

**Design and Floorspace Statement 01.12.25**

**Design Brief**

The purpose of the proposal is to:

1. Improve the living accommodation by converting an en-suite bedroom into a “snug” lounge with attached office;
2. Improve connectivity to the garden by way of replacement of windows with French doors;
3. Improve utility / storage space by extension to form a boot room / utility;
4. Convert a redundant outbuilding into a children’s games room, and;
5. Replace the lost bedroom with a new en-suite bedroom above the games room, and;
6. Provide a bridge between the outbuilding and house to provide internal access between the two.

**Configuration of House**

Whilst the house in its current form is of a reasonable size, it is poorly arranged with excessive bedroom / bathroom accommodation and insufficient living / storage space. It has been used as a holiday let or for B&B purposes for over 40 years where the need for additional living / storage accommodation is minimal.

The house sleeps eight people but it is difficult to seat eight people comfortably in the existing living room, hence the requirement for a snug and the consequent creation of a replacement bedroom in the outbuilding.

The conversion of one of the existing bedrooms also allows space for an office to be used to administer our client’s carpentry business. Given the lack of available tradespeople on Scilly we consider it advantageous to support this essential, skilled local business.

Likewise, storage and utility space is very restricted; the current owners are having to use the attic to store items that would normally be readily accessible, hence the need for the boot room.

The proposed extension very sensibly links an underused outbuilding with the house, providing a games / amenity room for our client’s children.

The property (including the redundant outbuilding) has a current gross internal floor area of approximately 175 sq m. The proposed accommodation has an approximate gross internal floor area of 224 sq m. We understand the new Local Plan requires justification for proposed accommodation that exceeds 30% over the National Minimum Space Standards, which for a four-bedroom, two storey, eight person property is 124 sq m plus 30% = 161 sq m.

To break down the floor areas further, we can confirm the following:

- |                                  |          |
|----------------------------------|----------|
| 1. Current area of house:        | 154 sq m |
| 2. Current area of outbuilding:  | 21 sq m  |
| 3. Proposed area of outbuilding: | 43 sq m  |

4. Additional circulation space: 27 sq m

We make the following observations:

- The property (including the outbuilding) already exceeds the suggested permitted floor area in existing form. Therefore, **ANY** extension, however modest, would technically be contrary to planning policy without due justification.
- Excluding the outbuilding, floor area is 154 sq m, just 4% below the permitted maximum of 161 sq m.
- However, because of the sprawling and poorly-designed nature of the existing accommodation much of this floor area is circulation space, awkwardly arranged and lacking in utility.
- The proposed increase is relatively modest overall, and defined by a desire to improve the aesthetics and function of the property.
- The increase in building footprint is actually relatively modest at just 12% of the completed floor area.
- To enable a sensible connection between the house and outbuilding, and to facilitate a second staircase, requires a substantial amount of circulation space. This is a significant contributory factor to the overall floorspace and one which doesn't increase number or size of bedrooms or living accommodation. To quantify this, the requirement to link the outbuilding with the existing house accounts for 27 sq m – over 55% of the extended space.
- The relatively “remote” nature of the new bedroom in the outbuilding creates the need for an additional bathroom, again a contributor to floorspace but one that doesn't lead to an intensification of use at the property.

### **Extension Design Benefits**

There are other benefits to the proposals:

- Improved thermal performance of the dwelling as whole, as a result of substantial upgrading of the building fabric to comply with Part L of the Building Regulations (Conservation of Fuel & Power). The property currently has a poor EPC rating Band “F”. We expect this to be improved to Band “D” after the works are completed.
- The property has been neglected for many years, with time-expired single glazed windows and doors, defective roof coverings, etc. These will be replaced with high-quality modern materials.
- Re-use of a redundant outbuilding is an environmentally-friendly and energy-efficient way to address our clients' accommodation needs without creating unnecessary waste or shipping unnecessary building materials into the islands.

We would ask that these are taken into account when determining the application.

### **Planning Purpose**

We would respectfully question what useful planning purpose is being served imposing a space restriction on Hanjague? It is in a rural location, well-screened from neighbours with no overlooking, privacy or overcrowding issues. The closest neighbour is in support of the application.

The applicants are a local couple, one employed in an essential local service business, one self-employed running an essential local carpentry business, with children at the local school. This

is their home, and they are therefore part of the “Local Market” quoted in the Local Plan. Approving the application will not remove the property from the Local Market – it will simply allow them to create a high-quality home from what is currently a neglected and dated house, and continue to enjoy living and working on the islands.

We understand the justification behind the policy is that, as houses get larger, they also get less affordable. This has been confirmed by the Chief Planning Officer who has advised that the policy is designed to reduce the value of properties, thus making them more “affordable”.

The Local Plan states:

»As.all.homes.on.the.islands.command.higher.than.the.national.average.house.price?larger.homes.are.therefore.less.likely.to.be.affordable.to.the.community?who.have.on.average?lower.incomes.when.compared.to.the.national.average?Consequently?proposals.for.extensions.should.not.result.in.an.imbalance.in.the.existing.housing.stock?and.ensure.the.retention.of.an.appropriate.mix.of.homes.available.to.the.community?.

.To.prevent.an.imbalance.of.house.types.and.sizes?and.to.help.retain.affordable.homes?proposals.that.seek.to.extend.an.existing.property.significantly?by.more.than.96% .above.the.minimum.for.the.size.of.property?will.be.resisted.unless.there.is.a.demonstrable.proven.need.for.a.larger.home?;

We challenge the rigid imposition of this policy on the following grounds:

- (i) The policy is outdated and unsupported by a current Housing Needs Survey;
- (ii) The supply of affordable housing has increased materially since the policy was adopted, and;
- (iii) Size is an ineffective predictor of a property’s value.

#### **(i) The policy is outdated and unsupported by a current Housing Needs Survey**

According to the Local Planning Authority’s own timeline, the Housing & Economic Needs Assessment should have been started by 28<sup>th</sup> July and completed by 20<sup>th</sup> October.

The consultation period to inform the assessment is only recently underway, and the deadline for receipt of survey responses does not close until 5pm on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2026.

The current Local Plan is also will reach its 5-year post-adoption milestone in March 2026 and is therefore ready for review.

We would therefore argue that the policy is outdated and therefore only warrants limited consideration in determining this planning application.

#### **(ii) The supply of affordable housing has increased materially since the policy was adopted**

Recent planning permissions, and proposed developments, will have had a significant impact on the balance of open market / restricted properties on the islands, and will have gone a long way to addressing housing needs.

By no means exhaustive, we refer to the following sites:

Former Carn Thomas School Site – 12 x 1-bed units, 10 x 2-bed units, 5 x 3-bed units

Telegraph – 4 x 1-bed units, 4 x 2-bed units, 2 x 3-bed units (under construction)

Sea View, Telegraph – 2 x 3-bed units (one complete, one under-construction), both subject to S106 obligations

Field opposite Ennor House – 12 x self-build units

Former Primary School Site – 7 new homes proposed for rent at affordable levels

If built, these schemes alone total 58 new dwellings – enough to materially alter the housing needs of the islands. This excludes the conversion potential of (i) the current care home, Park House, and (ii) the former museum site into affordable housing units.

Given the materially different housing situation now, compared with that prevailing at the time the Local Plan was adopted, we again consider the policy should be given limited weight in determining this planning application.

May we also make the observation that the NPPF states that the "preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up-to-date evidence". The evidence required should be "adequate and proportionate, focused tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned". We would argue that the policy in question fails this important test.

### **(iii) Size is an ineffective predictor of a property's value**

Using floorspace as a measure of value is simply too blunt a tool to be anything like effective.

Size is clearly just one contributory factor to a property's value. But far more important factors in determining value (and therefore "affordability") are:

- Location
- Environment
- Quality of accommodation
- Aspect and view

In fact, evidence shows that size of a property on Scilly is relatively unimportant in determining value.

To evidence this, Sibleys Chartered Surveyors have been instructed to analyse open market sales of houses & maisonettes on St Marys in excess of £400,000 over the past two years. We can confirm that Capital Values achieved range from £3,433 psm to £8,828 psm. Spreadsheet attached.

The highest rate achieved (for a small beachside bungalow) is over 2½ times more valuable per sq m than the lowest achieved (a large detached house). On this basis, a small property of just 90 sq m could be worth the same as our clients' property in its proposed enlarged form (224 sq m)

We believe this empirical evidence proves, beyond reasonable doubt, that using property size as a predictor of value, and in turn to inform planning policy, does not stand up to proper scrutiny.

Interestingly, further examination of the evidence suggests strongly that **larger properties are actually better value for money than smaller properties.**

Which leads to the question - what do the LPA consider to be “affordable”? Clearly Hanjague was “affordable” to the present owners but may well not be affordable to others. Scilly, like all areas, needs a mix of property types & sizes to cater for all demographics.

Reducing the size of Hanjague will, in our opinion, do nothing to improve the affordability of Scilly generally and therefore no useful planning purpose is being served by imposing a floorspace restriction.

We are also unaware of any empirical evidence to suggest the policy has actually helped to “retain affordable homes”?

Finally, we would make the following observation - it could reasonably be argued that a logical extension of the policy above is to introduce a further measure preventing homeowners from improving their properties, on the justification that better-presented homes with modern facilities will command higher prices and therefore be less “affordable”.

We do not believe such a policy would command support locally, and therefore respectfully ask members to also question what is being served by the current policy.

## **Conclusion**

We believe we have set out a full justification for the design, scale and need for the proposed extension, and thank the planning committee for considering this application.

Prepared by Ian Sibley MRICS

