



berry well,
penistone

DESIGN + ACCESS STATEMENT

september 2025



Aerial image © Google Maps

1. SITE ASSESSMENT

The subject of this application is known as Berry Well, an existing timber bungalow, tucked away on a secluded site at the edge of Penistone. Accessible via a track off Sheffield Road and beyond the railway line, and thanks in part to the well-established vegetation around the site, the area is completely hidden from public view. Only from a little used footpath, with a view over a hedgerow and across a field, can a small section of roof be seen that gives any hint of the existing dwelling.

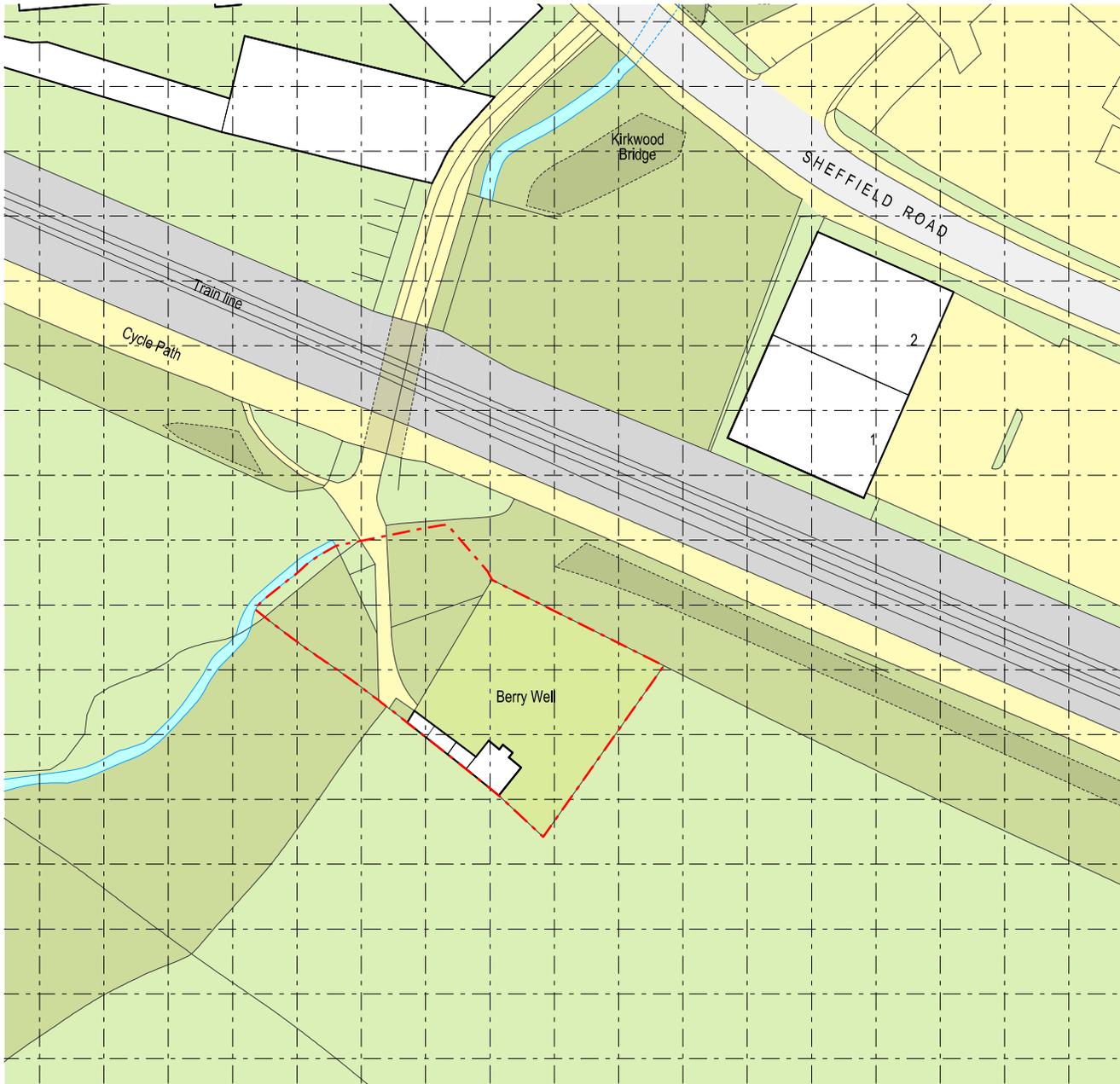
The existing building has been there for some time though and the site is firmly established as a residential dwelling, however it currently sits in some state of disrepair, and shows many signs of piecemeal extensions over several years. Whilst it is felt that the building itself is of very little architectural value, with the site having been bought and extensively worked on by the applicant, an award winning garden designer, the immediate surroundings of the house offer a beautiful oasis completely hidden from view.

Clearly the existing building needs extensive work in order to ensure any long term viability of the site, but it is also felt that any attempt to restore the existing property would be immensely problematic. The condition of the building is somewhat poor, multiple changes to the existing roof structure would most likely all have to be removed and there is very little scope to effectively upgrade the sustainability of any of the existing structure. Thus the site is conceived as more of a blank canvas, offering an opportunity for a house design that better suits the unique nature of the plot and the garden design.

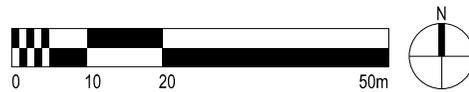
2. PROPOSED REDEVELOPMENT

As above, the existing building is very ineffective and very problematic in providing an answer to modern day living. With a strong desire to drastically reduce energy consumption and carbon output, it is proposed that a new building could be provided on a much smaller ecological footprint than any extension or retrofit.

In terms of the building form, the approximate location of the existing building is retained for the new house, along with the sense of a series of separate built volumes that extend down with the topography towards the entrance of the site. Instead of a jumbled collection of pitched and semi-pitched roofs though, the proposal is kept neat and simple, a series of cuboids with flat roofs, the nature of the flat roofs also providing scope to keep the impact of the increased height of the building down and continue to let natural light into all parts of the garden.



Existing Site Plan





Existing house



View north of existing house behind boundary wall (taken at high level above hedge)

3. LAYOUT

The simple external form of the building responds to the internal layout of the house and the topography of the site. Bedrooms are clustered away from the entrance and offset from the main garden, all sitting in the more private areas of the site.

To maximise the flexibility of the proposal, a small office area and library is created around the entrance area, separated by a few steps from the more public areas of the house. The first of these, the living area maximises the connection to the garden, whereas the kitchen / dining room is conceived as a somewhat more secluded space upstairs.

In order to maximise the experience of entering the site, enjoying the garden and approaching the house, some minor changes to the existing gate and wall are also suggested. Instead of the gate being as close to the south western boundary wall (creating a less usable area of land) and providing an immediate view of the house, a small change in orientation is suggested. The proposal sees the immediate view on entering the garden being focussed on the natural pool at the heart of the site. It is felt that placing this front and centre will help to ensure the focus of the experience is that of the garden and the architecture of the dwelling becomes secondary to this.

4. SCALE

Whilst it is clear that the proposal seeks to enlarge the offering of the existing house, the increases in size have been carefully considered so as not to overly increase the feeling of the scale of the building, keeping the architectural impact as small as possible and ensuring the building does not feel overbearing to the garden.

Where possible, areas of the lower floor are sunken slightly into the ground, and lower ceiling heights are adopted in some of the bedroom areas in order to keep the overall height down. This is balanced internally by providing taller ceilings where it does not dramatically impact the external elevations, such as the entrance and living area.

Flat roofs are adopted to replace the previous pitched roofs, thereby reducing any perception of the overall height of the building. These also lend themselves more naturally to becoming landscaped, in order that the careful design of the garden can not only continue up to the house, but effectively over the top of it too. Large areas of planted terrace space and green roofs are proposed throughout.

5. LANDSCAPING

The garden at present has been designed and landscaped to be of optimum value for biodiversity and wildlife, and has been featured as a wildlife garden on BBC Gardeners World and Gardens Illustrated magazine. There are minimal hard landscaping other than decking, and a large pond for wildlife features in the centre of the space.

The newly constructed building will not affect the footprint or layout of the current gardened space, extending out only to what is currently flag stones. There will be no significant changes to the garden layout at present, however the building will be softened with climbing plants, and the roof garden will actually increase the amount of overall green space on the site. The roof garden will be sown with British native plants to increase biodiversity, as well as being an attractive addition. Bird boxes will also be added to the new building.



Existing garden and pool



Existing house visible beyond pool

6. APPEARANCE

The focus of this report with regard to the appearance of the house thus far has been largely on the overall approach to its form, massing and relationship to the existing garden. The desire for a building that presents a more simple set of forms should already be clear, so in this section we will bring the attention to the material choices.

With a strong desire for sustainability and with respect to the naturalistic feeling of the garden, natural materials have been proposed wherever possible. The majority of the external form is proposed as timber cladding, thereby also acknowledging the material of the existing house. As per the elevations, whilst timber choices have not been finalised as yet, the intention is that subtle changes in the timber specification, sizes, cross sections and orientation will further help to articulate the separate spaces of the house.

At junctions where the house connects with the existing boundary walls, some stone is used in a limited extent to help improve the visual relationship between the building, the ground it sits in and its immediate context. This is also proposed at the entrance, where the intention is that as the landscape and the existing stone footpath steps up to meet the house, the house also responds to the meet the landscape.

Windows are carefully placed to maintain privacy where required, but to also ensure that views to the garden are well captured within the house. The upstairs kitchen / diner is treated as simply as possible, and though, as previously mentioned, this is largely invisible from any publicly accessible area, or private dwelling, it is intended to sit lightly above the existing stone wall, with some clerestory glazing helping to provide a visual break between the timber of the upstairs block and the weight of the wall below.

In order to maintain this simplicity between the two volumes, some small re-building of the existing stone wall will be required, but, in terms of the longevity of the existing wall and the future maintenance of the house, it was felt preferable to incorporate the external wall of the house into the boundary wall, attempting to make the house feel as if it belongs to the wall as opposed to hiding behind it.



Garden Elevation - North East



Front Elevation - North West

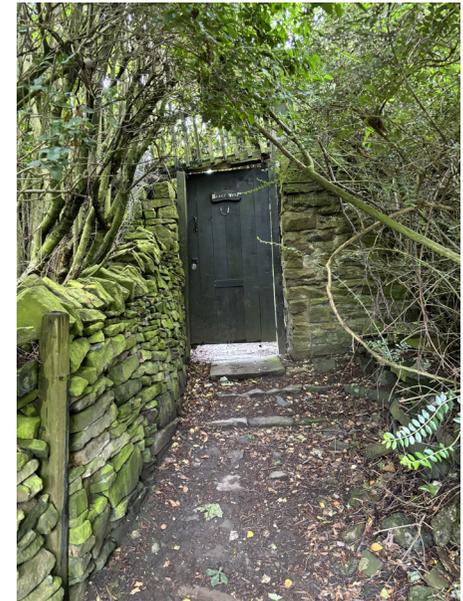
7. ACCESS

The existing topography and approach to the site presents some challenges that prevent the house from being fully accessible, but as with other aspects previously outlined, the opportunity to re-build the house provides several areas whereby the access can be significantly improved.

The proposals to modify the existing gateway into the site will entail the re-building of the steps at the entrance to the site and these will obviously be required to meet current building regulations. Additionally, the external doors to the existing house are somewhat makeshift, and whilst a stepped access is still provided, the new steps can be provided in accordance with the regulations to provide a much easier access.

Doorways to the new building can be provided with level thresholds, and the improved access between inside and outside living, afforded for example with the sliding doors to the living room, can also provide a much more accessible route between the house and garden. Whilst the kitchen and dining spaces are located upstairs, the new stair will again obviously be in accordance with the regulations but could also easily be adapted to accommodate a stair lift. Alternatively, if required in the future by more elderly residents, it is felt that the internal layout could be modified to provide separate bedroom spaces at the upper floor and an accessible bedroom at ground along with all the communal living areas. This provides the opportunity to allow something more suitable and along the lines of the Lifetime Homes standards that would clearly not be possible in the current house.

Further to this, the existing house has narrow spaces and very tight rooms. With the opportunity to alter this layout, the main parts of the house have been created in a much more open and accessible manner. The cramped layout of the existing, and the large separation between bedrooms and bathroom is also resolved with the provision of a more central shower room and a further bedroom with ensuite.



Existing entrance

8. SUSTAINABILITY

The long term sustainability of the proposal has been a key aspiration of the project and efforts have been made to ensure that the finished building is in line the desire to improve the environmental credentials of the site as a whole, reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions. The limitations of the fabric of the existing building and age of the structure provide very limited scope to make any significant improvements, without significant cost, not just financially, but spatially and aesthetically too.

It is proposed that by re-building the house, an A-rated dwelling could be achieved, using high performance glazing, high levels of insulation and heat recovery systems, alongside the ability to ensure a robust and air-tight construction that would be otherwise incredibly difficult to achieve with the existing building. As outlined earlier, whilst many areas of the scheme offer good opportunities for green roofs and continued improved bio-diversity for the site, at the roof of the upper level, where it cannot be seen from any of the surrounding land, photovoltaics are proposed in order to provide some energy generation to complement the other areas of reduction in energy consumption.

The re-use of materials from the existing site, such as the stone walling, with other low carbon renewable materials, such as the proposed timber cladding, also reduces the embodied energy of the structure. Further to this, by securing the permanent viability of the site in a re-built home, with the close proximity to the amenities of Penistone, and the scope to incorporate an electric vehicle charging point within the overall build, it enables sustainable modes of transport to be encouraged long into the future.

9. SUMMARY

In conclusion, whilst it is acknowledged that the existing building is invisible from the surrounding areas, it is still seen as a poor contribution to the site and does not match the quality of the garden. Whilst the original house is a somewhat non-traditional structure, the changes that have been made to its appearance over the life of the building have worsened the aesthetic and the relationship to the surroundings.

The unique opportunity of the site demands a building of far better quality, and is in need of a dwelling with a much greater sense of context and character. Given the existing building is invisible from the surroundings and the proposal here no less invisible, it is felt that the significant increase in quality and environmental aspiration should more than accommodate the modest increase in size.

It is proposed that this application does not conflict with the planning policies of the area, and that the proposal respects and conserves all of the valued aspects of the site, delivering a building with a much more appropriate scale, character and appearance for the site.