



Design & Access Statement

Barn, Birch Avenue, Haywards Heath RH17 7SL

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for alterations and extensions to Shepherds Barn, Birch Avenue, Haywards Heath.

The proposal seeks to remodel and extend the existing dwelling in a manner that enhances the architectural quality of the property while respecting the character of the surrounding residential area and landscape setting. The scheme has been carefully designed to create a cohesive family home with improved internal functionality, balanced proportions, and a refined external appearance.

2. Site Context

Shepherds Barn is an existing detached dwelling set within a generous landscaped plot along Birch Avenue. The property benefits from substantial front and rear garden areas, mature planting, and a spacious setting characteristic of the surrounding area.

The surrounding context is varied, comprising individually designed detached homes of differing architectural styles, scales, and material palettes. The area does not display a rigid architectural uniformity, allowing opportunities for sensitive contemporary interpretation and enhancement.

The dwelling already possesses elements of traditional Sussex architecture through the use of tile hanging, pitched roofs, and white rendered lower walls. However, the existing arrangement appears fragmented in places, with differing roof forms and inconsistent fenestration patterns reducing the visual cohesion of the building.

3. Design Concept

The proposal introduces a comprehensive redesign of the dwelling together with associated extensions and external alterations, including a rear extension designed to improve the relationship between the internal living accommodation and the surrounding garden.

The design approach focuses on:

- Creating a stronger architectural hierarchy;
- Improving balance and symmetry across the elevation;
- Enhancing the arrival experience and entrance definition;
- Rationalising roof forms and window arrangements;
- Improving the functionality and flow of internal family living spaces;
- Strengthening the visual and physical connection to the rear garden;
- Retaining the traditional character of the dwelling while introducing a more refined and contemporary appearance.

The proposed rear extension has been carefully designed as a subordinate addition to the existing dwelling. The extension provides enlarged open-plan kitchen, dining, and family accommodation, creating a more practical layout suited to modern family living.

In addition, the proposal includes alterations within the roof space to create an ancillary loft area. The loft conversion does not create habitable accommodation due to the restricted head height caused by the roof eaves. The space is intended to remain as an open ancillary area suitable for storage and occasional use only, and not as a bedroom or primary living accommodation.

The loft design has been carefully developed to work within the constraints of the existing roof form while maintaining the character, proportions, and appearance of the dwelling. Any roof alterations remain modest and sympathetic to the overall architectural composition. Large glazed openings facing the garden increase natural daylight penetration and create stronger visual connectivity between the internal spaces and the landscaped rear garden. The design seeks to maintain a domestic scale while enhancing the overall architectural coherence of the property.

The revised composition uses traditional materials and forms interpreted in a cleaner and more cohesive manner. The proposal remains domestic in scale and responds positively to the spacious setting of the site.

4. Scale and Massing

The proposed development maintains a scale consistent with large detached dwellings within the locality.

Although the proposal increases the overall built form through the introduction of front and rear extensions together with roof space alterations, the design carefully breaks down the massing through:

- Stepped roof forms;
- Varied ridge arrangements;
- Use of projecting gables;
- Set-backs to secondary elements;
- Material contrast between upper and lower levels.

The rear extension has been designed to sit comfortably within the existing built form and garden setting. Its scale and proportions remain subordinate to the principal dwelling, ensuring the addition integrates naturally with the host property without appearing dominant or overdeveloped.

The loft accommodation remains contained within the roof structure and does not materially increase the perceived bulk of the dwelling. The proposal has been carefully designed to preserve the existing roof proportions and avoid an overbearing or top-heavy appearance.

The alterations avoid an overly bulky appearance and instead create a balanced composition that reflects the established character of substantial family homes in the area.

The garage element remains visually subordinate to the principal dwelling, helping preserve a clear hierarchy within the elevation.

5. Appearance and Materials

The proposal adopts a high-quality traditional material palette comprising: Hanging clay tiles to upper elevations; White rendered lower walls; Dark framed windows and doors; Brick detailing surrounding the principal entrance; Concrete or clay roof tiles to match the character of the area. These materials reflect the established vernacular found locally and reinforce the rural-residential character of the property. The introduction of larger glazed openings improves natural light internally while maintaining appropriate proportions and rhythm externally. The redesigned entrance creates a stronger focal point to the dwelling, improving legibility and visual presence.



Existing



Proposal Front Elevation



Existing



Proposal Rear Elevation

6. Impact on Character and Surroundings

The proposal will enhance the visual appearance of the existing dwelling and contribute positively to the street scene and wider residential setting.

The rear extension has been carefully positioned to minimise visual impact from the public realm due to its location to the rear of the property and the presence of mature landscaping surrounding the site.

The design remains respectful of neighbouring properties through:

- Appropriate scale and height;
- Retention of generous spacing to boundaries;
- Use of traditional materials;
- Carefully considered window placement;
- Subordinate rear extension design.

Given the substantial size of the plot and mature landscaping, the proposed development will integrate comfortably within its setting without appearing cramped or overdeveloped.

The proposal represents an architectural improvement over the existing arrangement by introducing a more coherent and balanced design language while enhancing the usability and quality of the internal living accommodation.

7. Residential Amenity

The proposal has been designed to safeguard the amenities of neighbouring occupiers. Due to the generous separation distances and established landscaping, the development is not expected to result in: Harmful overlooking; Loss of privacy; Significant overshadowing; Overbearing impacts. The revised layout also significantly improves the quality of accommodation for future occupants through enhanced internal organisation, increased natural light, and stronger connections to the surrounding gardens.

8. Access Existing

vehicular and pedestrian access arrangements are retained. The proposal continues to provide adequate parking and manoeuvring space within the site. Safe and convenient access to the dwelling is maintained throughout. The main entrance has been enhanced architecturally to provide clearer legibility and a more welcoming arrival sequence.

9. Landscaping

The spacious landscaped setting forms an important part of the character of the site. The proposal retains the majority of existing soft landscaping and mature planting. The development continues to benefit from extensive garden areas that soften the appearance of the built form and maintain the verdant character of the surroundings. Any additional hard landscaping will be complementary in tone and material to the proposed dwelling.

10. Conclusion

The proposed development at Shepherds Barn represents a carefully considered and high-quality redesign of the existing property. The scheme: Enhances the architectural character of the dwelling; Creates a more balanced and cohesive appearance; Uses materials appropriate to the local context; Maintains the spacious character of the site; Protects neighbouring amenity; Delivers a high standard of residential design. Overall, the proposal is considered to accord with the objectives of good design and is a positive enhancement to both the property and the wider street scene.