

**Extension and Alterations to
Lowenva, Church Road
Hugh Town, St.Mary's
Isles of Scilly, TR21 0NA
for
Matt and Jenny Davis**

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

May 2023

Background

Matt and Jenny Davis live at Lowenva on Church Road, on the edge of Hugh Town overlooking the harbour. They purchased the bungalow in August 2019 from the estate of the late Prime Minister, Harold Wilson. They share the property with their three sons, aged 2, 7 and 10, who go to the local Five Islands School, a short walk down the road in Old Town. Lowenva is their principal residence and very much a family home. The photo below is evidence of this showing the front garden used as an outdoor play space with swings, climbing frame and a pen for their pet guinea pig.



Above: View of Lowenva from the boundary wall close to the Church Road entrance

The bungalow was constructed in the 1960's as a holiday home for Harold and Mary Wilson. It remained in the same ownership until the applicants purchased it. For the life-span of the

property it has been a second home so it is only relatively recently that a family has occupied the dwelling on a permanent basis.

Existing Property / Design Brief

Lowenva is typical of many 60's buildings and certainly looks its age! External walls are constructed from 'Reformite' 'reconstituted stone' blocks in varying shades of grey and pink. The building is very solidly built and there are no obvious signs of settlement or cracking. On either end of the building the two gables are clad with timber shingles – matching the shingle cladding on the roof. This is another building material that was popular at the time but is seldom used today due to fire risks and poor durability. Windows are the original timber ones and are in need of replacement.



Side view looking back towards Guthers

The bungalow sits at the rear of a 743m² rectangular plot incorporating a large garden at the front. The ground is generally level but the garden begins to fall away to the road frontage on the West side. Mains drains run close to the Northern boundary before connecting into the sewer in the main road. There is space for a single car to park at the back of the site, although this is seldom used as the applicants do not own a motor vehicle.

It is fair to say that Lowenva has no real architectural value but it is clearly of some historic interest due to the high-profile previous owners! Its positioning on the site is slightly curious as it is set much further back from the main road than neighbouring buildings. As a result, there is no private outdoor space other than the narrow strip between the bungalow and the tall boundary hedges at the back and far side. The front door is also unusually hidden from view around the

back. Anyone approaching the property for the first time would have to search out the entrance – apparently this was a client requirement when the property was first designed as the Wilsons saw Scilly as their escape from the public eye and wanted to hide away.

Lowenva is a perfect family home for the Davis family in many respects. Dr Jenny Davis works as a GP at the Health Centre almost directly opposite. Matt works in the Council's Social Services department so can also easily walk to work in the town centre. As mentioned above, the children have a short walk to school of only 10 minutes – even quicker if they chose to cycle. The bungalow is compact and easy to heat, light and maintain. However, there are some real design challenges that the applicants are addressing with this planning application. The architect's design brief summarised these 'issues' and requirements as follows:

- **Shortage of Bedroom Accommodation:** There are currently three bedrooms for five occupants. This means that the two younger boys have to share a bedroom and there is certainly no guest bedroom for visiting parents or family. As the children grow up – something they seem to be doing rapidly (!) – the shortage of bedroom space is going to become more acute
- **Lack of Utility Room:** The washing machine and ironing / drying space is currently in the kitchen / dining room. A dedicated space for utility use would be a real advantage. This will isolate the sound from the washing machine and also confine the humid washing activities to a well-ventilated room
- **No space for home working:** As the boys become older, they will receive more homework from school and will need to spend more time studying at home. There is also a growing expectation and need for adult home working – a pattern that Matt and Jenny have experienced during and after the pandemic
- **Living spaces relate poorly to front garden / poor means of escape:** At present, the living rooms face the back or side of the house, and the bedrooms are located at the front overlooking the garden. There are no doors leading from any of the rooms onto the garden. In fact, there is only one single door in the bungalow in the kitchen. If a fire was to break out in the kitchen, the only means of escape from the rest of the property would be through a window. This practical and fire-safety issue clearly needs to be addressed in the new designs
- **Obscure Entrance:** A better, improved entrance to the house is needed in a more obvious location close to the driveway. A draught lobby would help to keep the main habitable rooms warmer in winter. There should ideally be room here for boot or coat storage and access to a toilet without walking through the main living spaces
- **Cramped Bathroom Accommodation:** One bathroom / toilet is proving to be something of a challenge for five people!
- **Rooms do not take advantage of the outlook towards to harbour:** There is a magnificent view towards the harbour from the front garden, but this cannot be appreciated from inside the bungalow
- **Outdated Building Materials:** The shingles on the roof are weathering and there is no roofing felt below them. They are likely to fail in the near future and need to be replaced. The same comments apply to the shingles on the gables. The timber windows are also beginning to rot and have reached the end of their natural life span.

Proposed Designs

A. Use

The bungalow currently has an unrestricted residential use. The applicants do not want to change this. They are pleased that purchasing and occupying Lowenva for the last 4 years has brought a former holiday home back into full time residential occupancy.



B. Amount

The plan above is an extract from the planning drawings. It shows the existing bungalow walls coloured in blue and new structure in orange – so it is easy to see the extent of the extension. The existing property measures 71m internally. This is well below the National Housing Standards for a 3 bedroom / 5-person single storey dwelling of 88.5m² (86m² + 2.5m² built-in storage). The new proposals address this shortfall by adding 67m² of living accommodation plus the 13m² flat-roofed link / circulation space.

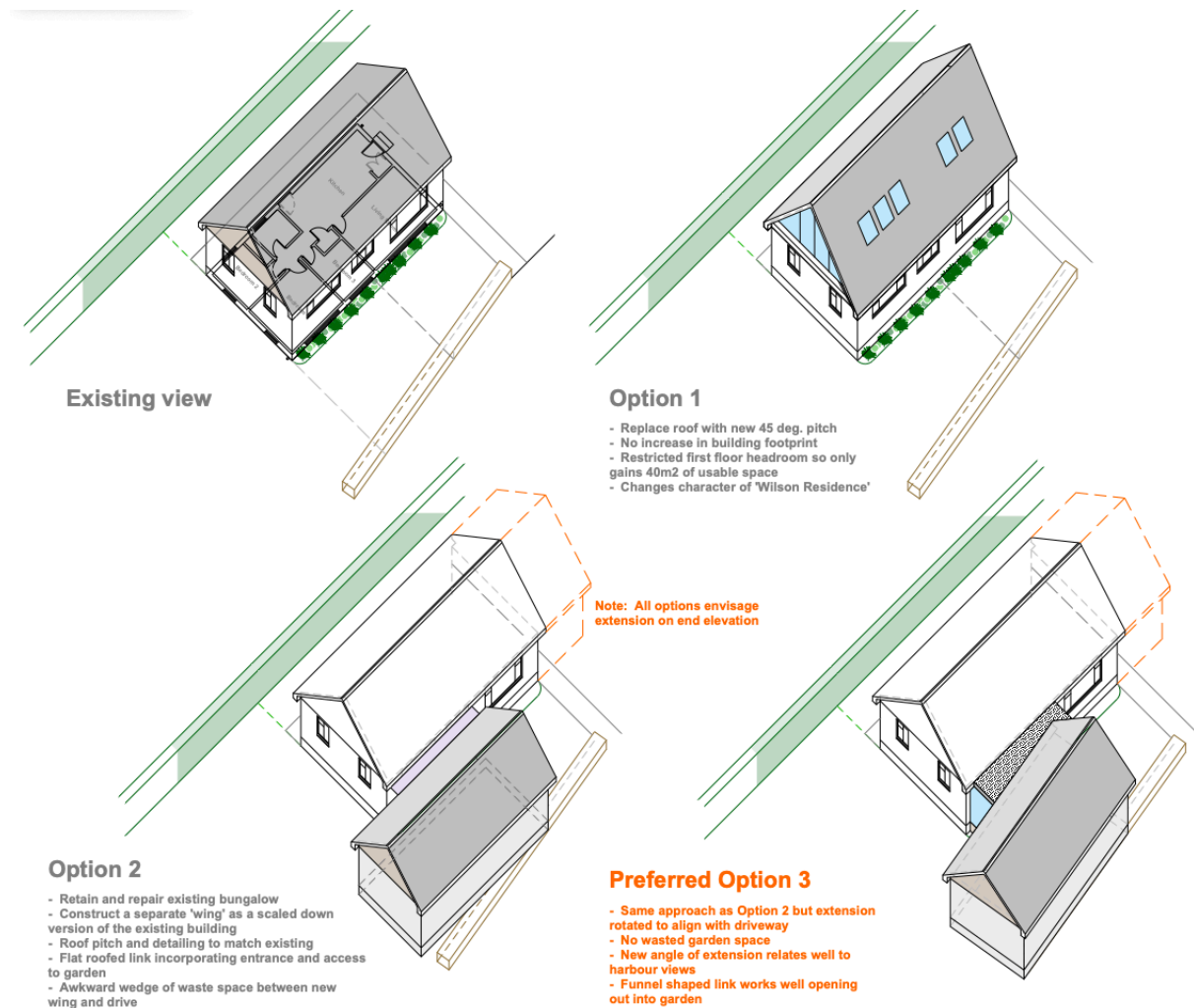
C. Layout

Firstly, the existing bungalow has been re-arranged internally by moving the kitchen / dining area to the front and bedrooms to the rear. A utility room next to the kitchen replaces 'Bedroom 2'. An additional toilet has been introduced with a new window replacing the original back door. The main new extension houses the principal living room and master bedroom with an en-suite. Finally, at the back of the house a smaller extension creates one of the new bedrooms and a home office available to all members of the family. The kitchen, dining area and sitting room all open onto an outdoor terrace. This is screened from public view by the extension itself and proposed new planting inside the low granite boundary wall.

D. Scale

The diagram on the following page shows the design development leading to the current planning submission.

The original option of raising the roof and replacing the structure with a steeper pitch was discounted for a number of reasons. Firstly, it would have completely changed the character of the current bungalow. It would have also rendered the existing house unusable during the construction period and would not have generated the additional space required. The latter two options show the progression towards the current planning submission. The 'preferred option' retains the architectural form of the bungalow and adds a smaller principal extension with the same pitched roof. As the span of the extension is smaller than the main property (5m compared to 6.7m), the new roof will be lower than the existing one. The rear extension is very much hidden from view so will have minimal impact on neighbours or the general public.



E. Landscaping

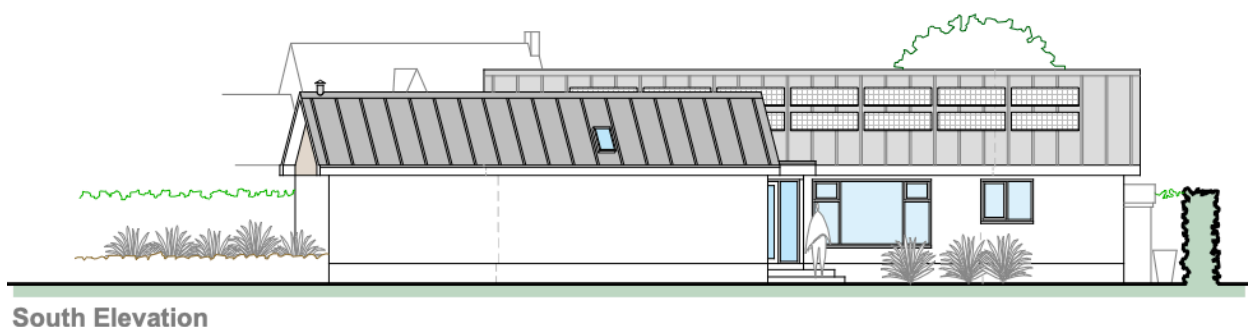
One of the noticeable 'features' of Lowenva is the way the bungalow sits on the landscape rather than within it. There is little in the way of soft landscaping or planting to help the disguise the stark architectural form of the 1960's building. New landscaping is therefore seen as an important element of this application. New areas of planting will be introduced around the new entrance and just inside the boundary wall. A private outdoor terrace will be created looking over the garden where parents can watch their children at play. The approach to the property will also be improved. The granite boundary wall is little more than a long pile of stones at the moment. This will be re-built as a low stone wall using the existing material and importing a small amount of local granite.



Work in progress on a new parking area

F. Appearance

The planning application designs show how the existing bungalow is to be given a facelift by replacing the shingle roof cladding, gable cladding and windows. The roof is to be replaced with a long-life, low-maintenance single ply membrane such as 'Sarnafil'. The planted ribs mask the joints in the sheet membrane and also improve the appearance of the roof. The same material will also line hidden gutters so there will be no need for conventional rainwater goods here. Existing windows are to be replaced with either grey upvc or marine grade aluminium that will be able to withstand the extreme Scillonian climate. Gables are to be clad with natural untreated cedar vertical boarding – acknowledging the use of timber in the original property.



South Elevation

The same palette of materials will apply to the extensions for consistency. The small extension on the rear of Lowenva will be a seamless continuation of the original bungalow – clad with the new roofing material so it will be difficult to tell the old from the new. The main new extension will follow the Southern boundary line at an angle to the host building. This creates some interesting architectural effects. Firstly, the wedge-shaped entrance hall will gradually open out into the kitchen / dining space with fully glazed doors facing the garden. The angled extension will also face the harbour and will embrace the private outdoor terrace. The flat roof will be a mixed sedum clad 'living roof' producing extremely high insulation values (see section on Sustainability below).

Impact on Neighbours / Consultation

Matt and Jenny will approach all of their neighbours before the planning application is registered. The impact will be minimal as the height of the extensions do not exceed the existing ones and light and views are not affected. Although the principal extension projects in front of the existing bungalow it is still set well behind an arbitrary building line linking the fronts of the neighbouring properties. It will therefore have no negative impact on public viewpoints.

Before submitting this application, a 'Pre-App Enquiry' was submitted to the Isles of Scilly Council – Ref no. PA-23-025. Although no formal response has been received, useful feedback from Lisa Walton in the Planning Department was obtained at a meeting at the Council Offices on Wednesday 19th April. At this meeting the general design approach was well received and the final 'preferred option 3' was seen as the best solution. Two specific points were raised at the meeting that would need addressing:

- **Size:** It was noted that the extensions are likely to exceed the target maximum size for extensions of no more than 30% of the existing property. However, this was not seen as a hard-and-fast rule and, as long as a case could be made for exceeding this target, this would be considered. The reasons for seeking to increase and improve living standards have hopefully been explained in this document
- **Principal Residence Condition:** The new Council policy of trying to encourage applicants to adopt a 'principal residence' planning condition was explained. Ms Walton stated that this would be a condition rather than a more binding legal Section 106 Agreement and could be reviewed if circumstances changed. Although it is the Davis's intention to keep Lowenva as a main residence for the foreseeable future, they do not want to agree to a condition that could devalue the property in future. They would like the Council to note the fact that they have actually changed a holiday home to a permanent one already without planning involvement

Access

The new designs improve internal circulation within the bungalow. At present principal habitable rooms are used as circulation spaces and the only entrance through the kitchen could be regarded as a health and safety risk in the event of a fire. As the ground floor level is approximately 0.5m above ground level – the equivalent of three steps – it will be difficult to convert the bungalow into a fully accessible property. However, many of the principles of an accessible home have been adopted. For example, circulation spaces are more generous in the improved property. There is a toilet close to the entrance hall. The front door is more obvious, and easy to reach from the driveway. Large areas of glazing, including roof windows, will improve internal daylight levels.

If it were necessary to access the property by wheelchair, there is space to install a wheelchair ramp adjacent to the front door. The extension and alterations will conform with Part M of the Building Regulations dealing with accessibility.

Sustainability

There is a real opportunity to improve the thermal performance of Lowenva here by utilising green technologies, selecting the right building materials and building in a sensitive manner. The following sustainable 'gains' have been adopted in the design project:

- **Solar Panels:** An array of solar cell panels is proposed on the South facing roof of the existing bungalow. These will be partially screened by the extension but will be in full view of the sun for the majority of the day

- **High Levels of Insulation:** The minimal insulation in the existing roof will be significantly improved and high levels of insulation will be specified in the extension. The new 2022 Building Regulations require much higher insulation standards and these regulations will clearly be adhered to
- **Cedar Cladding:** The gable walls will be clad with sustainably sourced cedar cladding. This pays homage to the timber roof shingles and wall cladding. It is a natural building material that does not require treatment. If carefully detailed it will weather well and will mellow into a silver / grey shade in time
- **Living Roof:** The flat roof will be clad with mixed sedum on a substrate with a drainage system below. It will improve the environment as plants absorb carbon dioxide and release oxygen during photosynthesis thereby counteracting emissions and helping to work towards zero carbon. The sedum also helps to create habitats and encourage a range of insects, birds and other wildlife. Green roofs also achieve extremely high thermal and sound insulation levels



Mixed Sedum roof – Porthmeor View, St.Ives

- **Single Ply Roofing Membrane:** The proposed Sarnafil roof system is also a very sustainable product. Sika, the manufacturers, pride themselves in protecting natural resources and minimising impact on the environment. One of their focuses is extending roof systems life span and achieving long term performance. The energy-efficient waterproof membrane will be guaranteed for decades, not years, delaying the prospect of replacement for the foreseeable future
- **Water harvesting:** Roof water will be harvested in a number of water butts and used for watering the garden, cleaning, etc
- **Heating:** In addition to the input from the solar panels, a DEFRA approved wood-burning stove will be installed in the new living room. This will minimise pollution and will burn wood off-cuts and locally cut logs

- Considerate Construction: Matt and Jenny are keen to ensure that the construction process minimises any disruption for neighbours or the local community. There is plenty of space on site for storage of materials and some parking. A Construction Management Plan will be prepared to control working hours, noise levels, waste control, etc. A Planning Condition to agree a mutually acceptable plan is welcomed



Left: Sarnafil roof cladding with planted battens, Bellair, School Lane, Truro

Centre: Vertical cedar boarding

Right: Concealed gutter lined with single ply membrane

Summary

Lowenva is located in a quiet residential area, surrounded by a mix of housing. There is no established theme although many of the properties are single storey – some with roof conversions. Walls are generally either natural or simulated stone, or painted render. There are a mix of roofing materials including profiled concrete tiles (see below). The extensions and alterations will regenerate a rather tired and dated property. The improvement in quality of construction will have a beneficial impact on the neighbourhood. Internally, the new accommodation will dramatically improve the living conditions of the applicants. Matt and Jenny are encouraged by the positive feedback received to date and look forward to a straightforward planning application process. If any queries do arise, they will do their best to address these during the application period.



View from garden

Footnote:

Since this Design and Access Statement was written, Dr Jenny Davis has been offered a temporary post as a GP in a Medical Centre on the Isle of Skye in Scotland. The family have therefore decided to relocate for a short period before returning to Scilly. They will not be selling their much-loved home in Church Road. During this period of absence, they may choose to carry out the construction work so that the extended and improved property will be ready for them on their return. Outside this construction period they intend to rent out the property to a local household or individual as they are acutely aware of the housing shortage on Scilly.

Michael R Bradbury RIBA
Mike Bradbury Design
Studio St.Ives
4 Gabriel Street
St.Ives
TR26 2LU

May 2023

