

Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application relating to 4 & 4A East Court Villas, located on Cranston Road in East Grinstead, RH19 3HQ. The properties are situated in a well-established residential area positioned between the communities of Felbridge and Ashurst Wood. The site benefits from excellent transport connectivity, being located within half a mile of East Grinstead railway station, which offers regular services to London and surrounding areas. This accessibility makes the location highly desirable for both residents and visitors.



4 & 4A East Court Villas form part of a semi-detached property arranged over three levels, reflecting a traditional architectural style that is common in the area. The building is currently divided into two residential units, each with its own access and internal layout. Along Cranston Road, there are three other properties of a similar style and scale: two semi-detached dwellings and the corresponding twin of 4 & 4A, completing the original development pattern on this stretch of the road.

Although each of the four properties displays individualised front and rear elevations, likely the result of incremental changes and extensions over time, they remain cohesive in scale, massing, and general architectural character. Together, they contribute to a visually harmonious and consistent streetscape. The properties are not statutorily listed and do not fall within a designated conservation area. However, they do possess a degree of architectural interest and character that enhances the local townscape and supports the area's overall residential identity.

This statement will outline the proposed development in detail, explaining the design rationale and demonstrating how the scheme responds positively to the site context, adheres to relevant planning policies, and contributes to the continued evolution of East Grinstead's built environment in a sensitive and considered manner.

Existing house

The existing property at 4 & 4A East Court Villas is a semi-detached dwelling that has been subdivided into two self-contained residential flats. Historically, both flats have been tenanted for a considerable period; however, the current applicant has recently acquired ownership of both units and now seeks to bring forward a proposal that reflects their long-term vision for the property.

The ground floor accommodates Flat 4A, a one-bedroom unit suitable for up to two occupants. This flat comprises a living/dining area, a separate kitchen, and a shower room with a WC. Its compact yet functional layout provides a practical living space, particularly suited to single occupants or couples.

Flats 4 and 4A are arranged vertically, with Flat 4 occupying the first and second floors of the building. This larger flat offers three bedrooms and is designed to accommodate up to four persons. The internal layout includes a spacious living/dining area, a separate kitchen, and a family bathroom. The bedrooms are distributed across both upper floors, enabling an efficient use of vertical space while maintaining good levels of natural light and ventilation throughout.

The property does not benefit from any off-street parking provision. Both current residents and their visitors make use of the available on-street parking bays located along Cranston Road, which is unrestricted and generally able to accommodate demand.

To the rear of the property, the garden has been subdivided into two distinct areas, each designated for the exclusive use of one of the flats. These private outdoor spaces provide valuable amenity areas for relaxation and recreation and contribute positively to the overall quality of life for the occupants.



Planning history of the property

- Description: CONVERT AND MODERNIZE INTO TWO FLATS.

Application reference: GR/093/86

Date: 16 May 1986

Decision: Approved

Neighbourhood

The application property forms part of a group of four similarly designed houses (shown in picture below) located on Cranston Road. These comprise two pairs of semi-detached dwellings, which were originally constructed as single-family homes (Use Class C3). The architectural style and scale of these properties are consistent, contributing to a coherent and established residential character along this part of the street.

Of the four houses, three, including the adjoining property and the other semi-detached pair, have remained as single-family dwellings (Use Class C3). In contrast, 4 and 4A were subdivided into two self-contained flats at a later date, following their original construction. This subdivision introduced a modest degree of variety in terms of occupancy type but did not significantly alter the external appearance or residential function of the building within the wider streetscape.

The immediate neighbourhood is predominantly residential in nature, with a mixture of house types and tenures. The area is well-served by local amenities and benefits from good access to public transport, schools, and recreational facilities, making it a well-connected and desirable place to live.



Proposal

The proposal seeks to reconfigure the internal layout of the existing building at 4 & 4A East Court Villas in order to return the property to its original use as a single-family dwelling (Use Class C3). The building is currently divided into two self-contained flats; however, the applicant, who currently resides in the ground floor flat, has recently acquired the upper flat and now wishes to unify the entire property into a single household residence.

The intention is to restore the property's original layout and character, aligning it once again with the neighbouring three properties, all of which remain in use as single-family homes. No external alterations are proposed as part of this application. The external facades, elevations, and roofline will remain unchanged, thereby preserving the existing architectural integrity of the property and ensuring there is no adverse impact on the surrounding street scene or wider neighbourhood.

Internally, the reconfiguration will create a spacious and functional layout suitable for modern family living. The proposed layout will be as follows:

- **Ground floor:** Living and dining rooms, kitchen, and a toilet and shower room;
- **First floor:** Three bedrooms and a family bathroom;
- **Second floor (loft level):** Two additional single bedrooms.

The result will be a five-bedroom family home capable of accommodating up to eight persons, providing generous living space and private outdoor amenity. The proposal represents a positive investment in the property, offering long-term residential use for a larger family while restoring the building to its original residential function.

The existing parking arrangement will remain unchanged, with residents continuing to make use of the available on-street parking on Cranston Road, which is currently free and unrestricted. As part of the works, the currently divided rear gardens will be merged into a single, larger garden space, creating a more coherent and practical amenity area for the household.

This proposal supports the ongoing sustainability and vitality of the local area by reinstating a family dwelling in keeping with the original character of the property and surrounding context.

Conclusion

The proposed conversion of 4 & 4A East Court Villas into a single-family dwelling presents a range of benefits, both for the current owner and the wider community. This section outlines how the proposal aligns with good planning principles and supports the aims of sustainable residential development.

While the current configuration provides two self-contained flats, the internal layout leads to an inefficient use of space. Both units include their own living/dining areas and kitchens, which reduces the overall number of bed spaces within the property. In its current state, the building accommodates a total of four bedrooms, serving a maximum of six people across both flats.

The proposed scheme will consolidate the internal layout to form a five-bedroom single-family home, increasing the overall bed space provision to accommodate up to eight people. By minimising duplication of communal areas and maximising usable sleeping areas, the proposal ensures a more efficient use of existing residential floorspace. This contributes positively to housing supply objectives without requiring new development or extensions.

Although the current occupier has a small family, they intend to move their elderly parents into the home in the near future. This type of intergenerational household is increasingly common, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the revised layout will provide the space and flexibility needed to support multi-generational living. In doing so, the proposal helps meet real and growing demand for larger family homes within existing housing stock.

In terms of parking, the property currently has no off-street parking spaces. According to local standards, the existing one-bedroom and three-bedroom flats would require a total of three designated spaces. In contrast, a five-bedroom single dwelling would typically require the same number. However, because the property will be used by a single household, the actual parking demand is expected to remain low. The applicant currently owns one car and anticipates no more than two vehicles in future. This represents a potentially reduced impact on on-street parking when compared to the existing arrangement, which serves two separate households and their visitors.

Architecturally, the property holds notable character and contributes to a coherent group of four semi-detached homes with shared design language. Returning the building to its original single-dwelling use enhances architectural continuity along Cranston Road and supports the visual identity of the street. In addition, owner-occupied family homes tend to be better maintained and more carefully looked after than fully tenanted properties. It is often the case that rental units, particularly in multi-unit conversions, suffer from general wear and tear, delayed repairs, and reduced levels of day-to-day maintenance due to the lack of long-term personal investment by tenants. By reuniting the property

under single-family occupation, the likelihood of neglect or minimal upkeep is reduced, which benefits the broader appearance and condition of the neighbourhood.

No external changes are proposed as part of this application. The external elevations, roof, and architectural detailing will remain untouched, ensuring that the proposal has no adverse impact on the appearance of the property or the surrounding area. On the contrary, the reinstatement of the dwelling's original form may enhance the street scene and even positively influence neighbouring property values.

The proposal also includes the merging of the currently divided rear gardens into one larger outdoor space. The removal of internal fences will open up the area to increased sunlight and airflow, improve planting potential, and create a more usable, family-friendly amenity space.

Crucially, the proposal does not involve any extensions or significant structural alterations. As such, it represents a highly sustainable form of development, making better use of the existing built environment. In an era where working from home has become increasingly common, larger family homes with internal flexibility are in high demand. The proposed layout will allow for one or more rooms to function as study or office spaces—reducing the need for garden outbuildings or other potentially less sustainable adaptations.

In summary, the proposal to return 4 & 4A East Court Villas to a single-family home offers a wide range of social, practical, and environmental benefits. It increases bed space, improves building stewardship, respects the architectural character of the area, and contributes to the sustainable reuse of existing housing stock. The property will become a well-maintained and spacious family home, offering long-term value to its residents and the wider community.