

2 Proposed New Houses
at
The Spires
Springfield Close
East Preston
BN16 2SZ

A Design And Access Statement
13th April 2017

Background and Brief

Our brief was to investigate the possibility of introducing new residential units in the extensive gardens of "The Spires".

Our scheme was informed by the reactions and comments to a previous proposal by others along with various restrictive covenants, historic plot divisions and a respect for the existing mature trees, hedges and neighbouring properties.

The Site and its Context

The site comprises five approximately half-acre plots with The Spires and its access occupying one of the southern plots, and the remaining four plots being the gardens to the house.

There is a secondary access to Cross Rd. to the north of the site.

The gardens are largely laid to lawn with a swimming pool to the west of the house.

The southern and northern boundaries are formed by mature evergreen hedges, and the other boundaries are formed by fences and hedges with mature trees on or close to all four boundaries. These are described in detail in the accompanying reports.

The Spires was designed and built by Reginald Fairfax Wells, the studio potter and arts and crafts designer. Wells was active in the Sussex area from 1925 and he built several houses, as well as an extensive woodland estate at West Chilington between 1925 and the late 1930's.

The Ordnance Survey sheets show that The Spires and its neighbour no.27 were the first houses in this specific area. Neither house is apparent on the 1931 map, but both houses appear on the 1938 sheet, suggesting that these house were built somewhere between 1931 and 1938.

When The Spires was first built it was in a single half-acre plot, with its rear boundary being very tight to the back of the house (presumably to maximise the southern aspect). There was also a gap of undeveloped land between The Spires and no. 27.

Local knowledge suggests that Wells lived in “The Spires” and that he built “Little Stoke” no. 27 for his mistress. In 1959 the Ordnance Survey clearly shows no. 27 having the large garden area which today lies to the east of “The Spires”.

The Spires as it stands today is architecturally weak and has been diluted by large later additions. The original house appears to be only the central two and a half storey section with its tall gable and tiered parapetted balconies terminating with a fantastic circular chimney feature and corbelled look out. The single storey semicircular bay may also be from the original phase but again it has been swamped by a later single storey addition to the west.

The two storey east and west ranges are both later additions and change the original design intent radically, what started out as a rather vertical mediievally inspired tower house has ended up being a rather bland linear form with no obvious entrance. The northern elevation is particularly ugly and unfriendly. In contrast, no. 27 (next door) is an example of Wells at his best, with the playful use of his stock forms and details creating an engaging and pretty house.

Design

Use

Having taken on the comments of the conservation officer to the previous application we have retained the existing house in its entirety. We have also proposed the siting of two appropriately sized and carefully designed houses within its garden site.

In laying out the development site we had to take account of:

- restrictive covenants on the eastern portion of the site
- the original siting, design and orientation of The Spires
- potential access points and reasonable distances of separation between proposed buildings and neighbouring houses and boundaries.
- Root protection areas of the existing mature trees.

Amount

We have designed two houses of the following sizes:

Plot 1

Two Storey 5 bedroomed family house with detached garage

Gross Internal Area of House 342 sq.m

Gross External Area of House 389 sq.m

Gross External Area of Garage = 46.24sq.m

Plot 2

Two Storey 5 bedroomed family house with detached garage

Gross Internal Area of House 340 sq.m

Gross External Area of House 378 sq.m

Gross External Area of Garage = 46.24sq.m

Layout

We have suggested the introduction of two new houses one to the west of the Spires with a north-south orientation (Plot 1) and the other to the north of The Spires with an east west facing orientation (Plot 2).

This proposed siting was chosen for the following reasons:

- The positioning of the houses to the north and west of the The Spires allowed the existing house to retain its original access point onto Springfield close, with its walls, piers, gates and drive.
- The Spires faces south and there are very few major windows looking north. (this is due to its siting on the northern boundary of its original plot). This allows The Spires to revert to its original form turning its back on the northern aspect.
- The Spires would enjoy its originally designed relationship with both its half-acre plot, Springfield Drive , and the neighbouring building of 27 Angmering Lane.
- Plot 1 is a well defined plot with a potential for a convenient access onto Springfield Drive and a sunny southern aspect.
- Plot 2 has an existing access point onto Cross Road which has allowed us to avoid shared access drives which would have been out of keeping with the grain of the area with its large houses in relatively private garden plots.

Plot 1 Layout

Plot 1 has been arranged to make the most of its southern aspect we have therefore positioned the drive along the plots eastern boundary with the parking, garage and front door to the north. This has allowed the house to have a traditional layout with a progression from north to south through the house. The hall, study and utility room are all on the northern side, with the living room and kitchen enjoying dual aspects on the west and eastern sides respectively and the dining room in the centre of the southern elevation.

The first floor is arranged to place the main bedroom windows looking north and south with only one small dormer window onto bed 3 looking west & bathroom windows looking east.

The proposed garage to Plot 1 is in the north west corner of the plot and is well screened by boundary planting.

Plot 2 Layout

Plot 2 is arranged to make us of the northern drive access off Cross Rd. we have positioned the house to enjoy good eastern and western gardens with its front door facing west.

This house has a central hall with an east facing kitchen (with a southern flat roofed bay) to make the most of the morning light, a west facing dining room which will capture the westering sun, a west facing study and dual aspect living room on the northern end.

At first floor all the bedroom windows face east and west with only obscured bathroom windows facing north and south. This is to avoid any potential overlooking to the northern gardens and The Spires to the south.

The garage to Plot 2 is close to the site of the current garage under the trees in the south east corner of the plot. It's precise position has been chosen to reduce the impact of the structure on the root protection areas of the existing trees.

Scale

We felt that the site was well suited to accommodating 2 new houses due to its larger than usual area. Generally the Willowhayne estate is arranged with ½ acre plots. The Spires sits on a site of 2.4 acres ie. 5 of the original plots. This scale of development allows the original house to command a large site (approximately 0.95 acre) proportionate to its scale. Plot 1 sits on a 0.6 acre site with plot 2 on approximately 0.8 acre (excluding the drive).

We have therefore suggested the two houses are as follows:

Plot 1 – Two storey - Gross Internal Area of 342 sq.m
 Gross External Area of 389 sq.m
 Height to ridge = 10.25m
 Length (E-W) = 21.2m (to main walls at widest part of plan)
 Width (N-S) = 12.2m (to main walls at widest part of plan)

Plot 2 – Two Storey - Gross Internal Area of 340 sq.m
 Gross External Area of 378 sq.m
 Height to ridge = 10.1m
 Length (N-S) = 21m (to main walls at widest part of plan)
 Width (E-W) = 11.3m (to main walls at widest part of plan)

Both Houses have been designed to reduce their scale towards neighbouring boundaries. Plot 1 has a reduced eaves level at the east and west ends to defer to The Spires and its western boundary and Plot 2 has a lower eaves level at the north and south ends again to defer to The Spires to the south and the garden boundaries to the north.

Landscaping

Generally our approach is to retain as much of the existing landscaping as possible with most of the boundary trees and hedges being kept in order to maintain the privacy and landscape setting of the site both from within the gardens and from outside the site in neighbouring properties and on Springfield Drive.

The grounds are mainly laid to lawn with mature trees close to and on the boundaries. The area to the south and east of The Spires will be retained as existing, the area to the west of the house will have the later pool and walling features removed to clear the area for Plot 1 and its drive area.

A new hedge will be planted between Plot 1 and The Spires with the existing stone wall with arched opening being retained in The Spires garden.

To the north of The Spires we have suggested the removal of the pond and a proportion of the extensive paved area in order to create a deep planting area with a row of new trees and shrub planting between the existing house and proposed Plot 2.

Both drives would be gravelled with a permeable gravel parking and turning area closer to the house. The drive to Plot 2 would need to be of a “no dig” construction where it is over the RPA’s of the existing trees. The drive to plot 1 would only need this treatment where it passes under the trees on the southern boundary.

Appearance

General Approach

We undertook a careful appraisal of the site and came to the conclusion that any new architectural interventions should be of a high quality of design and should respect the visual and spatial identity of the original Wells building.

In order to achieve this aim we decided that the houses should be sympathetic both to the general area and to the era and genre of “The Spires” whilst attempting to give the original house some “aesthetic elbow room”. We felt that if the new houses were designed in the manner of Wells himself then there was a risk of creating a visual muddle which would detract from the setting of The Spires and its sister house next door.

We therefore chose to use elements of the Wells aesthetic but deploy them in a slightly more expressive Arts and Crafts manner. In this way we hope we have created a pair of individual but related houses that allow the original Wells designs to retain their individual characters and relationship on the site.

Materials

We have used the materials of the proposed houses both to draw comparison and to create contrast with the existing house. This has been achieved by using materials such as white painted roughcast render (a visual analogue for the white painted masonry of the Wells house) and setting them against a palette of warmer richer colours in the form of clay brickwork, tile creasing and clay tile hanging. We have also suggested decorative brick arches and tile creasing courses to link the house to the Arts and Crafts and the detailing of the 20's and 30's often found in these maritime estates.

We have shown painted timber joinery in traditional proportions with simple crossed glazing bars, and suggested the use of bay windows and glazed front doors.

The roofs should be in Clay tiles at a steep pitch with matching bonnets, valleys and hips, and the flat roofs to bays have been shown in lead.

Form and Design

Plot 1

Plot 1 has a two storey main core with a steeply pitched hipped roof with sprockets to the eaves., the base materials of this section are face clay-brickwork to the ground floor and, clay tile hanging to the first floor with a kickout defined by a painted timber cornice moulding. This core is flanked by two narrower wings at the east and west ends both with runs of lower eaves forming catslides and a reduced scale.

The house also has a white painted rough-cast rendered gable feature running from north to south and expressing on both elevations. To the north this is visually linked to a parapetted open porch with a large brick arch to the entrance and battered buttresses, this is balanced in the composition by a strong shouldered chimney. On the south side the gable is punctuated by large southern windows and links visually to the white rendered plinth to the neighbouring bay window.

The northern entrance arch is echoed on the south side by the arched opening to the kitchen/sitting area which also has a verandah between the kitchen bay and the dining room gable. There is also an arched loggia to the utility room garden-door and a corniced canopy over the dining room French doors.

The house makes use of tile creasing to form decorative elements such as the gable kneeler corbels, and the drip features over the first floor gable windows in the rendered walls. We have also suggested tile creasing to form the main body of the corner pier to the utility room loggia, the under cill course to the study bay and the springing course to the entrance arch.

We have suggested a pair of black metal gates to the new access onto Springfield Close, these should have black metal posts in line with the hedge. We have chosen not to create brick piers to create a hierarchy with the original access to The Spires.

The garage is to be an Oak clad garage with painted timber side-hung doors and a pyramidal clay-tile roof. The front elevation of this garage will have battered white rendered piers to link it to the house.

Plot 2

Plot 2 has a central core running north-south which has cat slide roofs at either end. This form is then partially extruded to the east and terminated in a white painted roughcast gable with a two storey canted bay looking down the eastern garden. In similar fashion to Plot 1 the rendered gable is attached to an open arched porch with a parapetted roof and a battered buttress.

The rendered portion of the house continues from the eastern gable around the lower eaves section of the southern elevation (under a long cat-slide) and terminates with a battered buttress on the southern end of the west elevation.

The western elevation takes a simpler more horizontal approach with the first floor tile hanging that sprockets out at the base over two courses of corbelled brickwork, and face brickwork with a brick plinth to the ground floor. The western elevation has an asymmetric hipped projection to the northern end with a generous ground floor bay window. The garden door is also expressed as a set piece with a corniced canopy a lunette door and timber benches.

We have suggested a pair of replacement black metal gates between the existing brick piers onto Cross Road, to retain the current visual approach.

The garage is to be an Oak clad garage with timber side-hung doors and a pyramidal clay-tile roof

Access

Access to The Spires remains as existing.

Access to Plot 1 is via a new access drive off Springfield Close. Access is level and there will be a Part-M compliant front door and downstairs toilet in accordance with the Building Regulations.

Access to Plot 2 is via an existing secondary access drive off Cross Road. Access is level and there will be a Part-M compliant front door and downstairs toilet in accordance with the Building Regulations.

Bin Storage

Both the new houses and the existing house have double garages adequate for the storage of recycling and refuse bins. Bins are collected from the roadsides and will be wheeled to the ends of the access drives in all cases.

Cycle Storage

Both the new houses and the existing house have large garages adequate for the secure storage of bicycles.

Foul and Surface Water Statement

Foul water will run to mains sewers.

Surface water will be to soakaways in accordance with the building regulations and the parking areas will have permeable finishes.

Conclusion

Generally we feel that the proposals are of a high architectural standard, drawing upon elements of the existing Wells house and the wider context of the Willowhayne estate and the Arts and Crafts movement. We feel that the proposal will be sympathetic to the setting of the existing building whilst also responding to the local environment to create two individual houses with a shared architectural treatment.

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