Proposed Dwelling Smiths Road, Darnick, Melrose



Planning & Design Statement 9th March 2018



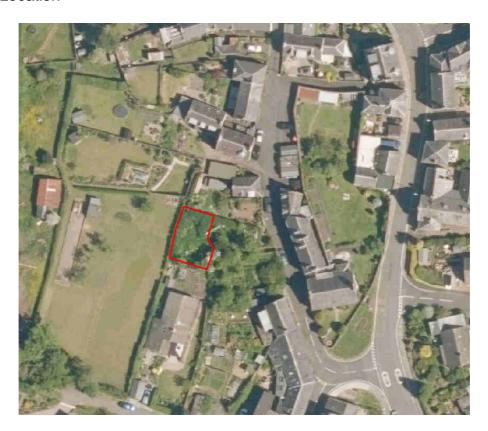
Proposed DwellingSmiths Road, Darnick.

Appraisal

The Application

The application is for Full Planning Permission to erect a detached house within a vacant private plot.

The Location



The application site is a vacant area of land within the village of Darnick. The site is accessed along Smiths Road and adjoins the property known as "Whistlefield" to the south. The application site is situated within the village conservation area and access is provided by a footpath from Smiths Road between the two adjoining areas of garden ground.

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The Site



The land form over the whole of the site is generally flat and slightly elevated from Smiths Road. The boundaries to the east & south which face Smiths Road & "Whistlefield" are defined by a 1.8m high vertically boarded timber fence. They also adjoins two areas of remote garden ground belonging to properties known as "Bowmont Cottage" & "Osmond Cottage" respectively.



The boundaries to the west & north are defined by existing mutual hedges. These adjoin remotely located garden ground belonging to Osmond Cottage & a recently consented house plot accessed from Lye Road.

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Access to the plot is made from Smiths Road along a short access pathway between the two areas of remote garden ground to the east of the application site.

Development Proposal

The development proposal is to erect a 2 bedroom detached single storey house with private garden ground.

Physical Constraints

The site is not subject to any protection status, but lies within the conservation area of the village.

Planning Policy

Relevant Planning Policy Guidelines considered appropriate are as follows:

Scottish Borders Council Local Development Plan 2016

Policy PMD2: Quality Standards states:

"All new development will be expected to be of high quality in accordance with the sustainability principles, design to fit with the Scottish Borders townscapes and to integrate with it's landscape surroundings. The standards that apply to development are:-

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PLACE MAKING AND DESIGN

- h) it creates developments with a sense of place, based on a clear understanding of the context, designed in sympathy with Scottish Borders architectural styles; this need not exclude appropriate contemporary and/or innovative design.
- i) it is of a scale, massing, height and density appropriate to it's surroundings and, where an extension or alteration, appropriate to the existing building.
- j) it is finished externally in materials, the colours and textures of which compliment the highest quality of architecture in the locality and, where an extension or alteration, the existing building.
- k) it is compatible with, and respects the character of the surrounding area, neighbouring uses, and neighbouring built form.
- I) it can be satisfactorily accommodated within the site.
- m) it provides appropriate boundary treatments to ensure attractive edges to the development that will help integration with it's surroundings.

It also states:

"Street design underpins the governments resolve to move away from a prescriptive standard based approach to promote innovative design to allow our streets to become safe, vibrant and attractive places. Parking needs to be accommodated by a variety of means to lessen the visual impact. The main focus must be on creating a positive successful sense of place which encourages more people to walk and cycle to local destinations."

Policy PMD5: Infill Development states:

"Development on non-allocated, infill or windfall sites, including the re-use of buildings within Development Boundaries as shown on proposals maps will be approved where the following criteria are satisfied:

- a) where relevant, it does not conflict with the established land use of the area; and
- b) it does not detract from the character and amenity of the surrounding area; and
- c) the individual and cumulative effects of the development can be sustained by the social and economic infrastructure and does not lead to overdevelopment or "town and village cramming"; and
- *I)* it respects the scale, form, design, materials and density in context with it's surroundings; and

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- e) adequate access and servicing can be achieved, particularly taking account of water and drainage and schools capacity; and
- f) it does not result in any significant loss of daylight, sunlight or privacy to adjoining properties as a result of overshadowing or overlooking." Policy HD3: Protection of Residential Amenity states:

"Development that is judged to have an adverse impact on the amenity of existing or proposed residential areas will not be permitted. To protect the amenity and character of these areas, any developments will be assessed against;

- a) the principle of development, including where relevant, any open space that would be lost; and
- b) the details of the development itself particularly in terms of;
- the scale, form and type of development in terms of it's fit within a residential area.
- the impact of the proposed development on the existing and surrounding properties particularly in terms of overlooking, loss of privacy and sun lighting provisions. These considerations apply especially in relation to garden ground or "backland" development.
- the generation of traffic or noise.
- the level of visual impact.

Policy EP9: Conservation Areas states:

"The Council will support development proposals within or adjacent to a Conservation Area which are located and designed to preserve or enhance the special architectural or historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area. This should accord with the scale, proportions, alignment, density, materials and boundary treatment or nearby buildings, open spaces, vistas, gardens and landscapes.

The Council may required applications for full, as opposed to Planning in Principle Consent.

Conservation Area Consent, which is required for the demolition of an unlisted building within a Conservation Area, will only be considered in the context of appropriate proposals for redevelopment and will only be permitted where;

- a) the building is incapable of reasonably beneficial use by virtue of it's location, physical form or state of disrepair; and
- b) the structural condition of the building is such that it can not be adapted to accommodate alterations or extensions without material loss to it's character, and

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c) the proposal will preserve or enhance the Conservation Area, either individually or as part of the townscape.

Policy IS7: Parking Provisions and Standards states:

"Development proposals should provide for car and cycle parking in accordance with approved standards.

Relaxation of technical standards will be considered where appropriate due to the nature of the development and/or if positive amenity gains can be demonstrated that do not compromise road safety.

In town centres where there appear to be parking difficulties, the Council will consider the desirability of seeking additional public parking provision, in the context of policies to promote the use of sustainable travel modes."

Supplementary Planning Guidance Document: *Placemaking & Design* states:

"It is essential to establish an understanding of:

- The local built character of the area
- How it formed in that way: the built heritage and landscape characteristics that have shaped a settlement or place
- The local sense of place

New development must seek to uphold and enhance the local character and sense of place."

It also states:

"New development must pay due regard to:

- appropriate scale of street, building plots and buildings in context
- the pattern and form of building lines, setbacks, rooflines, and building elevations.

Avoid arbitrary layouts that do not relate to a clear design concept and understanding of context."

Planning History

The application site was subject to two previous applications, the first of which was made in October 2016 (16/01311/FUL) and was refused on 14th December 2016.

The reasons for refusal were as noted below:

1 – The proposed evelopment would not comply with Policies PMD2, PMD5 or IS7 of the Local Development Plan 2016 because no off-street parking would be provided and the resulting implications on Smith's Road would have potential adverse impacts on road and pedestrian safety.

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2 – The proposed development would not comply with Policies PMD2, PMD5, HD3 or EP9 because it would constitute over development of the site in a manner that would have adverse implications for the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and an intrusive and overbearing impact on neighbouring properties.

A further planning application was submitted on 24th April 2017 which sought to address previous concerns. However, it was the comments of the Council's Heritage and Design Officer which led to the withdrawl of the application.

A revised planning application was submitted on 29th September 2017 (17/01346/FUL) in which the design was amended to respond to these comments. This application was refused for the following reasons:

- 1 The proposed evelopment would not comply with Policies PMD2, PMD5 or IS7 of the Local Development Plan 2016 because no off-street parking would be provided and the resulting implications on Smith's Road would have potential adverse impacts on road and pedestrian safety. Other material considerations do not outweigh these conflicts with policy.
- 2 The proposed development would not comply with Policies PMD2, PMD5, HD3 or EP9 because it would constitute over development of the site in a manner that would have adverse implications for the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and an intrusive and overbearing impact on neighbouring properties. Other material considerations do not outweigh these conflicts with policy.

The Proposals

The applicant wishes to re-apply for the construction a new house. We believe the previous planning appraisals have highlighted significant problems created by a "one-size fits all" planning policy for new housing in the Scottish Borders. This problem is apparent in particular when assessing applications within small villages, each of which is characterised by their own particular form of development.

We would contend that the previously held views of the Planning Authority do not seem to fully understand that it is the way in which Darnick has developed organically over the years which should guide future development within the conservation area and not the fear of "setting a dangerous precedent." We agree that a prescriptive based assessment of proposals is relevant to the majority of applications for housing on new sites within in the Scottish Borders, but we believe there are instances within historic townscapes and villages where such an approach will harm the character of the conservation area that we are trying to protect by introducing development that is out of scale and character with the built context. We believe that our previous proposals fall into this category and can demonstrate that the proposed house follows and respects the present scale and form of development, with

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sufficient amenity space consistent with other adjoining properties and is in sympathy with the architectural narrative of the conservation area.

In this planning submission we wish to highlight certain aspects of this application which we believe have been overlooked or misinterpretted. These are as follows:

- Previous planning history
- Perceived overdevelopment of the site
- Vehicular access and car parking
- Neighbour objections

Previous Planning History

It is worthwhile noting that this application follows two previous planning submissions; ref: 16/01311/FUL (refused) & 17/00591/FUL for a storey and a half design which was withdrawn in order to address the concerns of the Council's Heritage & Design Officer. However, we would wish to highlight some aspects of the Case Officers Planning Report in relation to the initial application as we do believe these are relevant to this appeal submission.

This report had established that the site was in principle suitable for development and stated:-

"The site is within the village settlement boundary as identified by the Local Development Plan 2016, and the general principle of potential infill development can be considered against Policy PMD5, subject to satisfying its criteria and other relevant LDP policies. The site is not open space of amenity or townscape value, and its use for residential purposes would not conflict with neighbouring uses."

It has also been established that there is historic evidence of buildings existing on the application site and the adjoining ground where partial remains of stone gable walls are clearly visible.

Comments received on the initial design were in many aspects supportive and stated:-

"a new house here would fill the gap in the townscape and would not, in principle, detract from what is a clearly varied, historic townscape pattern.

The plot is, however, partly enclosed by high timber fencing, and the house would be set one metre from three of the boundaries. I share neighbours' concerns that the house would appear as an overdevelopment. On the other hand, the house would be set back from the street, with intervening planting and fencing and other features obscuring its true relationship with its boundaries such that the size of the plot would not be

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readily apparent. Also, though elevated, the townscape here is varied and the house type itself relatively small."

"There would be no serious consequences for neighbours in terms of daylight, outlook or sunlight impacts. There would be some effect on the adjoining garden ground, but the impacts will not be significant given the positioning of the house.

In terms of privacy, for a village setting, impacts on neighbouring buildings would not be a concern."

It is noted that there has been a change of planning case officer for this most recent submission and whilst acknowledging some of the comments made by the previous officer, we believe the previous report overlooks the key areas in where the initial proposals were deemed suitable.

For instance, many of the comments in support of the initial submissions have not been acknowledged and the issue of perceived "over-development" in terms of building height were changed to the plot being detached, prominent & over developed in terms of house-to-plot ratio. There is concern that the apparent departure from the initial planning assessment of the site and design proposals have in part affected the outcome of the previous application. By highlighting these aspects in our revised planning submission we hope to demonstrate, that with a proper and full understanding of the historic pattern of development and transportation within and around the conservation area, the proposals do not create a dangerous planning precedent elsewhere. Indeed, it will show that we have understood, respected and continued the development narrative that characterises this particular conservation area.

Perceived overdevelopment of the site

We acknowledge that it was the accommodation at a first floor level in the initial submission which created a potential loss of amenity/privacy with the adjoining garden ground. It is this aspect that is defined within the meaning of "over development" which was given as a reason for refusal. It is noted that no such mention was made at that time of footprint in relation to plot size as a reason for refusal.

The decision was therefore taken by the applicant to respond to this issue by carrying out a re-design of the proposals with a reduction in size to a single storey property which was the subject of the previous application and this application. This would address previous concerns over height in relation to the elevation of the site and the omission of the first floor windows

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would remove the potential for overlooking into the immediately adjoining garden ground. In addition the amended design would assimilate with the closest single storey property adjoining the application site and a simplified exterior would blend into the general architectural narrative of the conservation area <u>as a</u> whole.



Fig 1 – Aerial view from the north of the revised design

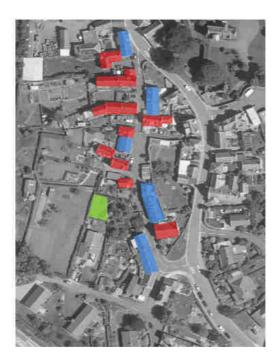
We believe this is a key area where the assessment of the previous applications in design terms has not gone far enough. We agree that the immediate impact for new development is to those most affected as adjoining or adjacent land owners. However, one has to gain a full appreciation of the unique way in which Darnick as a village has developed historically to determine if new development can be accommodated into the conservation area <u>as a whole</u> and in this regard we have carried out a comprehensive assessment of the following aspects:

- Pattern of existing development/Built context
- Pedestrian /vehicular access and parking

Pattern of Development/Built Context

There is a mixed pattern of development and house styles and flats along Smiths Road some of which front the road with others that are remote and only have pedestrian access. It is noted that the application site is located on the same side (west) of the road as other properties with this similar arrangement.

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Key
Green - Application site
Blue - Properties with street frontage
Red - Properties without street frontage/backland properties

Proposed House, Smiths Road, Darnick Development Profile



Key
Green - Proposed Site
Red - Properties situated remotely from Smiths Road without vehicular
access

Proposed House, Smiths Road, Darnick, Melrose Properties without vehicular access

Fig 2 - Development profiles along Smiths Road

It is important to understand how each of these attached and remote gardens relate to each of the properties to show that we are not disrupting this relationship. Figs 3 and 4 show that the application site is the only piece of ground in this area which is independent of any dwelling and will therefore not result in the loss of any existing garden ground. It also illustrates that whilst there is adjoining garden ground on all sides of the application site, the proposed house has greater degree of separation from the existing nearby houses with remote gardens and their relationship with one another.

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Property Application site

Darvale

Glenview Whistlefield

Osmond Cottage

Bowmont Cottage

Fig 3 – Aerial view of site from the north

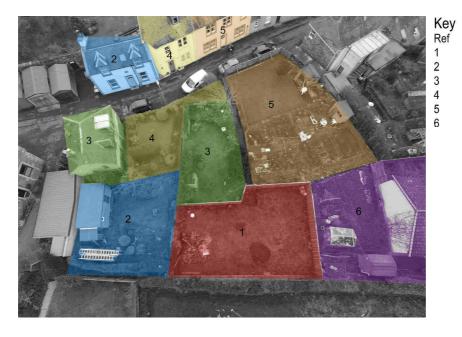


Fig 4 - Aerial view of site from the west

It has already been established from previous planning reports that the conservation area is generally defined as a "clearly varied, historic townscape pattern." Furthermore, the building form is again varied with a mix of traditional two or one and a half storey detached, semi-detached and terraced cottages with either natural stone or painted render walls and slated roofs. Mutual boundaries, if they are not adjoining or against the road side are mostly all within a metre of the buildings. Buildings adjoining the conservation area are of contemporary design and are read as part of the overall built context.

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Of equal importance is the assessment of other properties which do not adjion the application site but are loacted within the conservation area and to assess the house-to-plot ratio. Fig 5 show the development pattern to the north end of Smiths Road.



Key
Ref Property
1 Jomar
2 Jasmine Cottage
3 The Leet
4 Post Box Cottage
5 Rosetree Cottage
6 Loanfoot
7 Tenandry
8 Turrets
9 1 Charlesfield Place

Fig 5 – Properties to the north end of Smiths Road/Abbotsford Road

From these images we can see that there are a certain amount of properties that are equivalent or less than the house-to-plot ratio of the application site and can be summarised as follows:

<u>Property</u>	House-to-plot ratio
Bowmont Cottage	37.34%
Osmond Cottage	31.75%
Darvale	30.87%
Midhill	44.34%
1 Charlesfield Place	43.37%
The Stables	100%
The Old Dairy	100%
Post Box Cottage	67.29%
Jasmine Cottage	32.8%
The Leet	53.65%
Turrets	76.36%
Tenandry	71.05%
Loanfoot	63.29%
Halfmyne	45.28%
Application site	45.84%

It is acknowledged that there are also a number of properties which enjoy a much more generous garden ground. However, the above noted list compares properties that similar in size to

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the application site which are similarly located within close clusters described earlier in this appeal statement. From this we can see that the house-to-plot ratio is within that of other similar properties along Smiths Road and elsewhere in the conservation area.

Of significant interest is a recent construction of a new single storey dwelling elsewhere within the conservation area in land to the north-east of Lindisfarne (ref: 16/00917/FUL).



Fig 6 – House recently constructed house elsewhere within conservation area (16/00917/FUL)

This house occupies 45.81% of the available development site and was supported by the department. It is noted that although the plot is larger, it is similarly characterised by not fronting a road with adjoining garden ground on all sides and adjoining dwellings in close proximity. It is also noted that a double height glazed gable end was approved on the south facing gable within 5.4m of the adjoining boundary.

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Fig 7 – View from South-East of recently constructed house elsewhere within conservation area (16/00917/FUL)

It is also noted that the design provides little in the way of enhancement to the character of the conservation area and appears similar to that of the modern bungalow adjacent to the application site.

It is important to understand that the scale of our development is much smaller than the above noted example and must therefore have much less impact on the conservation area.

Vehicular access and car parking

Vehicular access and car parking proposals remain as previously proposed and the supporting information in this regard is detailed below.

It must not be overlooked that car ownership is not afforded to all, nor should it be implied when considering all types of new development. Certain factors which promote a more sustainable and low carbon approach to transport that provides householders with the choice on wether car ownership is essential or affordable should be duly considered.

For this to be successful, there needs to be access to a good and readily available network of public transport. Access to a network of paths and cycle ways must also be considered. It is noted that there are two nearby bus stops that are situated on the B6394 through Darnick which provide access to Melrose and beyond as well as the transport hub of Galashiels. These buses also link to the Borders Railway terminus at Tweedbank which is also within walking distance of the proposed development.

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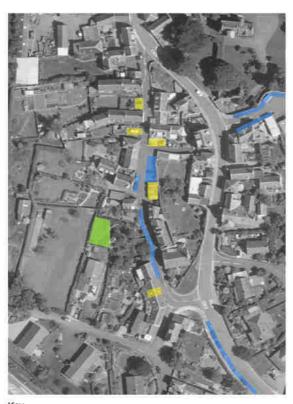
The above mentioned B6394 is also part of the Sustrans cycle network Route 1 which links Dover to the Shetlands. There is also a local cycle path passing nearby which provides access to Melrose and Galashiels along the extended line of the former railway. Strong pedestrian and cycle links are also readily available to the Border General Hospital. So, for the above mentioned reasons we would say there is a very strong case for the proposals to be considered exempt from the need to provide on or off street parking which could be controlled by way of a planning condition attached to any such consent.

However, should car parking require to be considered, we refer again to our previous case in support of parking provision in Smiths Road and the surrounding areas as follows:

We refer again to the policy guidance with regard to parking provision which states "Relaxation of technical standards will be considered where appropriate due to the nature of the development and/or if positive amenity gains can be demonstrated that do not compromise road safety".

Historically, Smiths Road was never designed with vehicles in mind and has thus developed organically with the west side of the street characterised by a series of houses either facing or siding on to the public road with an equal number remotely located behind with no vehicular access.

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Green - Proposed Site
Yellow - Private/Off-Street Parking
Blue - Public/On-Street Parking

Proposed Dwelling, Smiths Road, Darnick. Melrose Parking Profile

Fig 8 - Parking profile in and around Smiths Road

The lower east side of the street has a row of five adjoining properties opposite the application site, four of which front the street and one which sides on to the street.

The previous planning report highlights the lack of off-street parking as a reason for refusal. It is the response of the Roads Planning Service in respect of access and parking provision that that have partly influenced the Case Officers decision to refuse.

We are of the opinion that these views are based on a prescriptive assessment of the proposals by the RPS that takes the view that Smith's Road is unsuitable for additional parked vehicles. Despite an acknowledgment of the case put forward by the applicant, we believe the RPS response to be subjective (use of the phrase "in my opinion") and lacks sufficient depth in which there is no governmental guidance or knowledge base against which the views are expressed.

Planning Policy IS7 of the SBC Local Development Plan 2016 provides the RPS with the flexibility to waive standards and it is the Scottish Governments "Designing Streets" document that gives guidance to designers and Council's to take a less prescriptive approach and encourages each case to be

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assessed <u>in full</u> on it's own merit. What this means is that a full understanding of the access and parking dynamics must be determined in order to make an informed opinion and it is this aspect which we believe has only been carried out in part and not properly assessed or fully understood.

Had this been the case it would have been established that there is already a regime in place on Smith's Road that provides limited parking for the existing residents which when full means that other available on-street parking in the adjacent Abbotsford Road is used. Therefore, it is incorrect to say that the development will cause further parking problems when there is a recognised arrangement that is already in operation and has spare capacity.

Therefore the emphasis on the RPS to carry out a comprehensive assessment of the access and parking arrangements in Smith's Road in order to give a fully informed response appears to have fallen short in this regard and is a material consideration in the assessment of the previous application.

Indeed, it was put to the RPS in pre-application consultations that the applicant was prepared to purchase private ground off Tower Road for the purposes of dedicated off-street parking. However, this was dismissed as being too remote from the application site despite this locale already being used on a daily basis for public on-street parking by residents in Smith's Road.

This is a situation that is recognised by the Darnick Development Trust, who in a recently wrote an article on car parking in Darnick advising residents of **the legislation** concerning on-street parking is appended to this submission.

It is also interesting to note in the previous planning report for application ref: 16/01311/FUL, the Case Officers support for the principle that a less prescriptive approach to off street parking would be preferred if it were available by stating:-

"I would accept that parking is not possible within the site due to the location, and that off-street parking here would have physical implications for existing parking. It would also have visual implications that would not be acceptable because of their potential harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Such parking would, to some extent, be visually incidental to what would be a modern infill house, but would also then exacerbate its overall visual impact. I also acknowledge that the historic street layout was not designed for cars, but has adapted to them over time, absorbing a varied arrangement of parking. I agree that there can be justification in providing a novel approach to parking in appropriate circumstances. There would also be justification in reducing or removing standards if it could be shown that the implications of the extra traffic burden on existing on-street parking would not be detrimental."

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We do feel that the Planning Case Officers conclusions have been some what predjuduced by the views of the RPS and this has presented the Planning Department with a "fait-acompli". However, we do believe that the assessment of the application by the RPS is subjective and does not provide a full and comprehensive understanding of how the access and parking dynamics work in Smith's Road and Darnick in general. Additional cars aren't going to automatically lead to bad parking as Smith's Road has an absolute and predetermined capacity by the constrained nature of the street which already directs residents towards available on-street parking in the adjacent street which has further available capacity.

It is also worth noting that there are no recorded accidents on Smith's Road. Though this doesn't dismiss that there are still potential hazards along Smiths Road, the restrictive nature/speed of the road would seem to suggest this would be at the lower end of the spectrum, i.e. "bumps and scrapes".

Neighbour Objections

The neighbour objections made under the previous application highlight many reasons why the proposals should be refused. However, it is the planning report for the initial application ref:16/01311/FUL that addresses almost all of these concerns from a planning perspective, leaving only the one's that are given as the reasons for refusal.

However, there are several areas for the benefit of doubt are worthy of clarification and can be summarised as follows:

- It is noted that the area of ground now owned by the occupier of Glenview was previously advertised as a potential building plot having a street frontage and agreement in principle
- It has been discovered that there is already evidence of drainage services to the application site. The applicant had uncovered an existing drain within the access footpath to the site which has been recorded and issued to the planning department.

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Fig 9 – Evidence of drainage services going to application site within access path

- The recent boundary fence between the application site and the garden ground of Bowmont Cottage was erected by mutual agreement between the applicant and the owner to the benefit of both parties. However, if this is now to be re-aligned, then he is happy to carry these works out. The remaining boundaries were marked out in accordance with the title plan for the property with all dimensions checked and confirmed as correct.
- We also wish to comment on observations made in respect of material deliveries to this site. This would be addressed and controlled in much the same manner as any other site with the same access and parking restrictions. It is proposed that the agreement of a Construction Method Statement be made a condition if this review is successful which will identify the potential hazards and restrictions to delivering materials safely to site and set out industry approved practices to ensure all movements to and from site comply with current health & safety legislation.

We also wish to refer to general neighbour comments criticising the proposed design and the perceived over development of the site when it is this form of development that characterises the conservation area in Darnick.

We have read the comments which reflect the situation that each of the objectors are in, and it is often the advent of a Planning Application that provides the platform to voice all those aspects of living on Smiths Road that they are generally unhappy with.

We would prefer to focus on the number of residents of Smiths Road who understand and embrace what it means to live in a historic conservation area that is characterised by a close knit arrangement of small dwellings on small plots. We would instead wish to highlight the residents in Smiths Road who

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have chosen not to object to the proposals and it is clear to see that this greatly outnumbers the three objections received.

Theoretically, to address all of the issues to the complete satisfaction of the objectors would result in a development out of scale and density with little or no respect for the character of the conservation area. Therefore, this brings into question the basis for objecting and if these comments are in fact truly objective, as they don't seem to represent the common view of the local residents.

The critical issues that require to be satisfied are:-

- 1 Do the proposals respect and enhance the character of the Conservation Area?
- 2 Do the proposals provide sufficient amenity for the occupants without adversely affecting the amenity of others?

The amended proposals adequately address these issues in the context of the conservation area of Darnick which is a fact in danger of being overlooked.

Summary

In summary, we would highlight the following points in support of the examination of our revised planning submission.

- Support in principle for the development of the site.
- A comprehensive understanding of the form of development within the conservation area and how the design has sought to continue the Architectural narrative.
- The subjective nature and lack of understanding expressed by the RPS without assessment against the current Governmental and Planning Guidance.
- The determental effect off-street parking would have on the Conservation Area.
- The availability of further on-street parking in the adjacent street.
- Agreement of a Construction Method Statement.

We trust the Planning Department will find the foregoing information to be in order and believe this to give adequate justification to our submission.