# Statement of Case

For the appeal against the decision of refusal by Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation for:

A single storey side extension, first floor side extension, two storey rear extension, front porch and frontage alterations at:

## 66 Lawrence Avenue, Letchworth Garden City



Reference number: 41261 Date: 6<sup>th</sup> November 2024

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# Introduction

This Statement of Case has been prepared by the Appellants, , who are the homeowners of 66 Lawrence Avenue, with the input and support from , Letchworth Garden City Heritage Foundation (hereafter LGCHF) award winning designer, specializing in all aspects of architectural planning in Letchworth Garden City.

This document is intended to provide additional support and background information in relation to proposed extension and frontage alterations to 66 Lawrence Avenue. Within this Statement of Case, the Appellants address directly each of the four contraventions of the LGCHF Modern Character Area Design Principles, which were cited when the LGCHF Advisory Committee Review Panel refused the scheme.

To supplement their case, the Appellant has also provided examples of precedence on Lawrence Avenue and within the local vicinity for each of the four Design Principles, all of which were permitted in recent years.

Furthermore, the Appellant has sought letters of support from neighbours for the scheme, which are included within this Statement of Case.

### **Existing Property**

The existing property is a modest sized 3-bedroom home with a very small family shower room with no bath, a separate upstairs w.c. and the third bedroom is a small box room. The ground floor arrangement is similarly modest with a meagre kitchen and a small dining and lounge area. The existing layout is not conducive with modern dwelling standards and provides little scope for family expansion and entertainment. The property is in much need of renovation, the garage is in a state of disrepair and there are extensive works required to address some poor-quality building and design previously undertaken to the entrance of the house. In part, it this requirement for renovation that attracted the Appellants to purchase 66 Lawrence Avenue in April 2023. Please see below photos of the existing property:





#### The Timeline

An application for the works was first submitted to LGCHF on 09/11/2023, after some discussions with LGCHF and some significant alterations made to the original proposed plans, the decision by the Heritage Advice Service was to refuse consent for the proposal on 14/03/2024. An appeal was made for consideration of the LGCHF Advisory Committee Review Panel on 04/06/2024, which was refused on 24/09/2024.

### **Site Analysis & Context**

The property is in a LGCHF Modern Character area to the south side of the town centre. The rear aspect is west facing and due to the gradient of the road (higher to the South), adjacent properties tend to shadow those further down the hill. This can be considered a benefit as it does limit solar gain to shadowed windows.

#### **Planning History**

The current application relating to this review, LGCHF Ref: 41261, is the only application to have been submitted to LGCHF for this property.

### **The Appellants**

The Appellants are homeowners of 66 Lawrence Avenue. They are a young recently married couple. is a local business owner, managing , a Letchworth based landscape gardening company, familiar working with clients and the LGCHF making alterations works full time as a Marketing Director for a law firm to frontages and drives. based in London. They have lived in Letchworth for 6 years, previously residing in Welwyn Garden City, where they were both born and raised. They look forward to starting a family soon but are keen to have completed the majority of their property renovations before embarking on this next stage of their lives. Throughout the process the couple have been open and transparent with neighbours who have provided supporting statements, please see these on pages 25 and 26. With LGCHF, have already made a number of significant alterations to their plans and have sought to comply with as many of the LGCHF design principles as is practically possibly. They have sought professional support and guidance from designer who is familiar with LGCHF design principles and practices.

# Response to refusal

The first point of refusal from LGCHF is:

## i. Design Principle: Depth of Extension

Due to the likely impact on the neighbouring property, 2 storey extensions shall not normally exceed 3.6 metres from the original main rear building line. When 2 storey extensions have an impact on neighbouring properties, a reduction in depth and/or width may be required.

Please see below 3D model of proposed rear extension provided by



#### a. Appellant response

The top floor of the proposed extension has been designed to match the depth of the undisputed ground floor extension. The proposed depth matches the single-story extension of the adjacent attached property at 64 Lawrence Avenue.

As outlined on page 4 of the LGCHF Modern Character Area Design Principles document, 'each case will be considered on its own merits assessing the impact of proposals on the character and quality of the subject property and its context.' Importantly, The Principles state that 'a high quality and considered design will be sought.' It is the view of the Appellant and their advisor that this uniform finish of

both storeys in one plane provides a considerably neater aesthetic and will produce a better-quality finish, in line with this guidance from LGCHF. To bring the second storey in to 3.6 will create additional structural work which will create un-equal roof pitches and has no precedent on Lawrence Avenue or comparable streets. The current proposal is an especially neat and unobtrusive rear extension.

Additionally, this proposed two-story element of the extension is likely to impact the occupants of 68 Lawrence Avenue the most. The Appellant has been in full contact with their neighbours for the duration of the design process and have provided an enthusiastic letter of support, which you can find on page 25.

The Appellants and their advisor believe this extension to be a reasonable and logical extension of the house, sympathetic to its original character and without any harm to the street scene or the living conditions of the neighbours. The proposal meets with a vast majority of the LGCHF design principles.

The proposal has taken influence from other properties in the area, nothing that has been sought is without precedence. There are a number of first floor extensions within the locality that exceed the advisory depth of 3.6m and which were granted permission in recent years. Some of these are included on page 14.

#### b. Design Principles addressed by the Appellant:

LGCHF Design Principle	66 Lawrence Avenue Compliance
The space between buildings is an important feature of the whole Garden City and shall be maintained	This point has been noted and the design seeks to maintain an acceptable separation of 1 metre from the boundary with 68 Lawrence Avenue, and 0.6m from the boundary with 64 Lawrence Avenue.
Rear extensions shall complement the character of the original house, using the detailing and complementing materials, and have balanced proportions and scale	The proposed materials for the extension are to match the existing. Some features such as the concrete gutters cannot be replicated but attention to detail elsewhere will be observed.
The area and volume of the proposed extension shall be in proportion to the existing house and plot	The rear garden is approximately 45m long when measured from the rear of the existing house. The addition of the rear extension will not have any detrimental impact on the amenity space.
Design shall respond to and harmonise with the individual qualities of the host building and its setting. Therefore, in all cases high quality design will be encouraged, while poor design will be rejected, and alternative solutions sought	It is felt that the design is sympathetic with the existing property, matching roof pitches and using materials that will be sympathetic to the original building.
An appropriate rear garden shall be provided to ensure that an adequate private amenity provision is retained, preventing a cramped or overdeveloped appearance	The rear garden is approximately 45m long when measured from the rear of the existing house. The addition of the rear extension will not have any detrimental impact on the amenity space.

Extensions shall not lead to an unacceptable loss of amenity to neighbouring occupiers. Windows in the flank of extensions that cause overlooking shall be avoided. As a guide, rear extensions shall also meet the light angle guidance, as well as the maximum depths included in these principles	The party wall property has an extensive single-story extension and the depth of the proposal is consistent with this at ground level. The first-floor extension has taken into consideration the 45-degree angle light rule as recommended. The second storey is set back from the ground floor on the boundary wall to avoid any feeling of overlooking. The lowered pitch to the single story element is less obtrusive than a pitch matching the roof would be
Ground floor extensions up to a depth of 5 metres from the original main rear building line of the house may be acceptable	The undisputed ground floor extension is less than 5m from the original house and is up to the line of the neighbours extension at 64 Lawrence Avenue
Due to the likely impact on the neighbouring property, 2 storey extensions shall not normally exceed 3.6 metres from the original main rear building line. When 2 storey extensions have an impact on neighbouring properties, a reduction in depth and/or width may be required	The two-story element of the extension is deeper than the recommended 3.6m however it is felt that by having the rear of the property in one plane this is less messy than reducing the first floor and having to make up the difference with a small piece of tiled or flat roof. The most affected neighbours at No. 64 have provided a letter of support for the depth of the extension. It is also not dissimilar to other extensions in the vicinity
The width of side extensions can greatly impact on the original character of the home and the street scene – particularly the vistas between	This point has been noted and the design seeks to maintain an acceptable undisputed separation of 1 metre from the neighboring property at no. 64
Side extensions shall be consistent with the character of the original house, utilising the detailing and matching materials, respecting the proportions and scale of the existing property	The proposed materials for the extension are to match the existing as close as possible. Some features such as the concrete gutters cannot be replicated but attention to detail will be Observed and guidance on garage door design and materials has been sought from LGCHF
Roof pitches can have a substantial impact on the appearance of a building and the street scene; therefore all proposed roof pitches and design of the roof and roof line shall be consistent with the original roof design of the house, unless it can be demonstrated that the extension does not damage the character and quality of the existing property and its context	The proposed extension has been designed with roof pitches visible from the street scene that match the main roof at 35 degrees
The area and volume of the proposed extension shall be subservient to and in proportion with the existing house and plot	The proposed extensions will not be detrimental to the plot size and will be subservient to the plot and the street scene
Ground floor extensions shall retain a 1 metre gap to the boundary	A minimum one metre gap to the boundary has been maintained on the detached side
To maintain the open feel and space around detached and semi-detached dwellings, the side walls of proposed 2 storey and first floor side extensions shall be a minimum of 2 metres from a boundary	The two storey element has been set back significantly from the front elevation and no part of the first floor extension will be less than 2m from the notional boundary
First floor extensions smaller than the footprint of the ground floor, can create a poorly proportioned and unbalanced building and generally will not be supported, unless it can be demonstrated that it would not be detrimental to the character and appearance of the existing property and its surroundings/locality	The original proposal was for the first floor to be the same width and depth of the ground floor which would have been compliant with this Design Principle. However, in order to achieve compliance with other principles the design has evolved to that which is currently presented

The second point of refusal from LGCHF is:

## ii. Design Principle: Roof Pitches

Roof pitches can have a substantial impact on the character of the original house, therefore proposed roof pitches shall be consistent with the original roof design of the house.

Please see below diagrams of front and rear elevations, provided by



#### a. Appellant response

The Appellants and their advisor have ensured all roof pitches visible from the street scene are uniform and match the existing roof pitch at 35 degrees.

They strongly contest that the roof pitch to the rear single-story element needs to be uniform with the pitches to the front of the property for the following reasons.

- The main roof has a pitch of 35 degrees, if this is adopted then it will mean that a portion of the existing bedroom window would be lost, it would also have more of an impact on the view from the adjacent property at 64 Lawrence Avenue.
- LGCHF are generally open to single story extensions having a flat roof, however the Appellants have preference to avoid this option due the potential security issue that a flat roof can create.
- See rear elevation diagram above. This roof pitch solution is the most sympathetic to the original building and has the least effect on the adjacent neighbours.
- There are also numerous examples of inconsistent roof pitches to front extensions, which is set out on page 17. It is the Appellants intention to comply fully with the LGCHF on this design principle concerning the view from the street scene. The Appellants agree that the look of uniformity is neat and unobtrusive.

## b. Design Principles addressed by Appellant:

LGCHF Design Principle	66 Lawrence Avenue Compliance
Roof pitches can have a substantial impact on the character of the original house, therefore proposed roof pitches shall be consistent with the original roof design of the house	The design proposal has addressed the issue of consistent roof pitches that are visible form the street scene. The proposed extension has been designed with roof pitches visible from the street scene that match the main roof at 35 degrees. The rear elevation is deemed to be of lesser importance and as such the party wall single story extension has a pitched roof of a lesser angle than the main roof. A flat roof was considered, but due the recent spate of burglaries a pitched roof was deemed to be a safe alternative, and cannot be viewed from the street scene.

The third point of refusal from LGCHF is:

## iii. Design Principle: Porches

Porches shall complement the character of the original house and street scene, using materials that are in keeping with the existing property and have balanced proportions and scale.

Please see below 3D model of the proposed Porch:



#### a. Appellant response

Lawrence Avenue and the surrounding area consists principally of 'mirrored' semidetached properties. However, over the years, the design conformity and structural uniformity has been made redundant by the abundance of different permitted features making up the current street scene. Please see just a few of numerous examples on page 18 of pairs of properties that have been modified with the addition of porches and front extensions. The presence of this large number of different styles of porch across the entire street and neighbouring properties to 66 Lawrence Avenue underlines that the case for uniformity between neighboring properties is fundamentally lost.

It the Appellants view that the proposed porch is especially sympathetic to the structure and design of the original building, matching the original roof pitch and pitch of the gable to the front of the house. The design of the porch has been well considered, is balanced and in proportion to the existing building. In size it is no different to neighbouring properties. The porch is not excessively obstructive to the hardstanding and leaves plenty of space for the parking of two cars.

Importantly, the neighbours at 68 Lawrence Avenue have written a letter in support of the proposed porch canopy, please see this on page 26.

They remain open to consider possible design alterations of the porch, including pillars that finish at ground level instead of on a low brick wall and different pitches.

## b. Design Principles addressed by Appellant:

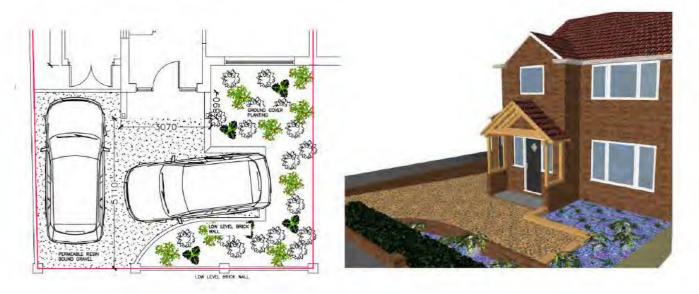
LGCHF Design Principle	66 Lawrence Avenue Compliance
Front porches are acceptable when they already exist as an acceptable feature within the context and will not break up the symmetry of, or unbalance a group of properties	Whilst a protruding front porch is not an original feature of this type of house there have been so many porches and canopies added to properties that the block appears unsymmetrical because of the lack of porch
They shall not normally extend more than 1.5 metres from the original front main building line	The proposed porch extends less than 1m from the front of the original property
Existing Porches Removal of original features such as open porches, canopies or tiled hoods can damage the original character of the property and will not normally be supported	The original property had an open recess as a porch however, this feature has been lost from nearly all properties of this type making the front elevation very bland. The addition of a protruding porch will enhance the aesthetics of the front elevation
Porches shall complement the character of the original house and street scene, using materials that are in keeping with the existing property and have balanced proportions and scale	The proposed porch will have a roof to match the existing in materials, colour, pitch and profile. Supporting brick piers will match the original brickwork. Timber posts will be used to soften the elevation

The fourth, and final point of refusal from LGCHF is:

## iv. Design Principle: Hardstandings

When there is enough justification to support the garage conversion then it shall be normally ensured that: The property's frontage has capacity to provide at least two car parking spaces(standard size 2.4m x 4.8m); when creating hard-standings on front gardens, at least 50% of the original frontage area shall normally be maintained as soft landscaping, free of car parking, footpaths, bases for bin storage etc.

Please see below 3D model of the proposed frontage and parking illustration at 66 Lawrence Avenue supplied by :



#### a. Appellant response

From extensive observation of recently approved hardstandings on the street and in the local vicinity, it appears that the majority of residents are disregarding this Design Principle completely, see just a small sample of these examples on page 21. Upon undertaking an extensive survey of the 75 houses on Lawrence Avenue, over 40 have a hard standing greater than 50% hard landscaping. 19 of those have hard landscaping of over 80%.

The Appellants have no intention to follow this trend and the proposed design seeks to achieve a soft planted area at 40%, whilst still accommodating two vehicles on the drive, thus relieving on road parking. The space for vehicles has been carefully measured and considered in this proposal as demonstrated with the illustration above.

The homeowner, , is a landscape gardener who has previously worked with clients in Letchworth Garden City to make property alterations to frontage and hardstandings. 'clients have been successful in agreeing hardstandings with LGCHF, even with a ratio of 20% soft landscaping to 80% hard landscaping, whilst

maintaining ample green and leafy frontage.

The proposed plan is approximately a 40:60 ratio, with plenty of shrubbery and planting planned for the area. Additionally, the materials planned for the hard landscaping is a permeable resin bound gravel, this making the entire surface porous and SUDS compliant, requiring no additional drainage. This design is especially practical considering the location of the property on the hill.

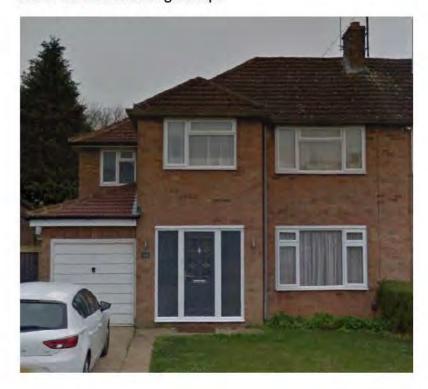
#### b. Design Principles addressed by appellant:

LGCHF Design Principle	66 Lawrence Avenue Compliance
The retention of a minimum of 50% soft planted landscaping in front gardens helps to maintain the green character of the Garden City and allows for natural water absorption through the soil	The design has sought to achieve as close to a 50% soft landscaping as possible (approximately 40%). This far exceeds the front gardens of similar properties. Although the proposal is slightly under the recommended 50% the 'hard landscaping' will be porous resin bonded gravel thus making almost the entire area porous and SUDS compliant
Good design is crucial when planning hardstandings. There are many innovative and creative solutions which achieve the 50% of the frontage as green rule	An extensive design review has been undertaken with various parties and we believe that the current proposal achieves the best possible solution
When creating hard-standings on front gardens, at least 50% of the original frontage area shall normallybe maintained as soft landscaping, free of car parking, footpaths, bases for bin storage etc  A Hertfordshire County Council approved crossover	The attached drawings demonstrate that whilst not quite 50% has been achieved the best balance has been achieved. Bin storage will be to the rear of the property  There is an existing crossover so HCC will not need
and dropped kerb is usually required. Works will not be issued with a Final (Plan) Approval until the crossover and dropped kerb are constructed.	to be consulted
Very small front gardens with frontages less than 5 metres deep will not be suitable for a hardstanding, as a standard parking space (2.4m x 4.8m) cannot be accommodated	Drawings and measurements demonstrate that two parking spaces can be accommodated
Although gravel is not acceptable for soft landscaped areas, it may be used for hard-standings, but shall include measures to stop it spilling onto the highway	The proposal is for resin bonded gravel that will be porous therefore eliminating any spillage of gravel on to the highway
Porous materials and permeable paving that reduce the impact of surface water run-off into water courses are strongly encouraged	The proposal is for resin bonded gravel that will be porous therefore eliminating any surface water run off
Neutral coloured concrete block paviours are acceptable; patterns, motifs or symbols shall not be incorporated	The resin bonded gravel will be a natural mix
Artificial grass is not supported on property frontages	Artificial grass is not proposed
It is not compulsory to build the required parking spaces at the time of adding an extension, but consideration needs to be given to the need to provide two parking spaces	Drawings and measurements provided clearly show that parking of two vehicles has been carefully considered
To reduce surface water pressure on drains, a soakaway underneath the paved area of hardstanding is encouraged	Due the requirements of building regulations a soakaway cannot be constructed within 5m of any building. The majority of the landscaping proposal is porous so a soak away will not be required

# Precedent

## 1. Extensions

, NH 17/01994/1HH Photo taken from Google Maps



, NH Ref: 13/01673/1HH
Photo taken from Google Maps, Extension measurement 4.8m



, NH Ref: 88/00053/1
Photo measurement taken from Google Earth, extension measurement 4.67m



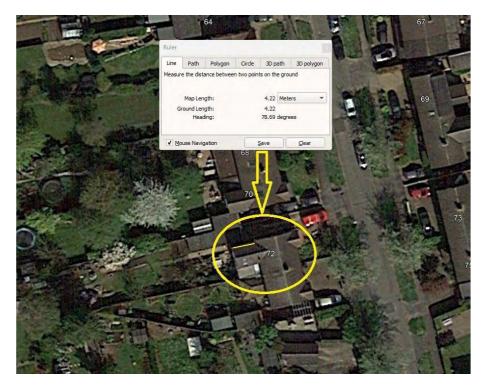
, NH Ref: 88/00053/1
Photo measurement taken from Google Earth



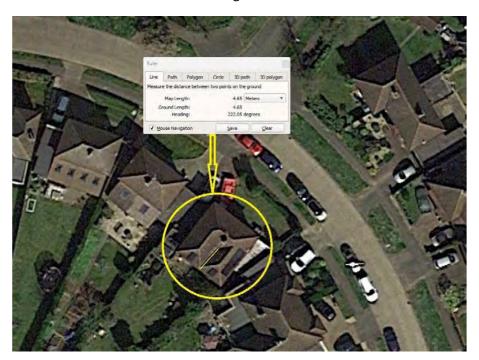
, NH Ref. No: 19/02191/FPH Photo measurement taken from Google Earth



, NH Ref. No: 19/02191/FPH
Photo measurement taken from Google Earth, Extension measurement 4.3m



NH Ref: 13/02056/1HH
Photo measurement taken from Google Earth



## 2. Roof Pitch

, NH Ref. No: 19/02191/FPH

Photo taken with owners consent

Note: this configuration this extension is similar that proposed for 66 Lawrence Avenue



Photo taken from the road



## 3. Porches

Photo taken from the road

Note: this original building design is identical to 66 Lawrence Avenue and it's adjacent neighbour at 68 Lawrence Avenue.



Photo taken from the road

Note: this original building design is identical to 66 Lawrence Avenue and it's adjacent neighbour at 68 Lawrence Avenue.



## Photo taken from the road

Note: this original building design is identical to 66 Lawrence Avenue and it's adjacent neighbour at 68 Lawrence Avenue.



Photo taken from the road



## Photo taken from the road



## 4. Hardstandings

Photo taken from the street



Photo taken from the street



## Photo taken from the street



Photo taken from the street



### Photo taken from the street



Photo taken from the street



# Conclusion

It is the belief of the Appellants and their advisor that the decision made by LGCHF to refuse the proposed extension and alterations to 66 Lawrence Avenue is unjustified and not consistent with decisions made on comparable schemes in recent years. For the many reasons given in this statement, they request that this appeal is considered in full and against the backdrop of the reality of the current street scene, matched with the needs of a modern and growing family home.

This proposal is a reasonable and logical extension of the house, sympathetic to its original character and without any harm to the street scene or the living conditions of the neighbours. The 3D plans provided by envision a neat and well considered design finish, unobtrusive for the neighbours and complementary to the existing building and street scene. The plans also display a practical consideration for the allocation of parking and the overall scheme is proportional to rear garden. The proposal meets with a vast majority of the LGCHF design principles. The proposed extension, roof pitches, porch and hardstanding are well considered, well designed and sympathetic to the existing building.

The proposal has taken influence from other properties in the area and as outlined in this statement, nothing that is sought here is without precedence that has been permitted in recent years.

As described in this statement, Lawrence Avenue has a wide variety of properties which present a non-consistent street scene. This proposal cannot negatively alter the already non-uniform street scene and will not materially disrupt the local group of properties which display numerous different property features. The Appellants and their advisor strongly believe that this appeal cannot be refused on these grounds and politely request that the current actuality of the design and look of the existing street scene is considered.

Engagement with neighbours has been paramount to the design proposal as it is not remotely the intention of the Appellants to cause neighbourhood friction. This is evidenced by the letters of support from the immediate neighbours on pages 25 and 26.

It is the Appellants view, therefore, that there is no justification for the refusal of these proposals on the grounds of the Design Principles considered within this Statement of Case. The Appellants and their advisor respectfully invite the Independent Inspector to overturn the decision made originally by LGCHF and subsequently upheld by the AMC and HAC.

Letchworth Garden City SG6 2EZ

Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2024

### **RE: Building plans at 66 Lawrence Avenue**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Please include the following when making final decisions surrounding the building plans at 66 Lawrence Avenue.

(our fantastic neighbours seeking permission to extend their house) have been nothing short of open, transparent and understanding when it has come to them sharing building plans for their home. It's been refreshing to experience such involvement in the process; we would never expect to be involved as much as we have been afforded thanks to

As I'm sure you are aware, we have been kept informed of all plans well in advance of any concrete decisions that that couple have made. We were quick to meet up, and in actual fact enjoyed talking through what the couple were seeking to do to their house. The second story extension in particular sounds fantastic and we hope that they are given permission due to the obvious benefits to the newlywed couple.

We have no objections whatsoever to the plans that the couple seek to do to their house. We really hope that those involved in the decision making process consider how sympathetic and understanding the couple have been from the outset.

We are hugely grateful to for their continued communication and updates in regard to their plans to extend. More importantly, we feel incredibly fortunate to have such caring, considerate and friendly neighbours.

Please feel free to contact me should you need any more information from ourselves.

All the very best.

Take care,

66 Lawrence Avenue, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 2EZ

#### Dear

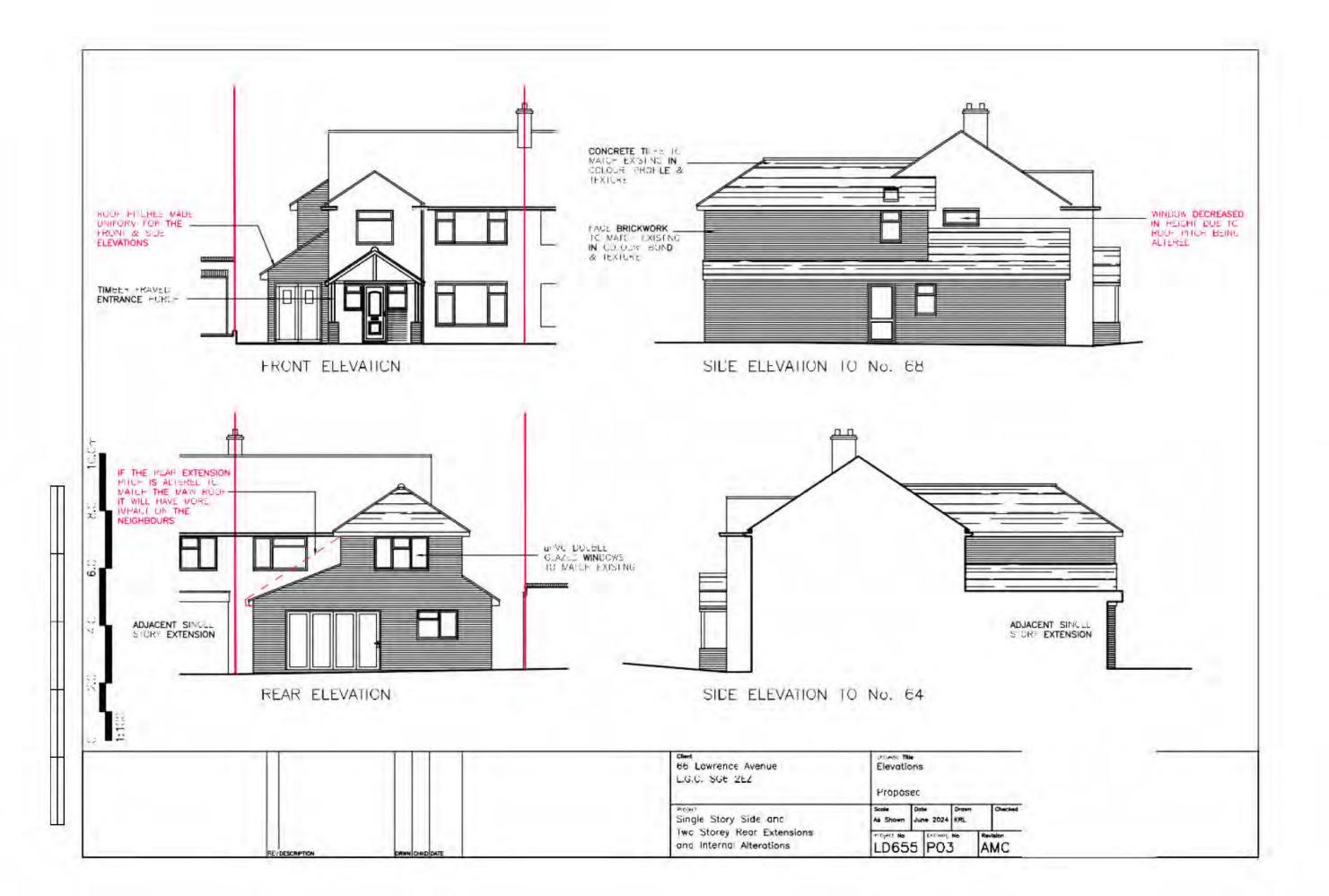
Further to our conversation on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2024, we are writing to formally provide a supporting statement regarding your proposed front porch alteration at 66 Lawrence Avenue.

Having had the opportunity to review the below drawings which you shared with us yesterday evening, we are supportive to a proposed pitched roof design for the front porch.



It is our belief that the above pitched design of the porch complements the existing roofline of the property & as a result it also enhances the overall visual appeal of the house. In contrast, the slope droof canopy option which you discussed with us, while functional, in our opinion is less aesthetically pleasing than a pitched design.

Yours Sincerely,













#### NOTES AND REVISIONS

No dimensions are to be scaled from the drawing. All stalled dimensions must be verified on site. Lobe Design must be abried of any discognized as. This drawing must be read together with the specification-fill of Quantities and related drawings.

This drawing is for the purpose of obtaining Planning & Suitting Regulations Approval only. Should the contractor use them to build from their they assume full responsibility for the design.

13.02.24 24.01.24

66 Lawrence Avenue L.G.C. SG6 2EZ

Proposed

Project Single Story Side and Two Storey Rear Extensions and Internal Alterations

LD655 P04