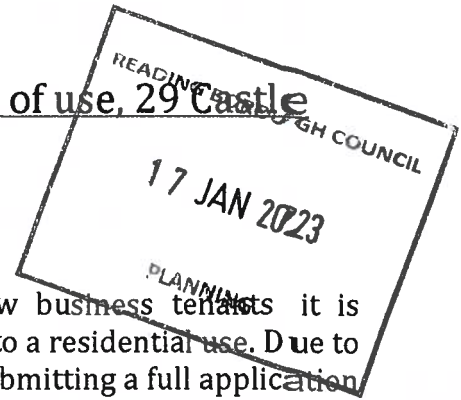


Design and Access Statement – Change of use, 29 Castle Street, Reading.



Introduction

Following a three year long attempt to secure new business tenants it is proposed that this site be redeveloped from office use to a residential use. Due to the site being located in a Conservation Area we are submitting a full application with this attendant Design and Access Statement, so as to ensure the retention and enhancement of this building within the conservation area.

This proposal is intended to establish a use for this building that will provide long-term purpose of this property and retain the local character, thereby continuing to enhance the conservation area.

Use

In the current commercial letting market this specialized space has found no new tenants and so the owner, with an eye on the conservation area and the building's continuous use, is seeking to convert it into self contained flats. This will retain an active frontage to Castle Street and add to the housing stock within the Borough.

As you can see from the attached annotated sketch of the existing internal layout there are two very specialized office units that are arranged in a somewhat awkward layout, which further limits its current use. The proposed redevelopment seeks to address this with a change of use and a rationalizing of the internal layout.

The 1970's extension at the back was done with little forethought to the sustainability of this property in the long term. This proposal seeks to protect the historic frontage and utilize the late 20th Century extension to ensure an integrity to the site as a whole.

The building was a part of number 31 in the 19th century, being a large residential house. It was subsequently modified and separated from number 31 in the 20th century and changed its use to offices

Amount

The existing layout of the building is utilized to provide four generously proportioned residential units. Each of these not only conforms to the recommended floor areas, but exceeds them. Each dwelling is a two bedroom flat and each has access to the front and rear of the property, in spite of the changing levels. The original staircase is maintained in this design. The advantage of this mix in the town centre location allows for a variety and size of households. Indeed, each unit has two bathrooms.

Layout

As mentioned above, the awkwardness of the footprint of the building, which we are maintaining, has nonetheless permitted the best use of the building via rationalizing the accesses, staircases and escape routes for all the units. The current office arrangements rely heavily upon awkward externally mounted fire ladders for escape purposes, which are now condemned for current use. We propose that these be removed, to help improve this part of the conservation area.

Scale

The footprint remains unchanged. The only addition is a small extension to unit 4, on the second floor, along with a terrace.

Appearance

The Castle Street elevation is unaltered. The only alteration to the elevations is at the rear of the property where the addition of a small extension on the flat roof of the second floor and the removal of the extraneous 1970's metal fire escape attached to the external walls.

Access

The site has the benefit of a pedestrian entrance off Castle Street and a vehicular entrance at the rear. This proposal gives all flats access to the well-proportioned car park and service area at the rear of the property. Wheelchair Access is possible for Units 1 and 2. There are two electric car-charging points and eight bike racks in the car park

Its location is 4 minutes from Broad Street and the centre of town, it is 10 minutes to the train station and 2 minutes to a major set of bus stops, which mean that the new residents do not have to rely upon car use, when there is such good and convenient public transport on hand. In addition the convenient canal path provides easy recreational use and access to the national cycle network within a very short distance from the site.

January 2023.