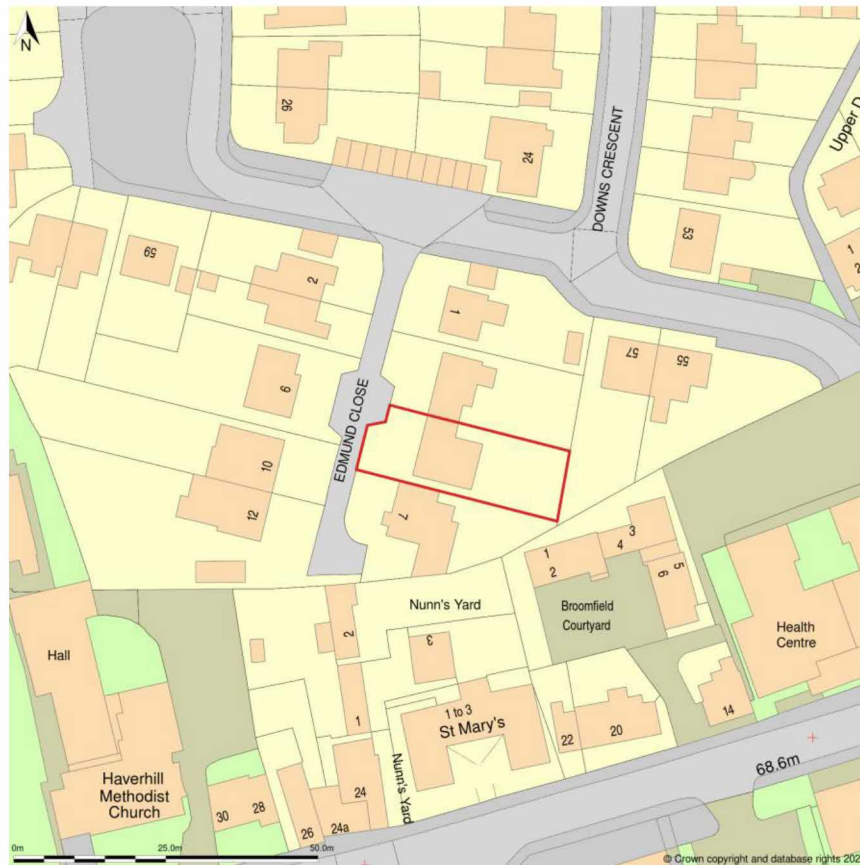




PLANNING STATEMENT

Siting of garden studio structure in rear garden for use as tourist/guest accommodation, and extended car parking space at front of 5 Edmund Close, Haverhill, CB9 9LN



MRC Planning Limited, Longton Villas, 4 Clarendon Street, Bedford, MK41 7SJ



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This statement has been prepared to support an application for planning permission for siting a detached prefabricated structure within the rear garden of 5 Edmund Close, Haverhill for use as guest/tourist accommodation. It is also proposed to increase the available space for car parking in front of the house. The structure is formed in an 'L' shape with its longest rear side measuring 7.58m its greatest depth measuring 5.38m and its height above ground level measuring 2.5m. A representative image of the structure is shown below.

Representative image for reference only.



1.2 Photographs of the existing rear and front gardens showing where the structure will be sited and where the car parking space will be extended are shown below. Scaled plans also accompanying this application.

Photos of location



Rear garden and location of accommodation



Front garden and location of hardstanding

- 1.3 5 Edmund Close is a detached house on the east side of the Close. It has a deep and level rear garden mainly laid to lawn and is enclosed by fences and mature planting. The front garden is level and currently provides parking for 2 vehicles plus a garage located on its north side (3 spaces total). It is proposed to increase the front garden hard surface to improve the parking capacity and make its use easier for both the existing occupier and potential visitors.
- 1.4 The proposed visitor accommodation will provide comfortable accommodation for visitors and includes a bedroom area, a living space with a small kitchenette and a shower room/WC. It is anticipated that it will be attractive to both tourists to the area, perhaps those using the nearby Stansted airport, and by those who are in the area for business for a few days, allowing them space to relax or work in the evening but as an alternative to hotel type accommodation.

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The customer will use the widened parking space at the front of the house and would access the accommodation in the rear garden via the path at the side of the house.

- 1.5 The accommodation and parking space will be supervised, managed and cleaned by the occupier of the house, with rules of occupation in place to minimise any possible effects of its use on the local street and its residents.
- 1.6 The structure is manufactured off-site and clad in powder coated steel panels and assembled on site over the course of 2 or 3 days, minimising any possible impact on neighbouring homes and residents. Its prefabricated construction does not rely on the creation of extensive foundations, instead the studio has a chassis with adjustable feet beneath it (to facilitate uneven ground) and so it can be moved or re-sold in the future. It will simply sit on the garden.
- 1.7 The photographs below show the same model structure being assembled. First the two 'halves' are assembled and then they are joined together.



First part in place, note shallow padstones in place in readiness for second part.



Second part within steel cradle before joining to first part



Second half being lifted into place on supporting cradle



Second half in place just before it is rolled together (see wheels on the feet) and joined.

2.0 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.1 The NPPF makes the clear statement that “The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development” and places at the heart of the Framework “a presumption in favour of sustainable development”. For decision making this means approving development that accords with the development plan without delay and LPAs should “approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way” and “work proactively with applicants to secure development that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area”. (Para 38).
- 2.2 Paragraph 85 states “*Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.*”

- 2.3 Paragraph 86 d) requires planning policies to “be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances”.
- 2.4 In its section 12 ‘Achieving well-designed and beautiful places’ at paragraph 135 the NPPF requires amongst other things that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area; are visually attractive, are sympathetic to local character ... while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities); establish or maintain a strong sense of place and optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development.
- 2.5 The Development Plan
- 2.6 In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, applications for planning permission should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 2.7 The local plan for this part of West Suffolk Council is made up of the following:
- St Edmundsbury Core Strategy (2010)
Haverhill Vision 2031 (2014)
Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Local Plan Joint Development Management Policies (2015)
- 2.8 Core Strategy Policy CS9 Employment and the Local Economy recognises Haverhill as a sustainable location where there will be support for growth, including in tourism. It requires that “All employment proposals will be expected to meet the criteria set out in Policy CS2 to protect and enhance natural resources and ensure the sustainable design of the built environment” and Policy CS3 requires “new development to create and contribute to a high quality, safe and sustainable environment”.
- 2.9 The Haverhill Vision 2031 document publishes a range of aspirations including taking full advantage of the Town’s proximity to Cambridge and the M11 and Stansted and support economic and business growth in the town.
- 2.10 Forest Heath and St Edmundsbury Local Plan Joint Development Management Policies (2015) DM Policy 34 – expresses general support for new tourism facilities where well related to main urban areas and readily accessible to public transport, cycling and walking links, where it would not adversely affect the character, appearance of amenities of the area and it is of an acceptable design. It requires vehicle parking on site to be provided as standard. The policy requires the occupation of any new tourist accommodation to be restricted via condition or legal agreement to ensure a tourist use solely, and not permanent residential occupation.
- 2.11 Policy DM46: Parking Standards requires proposals to provide appropriately designed and sited car and cycle parking, plus make provision for emergency, delivery and service vehicles, in accordance with the adopted standards current at the time of the application.
- 2.12 The West Suffolk Local Plan Submission draft was published in early 2024 and an examination of its Policies has not yet taken place. It is therefore at a relatively early stage in its adoption however the submission draft does contain draft Policy LP39 which says “Proposals for new tourism facilities, including overnight visitor accommodation such as hotels, bed and breakfast, self-catering, holiday lodges, static and touring caravans and

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tenting fields, or improvements and extension to existing facilities, will be permitted” provided that amongst other things the site is well related to the main urban areas and is accessible, and it would not adversely affect the character, appearance or amenities of the area and vehicle access and parking is provided to an appropriate standard. It requires that occupation of any new tourist accommodation will be restricted through condition or legal agreement to ensure proposals remain in tourism use.

3. ANALYSIS OF PLANNING ISSUES

3.1 It remains the case that Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise (Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990).

3.2 Both the National Planning Policy Framework and Development Plan Policies make it clear that high quality design is required of all development. Development is to be compatible with local character, the existing townscape and wider landscape and impacts upon neighbouring occupants in terms of privacy, outlook, sunlight/daylight, and noise and disturbance are also elements to be considered in terms of good design.

3.3 The main issues relevant to the application are therefore considered to be

- the impact of the structure and enlarged parking area on the character and appearance of the area,
- the effects of the tourist/visitor use of the structure on the amenities of neighbouring residents,
- the effect of the additional vehicular activity associated with the proposed use on highway safety and capacity in the area.
- Biodiversity net gain

3.4 Impact on the character and appearance of the area

3.5 The introduction of a structure or an outbuilding of the size proposed should be considered acceptable in principle within the general context of the site. The site is a residential house and garden in a primarily residential area. The proposed structure is of a scale and appearance of a garden outbuilding, it will be well screened from the street and from neighbouring homes and gardens and so its physical appearance and presence would not appear out of character or unusual in this residential setting. Were its use to be limited to incidental residential uses such as garden room or storage shed, its dimensions and position in the garden would mean it could be constructed as permitted development under Class E of Part 1 of Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order 2015 (GPDO) and it would not require planning permission. The structure would have an acceptable impact on the appearance of the area.

3.6 Similarly the creation or extension of a hardstanding for parking a car in front of a dwelling is permitted by Class F of the GPDO where the hard surface is made of porous materials, or provision is made to direct run-off water to a porous area or surface within the curtilage of the dwellinghouse. The creation of the extended parking area will therefore be drained to prevent direct run-off and surfaced in a bound stone/resin finish and could be done without planning permission, however it is the applicant’s view that the proposed works are entirely appropriate and of a sufficiently high quality to be acceptable in the street scene. The

enlarged hardstanding, and its use would have an acceptable impact on the appearance of the area.

- 3.7 Effects of the tourist/visitor use on the amenities of neighbouring residents
- 3.8 The structure is modest in size with a single bedroom space. Its capacity is therefore limited by its size and it is likely that occupation at any time will be limited to a single person or to a couple. The accommodation will be available only through prior booking arrangement and the owner will be able to screen all guests in advance, provide them with clear instructions for arrival and departure and outline expected levels of behaviour. The owner will be living alongside any potential guest and will be supervising the use of the structure at all times.
- 3.9 The provision of clear instructions and expected standards of behaviour for all arrivals and departures and for all stays will ensure the visitors respect the Close and its residents. The number of vehicles per booking will be limited to one vehicle and so the increased sized hardstanding will provide additional parking space. County Council parking standards currently require one parking space per letting room with 2 spaces for the owner/occupier of guest house type accommodation which is the closest type of accommodation referenced in the Suffolk Guidance for Parking document (2023). This will be achieved on site and the provision of an additional parking space to cater for visitor vehicles means any guest will be able to quickly park and gain entry to the accommodation with the minimum of fuss. Such low levels of activity will cause very little disturbance and will not harm the amenity of the area and its residents.
- 3.10 Effects of additional vehicular activity on the highway safety and highway capacity
- 3.11 Edmund Close itself is not a through road, and thus vehicular activity is limited to the householders using it and traffic speeds are very low. The junction of Edmund Close onto Dowson Crescent allows for clear visibility in each direction, traffic speeds are again likely to be low and the addition of one vehicle's movement over the course of a day will have a negligible impact on Edmund Close and the wider road network. The increase in vehicle numbers resulting from the proposal will have no adverse effect on highway safety or the capacity of the highway network.
- 3.12 Biodiversity Net Gain
- 3.13 Since February 2024 achieving biodiversity net gain on all qualifying developments has become mandatory. For smaller developments Council's are advised to take a proportionate approach to securing BNG. The proposed guest accommodation is at the very lowest level of development that might justify BNG and so the application is accompanied by a base level assessment with a recommendation for two trees to be planted on the site, achieving a 12.2% increase in biodiversity. A landscaping scheme incorporating appropriate native planting can therefore be made the subject of a planning condition if permission is granted.

4.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 The site is located in a sustainable urban location, where new tourist facilities and overnight accommodation is encouraged by the current and emerging development plan in accordance with the requirement to concentrate development at the most sustainable locations. The provision of guest accommodation will support local tourism and local business. In principle therefore the proposed use is acceptable in this location.

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- 4.2 The structure has the appearance of a residential outbuilding and will not look out of place in this garden setting. Its limited scale, the presence of garden fences and landscaping and the orientation of its windows mean it will not cause overlooking or any loss of privacy or appear over-large in this substantial garden. Were it an incidental outbuilding it would not require planning permission.
- 4.3 The use of the structure for guest accommodation will be strictly controlled and supervised by the occupier of the house just metres from the structure. All bookings will be pre-arranged and the 'rules' of occupation will be explained to all guests with a view to minimising any potential impact on the area and its residents. Except for some additional comings and goings which will be strictly controlled by the owner, the activity associated with its use will be modest. The character of the use and the level of activity will not appear very different from the existing use as a single house and will not be demonstrably harmful to the area or its residents.
- 4.4 The very limited vehicular activity arising from visitor vehicle movements will have very limited impact on the area and a negligible impact on highway safety and capacity in the area.
- 4.5 The occupation of the structure by visiting guests and for short periods only, can be controlled by planning condition, so there will be no chance of the accommodation ever being used as a permanent independent dwelling.
- 4.6 The benefits of the proposal include economic benefits in the form of employment and support for local business/tourist facilities and a diversification of the town's economy. Environmentally it is of an appropriate design and will appear as a structure that fits comfortably within its residential garden setting and the extended car parking area forward of the house will similarly not appear out of place.
- 4.7 The proposal is therefore considered to be an appropriate use in this suburban location and accords with development plan policies which seek to support local tourism and local business. It is of a good standard of design that is respectful of the sites residential context and will have only a very modest impact on the area. It is considered the proposal accords with relevant development plan policies and represents sustainable development with no significant adverse impacts or material considerations that would justify a decision other than the grant of planning permission subject to the imposition of suitable planning conditions to control its future occupation and to secure local landscape and biodiversity improvements commensurate with the modest scale of works proposed.