DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

PROPOSED RE-BUILDING OF HOUSE
AT
SUNHOLME, PORTHLOO, ST MARY'S, ISLES OF SCILLY, TR21 0NE

22ND JANUARY (Revised 17.02.16)

1. INTRODUCTION:

Sunholme was built as a single storey (bungalow) around the late 1920's and early 1930's. It is a rendered building of no particular architectural merit, and does not have any significant design features that can be considered to contribute to the overall environs of Porthloo. Having said that, there are no architecturally significant buildings near to the site that would play a part in deciding the design philosophy of the re-building of the house.

The house was designed to have 3 bedrooms all on the ground floor. Sleeping situated on the North side of the house, with living and eating on the South side. A simple plan shape. Sunholme is raised up on the seaward elevation such that there is a platform that forms an access point to the front entrance. It is believed that water tanks are located under this platform, and will form useful proposals for rainwater harvesting. Surrounding land within the ownership of the applicants is banked on three sides of the house, making any garden small, but natural.

In particular, the South wall has significant cracks that will need attention. Further exploratory work needs to be carried out by the appointed structural engineer to establish the nature of any works required.

2. BRIEF:

The applicants purchased Sunholme in 2015 with a view to create a home which would be designed for 21st century living, maximizing the views from this magnificent site in Porthloo, overlooking St Mary's harbour. Although the original house provided accommodation for living, eating a bathroom and three bedrooms, the house had not been modernized for many a year, and certainly not equipped for 21stcentury living. The brief specified three bedrooms, the same as before, but with the added convenience of en-suite bathrooms for at least two of the bedrooms, and a family bathroom. Plenty of storage, something lacking in the current house, and living space that made the best of the location and wonderful views. The applicants were also keen to create a house which used traditional Isles of Scilly materials, as listed in the Isles of Scilly Design Guide (IoSDG), but in a contemporary way. The spaces can be organized to create open plan living, and where

possible, the experience of 3 dimensional areas created by opening up and exposing structural voids. The house must be sustainable and be insulated to at least current building regulations, have an energy efficient heating system and the possibility of rainwater harvesting and other forms of sustainable solutions.

The house must also respect the current curtilage of Sunholme, and if possible re-use as many existing walls as possible (subject to a structural engineers report). That also applies to other materials that should be re-used where possible. There must be no uPVC proposed in the design, not only recommended in the IoSDG, but also recognized as not sustainable, having with a short life span, and totally the wrong material to create well proportioned fenestration.

3. DESIGN PROCESS:

The constraints for the design are quite clear. The overall footprint and position of the existing external walls are sacrosanct. Also, in order to respect the massing and bulk of the house, the roof must not be any higher than the existing. Throughout the design process, this has been a factor that the applicant made clear to the neighbours up to the submission of the planning application.

Early on in the design development stage of the scheme, it became clear that all the accommodation required would not fit on the ground floor; there would have to be a second storey. Before arriving at the final design solution, various options were investigated to try and achieve this, but making sure the proposed scheme was no higher than the existing. Large dormer style windows, prevalent in many Scilly houses in recent years, was not only contrary to the IoSDG, but would demonstrate poor design and certainly not acceptable either the the applicant or their design team. Another option was to take off the existing roof and provide a new structure at a greatly reduced pitch, and incorporate either dormer windows of a modest scale or velux style conservation roof lights. Such a scheme was sketched up, and to achieve the area of accommodation required, the existing walls would have to be extended higher. The result was a poorly proportioned scheme, and the use of sustainable roof materials such as slate or tiles could not be used due to a roof pitch of about 18 degrees. This in turn lead to the idea of designing a lightweight structure to sit on top of the existing house footprint, with a flat roof. Set back from the main front elevation to create a first floor external seating area and constructed out of glass and timber, this structure would not be obtrusive, but appear to be elegant, particularly capped with a thin and well-detailed roof. This roof has an overhang that varies up to 750mm, depending upon which side of the house. The most important feature is that this roof is extremely light, and also very thin; only 100mm. It will appear like a “blade” on the overhangs, but structure and insulation is concealed within the building itself. The overall height of this new roof

is actually 200mm lower than the existing, therefore meeting one of the brief requirements.

It became obvious that this space created a perfect living space, and therefore an “upside-down” house. The design, subject to structural engineers final report, uses the existing external walls. They have been extended to incorporate a parapet 850mm high. This works to create good overall proportions on each elevation. It also reduces any impact of having the first floor external space. At present, the materials for the existing walls are under consideration, but could either be render or timber clad. The applicant would like further thought and discussion on this with the planning officer. However, they are mindful of maintenance as well as aesthetics. Using the existing walls has enabled the design to incorporate positioning of windows so that existing lintols can be used. Also, the walls for the ground floor bedrooms echo their positions on the existing, and it will be seen if those walls can be re-used provided that structural stability can be maintained.

The position of the staircase was an important part of the design decision-making on the project. The key to this was giving the house a galleried entrance incorporating entrance, hall and first floor access points. The staircase is integral in bringing all vertical elements of the scheme together, and giving the house a very three-dimensional profile. Then there is the very deliberate feature wall, behind which this the entrance is designed. To create this simple and very special wall in granite unites the contemporary design with a very typical, and traditional scillonian material. The rest of the house is lightweight in feel, and low in impact, but by bringing in this feature, and making sure it’s proportions are absolutely at one with the rest of the design is important. Again, the proportions of the simple vertical window not only is functional, but it’s size and shape has been carefully chosen to sit well in the granite wall. A late change to the design was the cutting back of the side elevations from the ground floor walls. It emphasized the lightweight first floor structure and looked better balanced, particularly from the main West elevation.

All windows and doors are to be fabricated in aluminium, which is both durable and maintenance free. Upc was never considered an option as they offer no scope for design in this context and neither are they durable. Timber was considered, but maintenance can be an issue.

This house does make a statement of restrained contemporary design because the immediate environs do not provide any reference points for the designer to latch onto. It also meets the requirements of the applicants to create a fabulous house out of what is currently a poor statement but within what is one of the best locations on St Mary’s.

Finally, it is clear that the re-building of Sunholme has a contemporary architectural style. As a result, the applicants would like to draw

attention to the National Policy Framework (NPPF), which makes it clear that Councils should not attempt to prescriptively impose particular architectural styles or preferences when taking decisions. Other fine examples of good quality contemporary architecture exists elsewhere on Scilly, and Tresco in particular.

4. ACCESS:

Access to the house via the rear entrance is available for people with mobility problems. Furthermore, another reason for having all the bedroom on the ground floor means that the house will be future proof in the event that the applicant requires ground floor accommodation due to mobility issues.