

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

22ND JANUARY

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 significant architecturally significant buildings of the site that plays a large part in deciding the design philosophy of the re-building of the house.

The house was designed to have 3 bedrooms on the North side of the house, and 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.

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 has accommodation for three bedrooms, it was considered preferable to create space on the first floor for a better use of space. However, any such accommodation must not be designed as huge oversized dormers, deemed to be architecturally not acceptable and too much of a visual impact. Depending upon layout, the idea of an upside-down design would be considered.

The applicants did not like the dull and drab elevations of the existing house, and also preferred contemporary designs. The brief also made it clear that the new house could not exceed the existing overall height, including the roof. Neither should the new house exceed the established footprint of the existing. Maintaining walls where necessary was a suggestion, subject to a structural engineers report.

Even at the brief stage, a vocabulary of materials for the house was agreed. Timber, glass and maybe render with the possibility of granite as a feature should also be considered. Windows and doors should be chosen for longevity, ease of maintenance and quality of design. That would preclude the use of Upvc.

3. DESIGN SOLUTION:

The constraints for the design are quite clear. The main one restricts the overall footprint and position of the existing external walls and keeping to the overall height of the existing roof. In fact, very little has changed on the project since the initial design sketches were presented. It became clear very early on that a pitch roof was going to be very restrictive in terms of providing the space required. Any pitch roof solution would be too high as the walls would have to be extended to give the accommodation necessary. Large dormer style structures were never a consideration because of the poor roof proportions they create. This in turn led 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 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.