whilst respecting its qualities and surroundings.

The site area of 3,800m² is more than sufficient to accommodate two houses and at the point where the houses are located the site width is approximately 29.75m wide.

The proposed houses have a maximum width of 8.3m each and a length of 18.95m. the width of the houses allows a separation gap of 3.85 m and space either side between the boundaries of approximately 4.6m.

To the southwest of the proposed development, the site includes an area of ancient woodland connected to Hilbert Woods LNR and which include a number of protected trees. A fence separating the usable domestic garden from the woodland will be maintained.

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The proposed houses will be at least 28m from the closest part of a house in the High Beeches development, and some 9.4m from the closest part of the flats in Great Oak to the southeast, which is located at a much higher level.

3.4. Scale

The development proposed provides two houses of three storeys beneath flat roofs. The top floor has a much reduced floor plan and roof above with balconies only at the ends.

The overall height of the houses is 8.0m above ground level, which is comparable with traditional two storey houses beneath a pitched roof. The roof height at its maximum is 1.44m lower than the closest houses to the north on the High Beeches development and 13.65m below the ridge of Brentor Court to the east. The boundary hedge separating the site from Brentor Court is some 900mm taller than the proposed houses. Great Oak is similarly located, but no survey data could be obtained due to the height of the boundary vegetation.

The dense boundary tree screen to the northwest screening the development from the High Beeches development is some 16-18m high providing significant amenity value.

3.5. Landscape

The site is very secluded as it is screened on all sides by mature trees and hedging. The woodland to the southwest is and will remain separated from the development by a simple post and wire fence. The ecological survey and report includes an Ancient Woodland Management and Enhancement Plan which will be adopted.

The Pre-Application Advice suggests that a Unilateral Undertaking should be offered as part of the planning submission, and one has been included as a draft for consideration and modification as appropriate.

The trees on the site will largely be retained; many are subject of TPOs and others provide valuable amenity for the benefit of future occupants and neighbours.

An Ancient Woodland Management and Enhancement Plan has been prepared by Corylus Ecology and has been included in their Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey, Bat Building Survey and Ancient Woodland Management and Enhancement Plan dated December 2017.

This document recommends enhancement of the buffer zone between the woodland and the new houses, and this enhancement will be secured as part of a Unilateral Undertaking.

3.6. Appearance

The proposed houses will be all but invisible in the local environment, even in winter months when deciduous branches and tree trunks will mask them from outside view.

The houses have been designed with a contemporary layout and external appearance as the result of a careful analysis of the site constraints and opportunities.

In order to avoid roofscape intrusion into the landscape, flat roofs are proposed. The top floor has a reduced area and consequently less roof. Small balconies to the bedrooms will make attractive features and protect the amenities of the neighbours in and beyond the site.

3.7. Access

The development is for the provision of two houses where one exists. Access to the site is through Monks Horton over which Thistle Dous has an unrestricted right of way. From the entrance to Monks Horton, access to the highway on Sandhurst Road is via a short section of High Beeches.

Once within the site, access to the houses will be along a private driveway with passing bays and supplementary parking, retaining and enhancing the existing tree coverage and other vegetation.

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Appendix: Pre-Application Advice:

The proposal [is] to demolish the existing dwelling on site and construct two detached dwellings in its place. Although you have no firm plans in place we discussed two contemporary detached flat roofed two storey dwellings with extensive rear glazing, one of which could be 2.5 storeys on the lower section.

The site is within the LBD for Tunbridge Wells, which indicates the most sustainable locations for new development. It is close to services and good public transport routes. The principle of two dwellings on this site would be acceptable in principle, subject to the considerations set out below.

Trees and ecology

There is a TPO covering the woodland at the rear of the site (007/2003). The trees at the entrance are also protected as are the group of trees half-way down the driveway, as are a group of trees to the rear of Brentor Court which overhang the boundary (both under 020/2001). Trees in the rear garden of 6 Redleaf Close are also protected (010/1999). The tree survey you suggested and any subsequent protection measures would be key to the site and would inform the design and layout. For this reason and also in the interests of good design, I would stress the development should show a sufficient gap to the boundaries (and to the rear) so as not to harm the roots of the protected trees (as well as the others on the boundary), nor to place undue pressure on them to be lopped/felled in the interests of gaining light/outlook for the occupiers of the dwellings.

The phase 1 survey would also be key as would the recommendations flowing from it. There is likely to be bat and nesting bird potential on site. A woodland management plan (possibly to be secured by unilateral undertaking) for the future of the woods (given that the additional larger dwellings may place further pressure on them to be used residentially) would also be welcomed. The plans show the woods to be divided and this should only be with a post and wire fence, with the woods also clearly divided off from the residential curtilage – this should also form part of the management plan. The draft unilateral undertaking with the woodland management plan would ideally be submitted with the application.

Sewer

There is also a sewer line running across the back of the garden. You may wish to consult with Southern Water before drawing up more detailed plans as they would be a consultee on the application. The proposed block plan should show the line of the sewer so its course is clear at the application stage.

Levels and general design/layout

The site levels are quite complicated; the main part of the site is at a much lower level than High Beeches and is accessed via a steep driveway. The levels within the site are also uneven and fall away towards the woodland at the rear. For this reason the topographical survey you suggested plus cross-sections showing the existing and proposed development would be essential. Generally, the less work to alter levels the better. On site you also mentioned work to the driveway – this may also be constrained by the levels and presence of TPO trees. The proposal to site the dwellings on the main part of the site is the most logical place for them but care would need to be taken to ensure the development does not appear cramped and overdeveloped.

Highways

I would think it unlikely that there would be a significant highways issue arising from the proposal given that the six flats at Monks Horton plus Thistle Dous already use it. You may wish to seek further advice from KCC Highways however.

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Residential amenity

You asked about the impact on the residential amenity of the occupiers of the Monks Horton flats. The access drive is already in regular use and leads to the lock-up garages next to the flats. I would not consider the additional traffic from the second dwelling would unduly impact their amenity through noise and disturbance.

The development itself should perhaps avoid the use of side windows to limit any impact on neighbouring dwellings to the north; to the south the flats at Great Oak are on a higher level so this is probably less of an issue. The use of obscure glazing or privacy screens should be considered if appropriate.

Summary

Based on our site discussions and the indicative plans, the proposal is likely to be acceptable so long as the issues raised above are satisfactorily addressed.