

# **M D Howlett Associates Ltd**

## **Architectural Consultant**

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## **DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT**

in respect of a new first floor flat proposed at

**46 Church Street, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire RG4 8AU**

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### **1. ENVIRONS**

The site is situated in central Caversham within a commercial area on the north side of Church Street at its junction with the similarly commercial Prospect Street, with good private and public transport links southwards towards Reading town centre, and northwards into South Oxfordshire. Church Street itself forms part of the A4155 trunk road between Reading and Henley-on-Thames, the site being located a short distance south of that road's junction with the B481 trunk road to Sonning Common and beyond. On both sides of Church Street are located shops, some below residential apartments, although some of these upper floors contain office accommodation or staff facilities for the shops below. These buildings are generally two-storeys high, of traditional brick construction surmounted by pitched roofs.

Chester Street public car park provides vehicular and pedestrian access to the rear of the properties in this part of Church Street as well as to the rear of properties on the west side of Prospect Street. Located either side of those commercial/residential buildings immediately fronting Church Street and Prospect Street are residential areas consisting mainly of two-storey terraced and semi-detached houses.

### **2. THE SITE**

Generally the existing original two-storey building on the application site, believed to have been erected early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is, like its neighbours within the shopping area, of traditional brick construction surmounted by timber-framed pitched slate roofing. The shopfront is located without intervening space at the back edge of the pavement in Church Street and it has the benefit of a rear goods entrance accessed from Chester Street car park.

To its rear and side, the latter also located on the back edge of the pavement, is a single-storey extension to the shop, and is accessed from the goods door leading to Chester Street car park.

The site is a generally two-storey building situated on the north side of Church Street with staff facilities at first floor level accessed by an internal staircase within the main shop. Behind the rear goods entrance is a hardstanding suitable for refuse storage. The property enjoys a right of way from the rear car park.

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### **3. PROPOSALS**

It is proposed to demolish the single-storey part of the property and replace it with a generally two-storey extension, including converting the existing first floor, to form a first floor self-contained two-bedroom residential flat, separating it from the ground floor part of the retained shop. Access to the new flat would be via an external rear staircase from the rear car park, and amenity space would be formed from a rear first floor terrace overlooking the car park. Kitchen and sanitary facilities would be constructed at ground floor level to serve the retained shop, whose rear service entrance from the rear car park would remain.

The accommodation would consist of a living room combined with a kitchen, two separate bedrooms and a separate bathroom.

The proposals would retain the hardstanding for bin storage, and include a new rooflight serving the new bathroom.

### **4. PRE-APPLICATION SUBMISSION**

The response to a pre-application submission of 11 April 2019, ref:190639, identified the need for noise impact and air quality assessments, which are provided in separate documents. In addition, certain areas of concern have been addressed in the current application. Principally these were:-

#### **4.1 Entrance security:**

Further details of the proposals, in particular drawing 1033/2, now show metal railings and other measures to act as a security barrier.

#### **4.2 First floor rear window to adjoining property:**

It is understood that the first floor of the adjoining property at No.46 is of non-residential use, and that the rearward projection of the proposed first floor flat should therefore be acceptable.

#### **4.3 Previous plans:**

The original building has a single-storey rear outrigger, which was indicated on the previously submitted plans.

#### **4.4 Noise and air quality:**

Measures are described in their respective assessments to mitigate the poor air quality and noise emanating from the surrounding commercial area and car park.

### **5. ACCESS**

#### **5.1 Specific Access Issues**

The proposed development is situated on a broadly flat site that is unlikely to provide unusual difficulties for those with mobility problems. The proposed flat would be in general compliance with Part M of the Building Regulations, but would be unsuitable for wheelchair users due to its access being via a new staircase.

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#### **4.2 Access from Existing Transport Network**

The site lies a short distance from public transport links to Reading town centre, and within walking distance of many locally available public and commercial facilities in central Caversham. Therefore no on-site parking will be provided.

#### **5.3 Access Points and Layout**

The new flat will be approached from Chester Street car park to the rear of the property, while the shop would, as now, be accessed from the back of the pavement in Church Street.

#### **5.4 Maintenance of Access**

The access points will match those existing, which are of robust hard materials requiring minimal maintenance.

### **6. DESIGN**

The principal aims of the design are as follows:

6.1 To provide a self-contained flat in accordance with the Council's policies that seek to maintain standards of residential accommodation while restricting impact upon public resources;

6.2 To provide good quality residential accommodation that is affordable for key workers and in keeping with the residential nature of much of the locally surrounding area;

6.3 To adopt the prevailing relative residential density in the immediately surrounding area;

6.4 To protect the privacy of neighbours by locating new windows where they do not immediately overlook neighbouring residential properties;

6.5 To respond to government policy seeking to better utilise underused urban sites;

6.6 To improve the economic use of an existing site without undue detriment to its surroundings or its existing commercial function, thereby maintaining the quality of the area in a sustainable way and in the long-term public interest.

February 2020