

Design and Access Statement to accompany the application for planning permission for alterations to:

7 Bridge Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AE

Applicant: Fox Payne
Address: 7 Bridge Street, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8AE
Date of Application: 16th June 2020

Section 1: Heritage Statement

7 Bridge Street

- The building known as 7 Bridge Street, a building of townscape merit, is located within the proximity of the junction of Bridge Street, Church Road and Church Street in Caversham. The junction is at the northern end of Bridge Street and is considered a significant element of the St Peter's Conservation Area.
- 7 Bridge Street is on the east side of Bridge Street and is at the position of the thoroughfare where the widening was carried out sometime after 1913.
- Maps and photographs from, and previous to, 1913 indicate a three storey gable roofed building on the present site with another three storey building to the north and a row of two storey buildings of various widths to the south.
- A photograph dated circa 1913 (but from a postcard collection 1910 – 1919) shows the extreme south side of the entrance door of the present day building with all the buildings to the south demolished (apart from the riverside inn and outbuildings by the river. Caversham Bridge is clearly shown as the iron construction and so the photo is most certainly pre-1926 when the present day bridge was constructed. An "Abstract of the Title of Gerald Nash Wanklin", a subsequent tenant and freeholder, indicates that 13 Bridge Street at the time and now 7 Bridge Street, was wholly or partly demolished by the local government in 1913 to allow for the subsequent road widening, which would tie to that postcard.
- Two aerial photographs, dated 1928, clearly show the present day building with open sites to the north and a petrol station forecourt to the south. The photographs also clearly show the two prominent banks which also face onto the road junction. The neo-classical, former Lloyds Bank, 15 Bridge Street, was completed in 1928 to the design of H. Chalton Bradshaw, and appears completed on the site. Barclays Bank, 2 Church Road appears to be substantially complete but still set within a building site.
- A map published 1934 clearly indicates these three prominent buildings, although 7 Bridge Street is not labelled as a bank. The area between 7 Bridge Street and 15 Bridge Street is still indicated as vacant. The profile of the road between 7 Bridge Street and the Bank has been substantially altered.
- Another aerial photograph, dated 1948, shows the three storey mixed use buildings, 9 – 13 Bridge Street, constructed between 7 Bridge Street and 15 Bridge Street, the former Lloyds Bank. The 1930's Telephone Exchange can also be clearly seen on the photograph. The present day rear extensions which contain three vault arrangements have not been constructed. Record drawings held by the present owner record a planning permission in 1950 for change of use of the Ground Floor to Bank premises with the upper two floors remaining as residential with an additional external staircase at the rear. The as existing drawings at the time show the Ground Floor premises as a retail premises with a small workshop all together with the living accommodation on the upper floors and at the rear.
- The retail premises describe above and owned by the aforementioned Gerald Nash Wanklin, a jeweller and optician, was purchased by the Westminster Bank in 1950 which coincides with the alteration of the Ground Floor to Bank premises.
- Earlier records indicate that the earlier owner, Henry Stephen Gardiner, was also a jeweller and optician at the time of the road widening. Certainly a premises occupied by a jeweller and optician would be considered important enough to retain at the time the adjoining properties were demolished ahead of the subsequent road widening. The alteration to 7 Bridge Street was to slightly realign the front with the new road profile.

- There is speculation in the St Peter's Conservation Area Statement that 7 Bridge Street may be a remodelled, pre-twentieth century edifice. The stretcher bond brickwork and wall thickness indicate a cavity wall construction which would indicate a new building, at least from the First Floor upwards. The frontage was slightly realigned to be parallel with the now demolished row of buildings to the south. In fact closer examination of the postcard image indicates a change or renewal of the pavement surface coinciding with the south side of the building which may have been continued or remade when the adjacent vacant plot became a petrol station.
- Comparing the plot sizes on the 1914 map and the 1934 map it could be reasoned that 7 Bridge Street was widened to the south in 1913 when it was reconstructed. On earlier maps there is an overlap in the boundary on the east side which approximates the width of the arch topped entrance doorway and set back first floor elevation. Photographs taken from the south end of Bridge Street indicate a two storey double pitched roof building on the adjacent south plot. This may go some way to explaining the manifestation of the steeply sloping pitched roof over the building's entrance, incorporating part of, or mimicking the roof of the, presumably, demolished adjoining property.
- The treatment of the elevation to Bridge Street is very typical of the recently past Edwardian Era, a slightly frivolous complexity of disparate architectural elements carried out in good quality red brickwork with intricate stone dressings: certainly not in the newer fashion of austere and formal new-classical Bank premises.



- In general the Ground Floor street frontage is formed as a shop front arrangement, contemporary typical of the early 20th century, with heavily modelled pilasters, capitals and signage fascias framing a side entrance door and the wider shop front. The arch topped entrance door gave access to a staircase to the upper residential floors, with the shop entrance contained within the wider shop front.
- The fenestration to the Ground Floor facing on to Bridge Street is slightly at odds with the rest of the elevation. The brickwork stall riser under the full width window appears to be of inferior quality than the upper storeys and around the entrance door. This alteration to the frontage formed part of the alterations when the Ground Floor was converted to Bank premises.

- The facing brickwork is formed as a stretcher bond pattern indicating that this is a very early cavity wall construction: this is reinforced by the measured wall width which is not typical of a solid wall construction.
- The First and Second Floor windows facing the road are a mixture of painted timber vertical sliding sash windows and painted timber side hung casement windows. In the main facade section both the sash windows and the casement windows have the frames set in a brickwork recess. Whereas the casement window over the entrance door is set flush with the brickwork, again indicating the architectural elements being modelled on separate adjacent more domestic scaled buildings.
- All the First and Second Floor windows in the rear elevation are painted timber vertical sliding sash windows with the frames set in the brickwork recesses.
- The main Ground, First and Second Floor facade section manifests as a formal and symmetrical pedimented composition.
- The First Floor set back face over the entrance door manifests as a much humbler lower scaled domestic arrangement.
- The Bank premises was subsequently extended in 1971 to its present day arrangement, with the historic ground to first floor staircase removed and replaced by a staircase forming part of the rear extension

The Benefit of the proposals to 7 Bridge Street:

- The main benefit to the building, incorporated in the following proposals, is that:
 - The likely historic position of the staircase will be re-introduced as part of the alterations without harm to, or the loss of, historic fabric;
 - The Ground Floor frontage will be partly restored to a retail arrangement suitable for a modern financial use premises without harm to, or loss of historic fabric.

The Benefit of the proposals to the St Peter's Conservation Area:

- The main benefit to the conservation area is that:
 - The Ground Floor frontage will be restored to a historic retail arrangement without harm to, or loss of, historic fabric, but incorporating elements of the significant alterations at the mid-century change of use of the Ground Floor to a Bank.



Section 2: Design and Access Statement

1. The application is for planning consent to:
 - 1.1 Make alterations to the Ground Floor shop front;
 - 1.2 Make alterations to the Ground and First Floor accommodation at the rear.
2. The proposals are to:
 - 2.1 Ground Floor Shop Front
 - 2.1.1 Main window frontage
 - i. Alter the glazing and stall riser incorporating new signage.
 - 2.1.2 Recessed stone clad frontage
 - i. Alter the stone clad frontage to incorporate new glazing.
 - 2.2 Ground and First Floor accommodation to the rear
 - 2.2.1 Rear Ground Floor elevation
 - i. Install new metal framed sliding folding glazed doors;
 - ii. Install new metal framed louvred doors.
 - 2.2.2 Rear First Floor accommodation
 - i. Construct single storey first floor extension with cavity wall brickwork and rendered blockwork, metal framed sliding folding doors and a flat roof incorporating low profile rooflight.
3. The reasons for the alterations:
 - 3.1 Make alterations to the Ground Floor shop front:
 - i. The present facade arrangement is rather defensive and unwelcoming in appearance and not visually friendly to passersby;
 - ii. The present facade arrangement is not historic and was installed when the change of use from a retail to banking took place in the mid century alterations.
 - 3.2 Make alterations to the Ground and First Floor accommodation at the rear.
 - i. To provide additional and more modern accommodation without harm to the adjoining residential accommodation.
4. The arrangements are determined by:
 - 4.1 Make alterations to the Ground Floor shop front.
 - i The early twentieth century historic arrangement and the subsequent significant mid century alterations.
 - 4.2 Make alterations to the Ground and First Floor accommodation at the rear.
 - i The early twentieth century historic arrangements and the subsequent significant mid century alterations;
 - ii The arrangement of the adjoining commercial and residential accommodations.
5. Proposals
 - 5.1 Make alterations to the Ground Floor shop front.
 - i Carefully remove the frames and glazing between the fluted pilasters;
 - ii Support the fluted pilasters and carefully remove the brickwork stall riser;
 - iii Insert stone pedestals to support the fluted pilasters;
 - iv Build up a new small stall riser;
 - v Insert new metal framed shopfront frames and glazing.
 - 5.2 Make alterations to the Ground and First Floor accommodation at the rear
 - i Carefully demolish the ground to first floor staircase and brickwork enclosure;
 - ii Prepare perimeter walls and roof structure and construct stretcher bond red brick cavity wall enclosure to North and East facing elevations: brickwork quoin details employing a buff brick;
 - iii Construct a blocked out rendered cavity wall to the South facing elevation;
 - iv Insert metal framed sliding folding doors to the East elevation;
 - v Construct a flat roof including a low profile rooflight.

6. Access

- i Improved access to the Ground Floor accommodation from the Car Park;
- ii The access to the First Floor accommodation is improved;
- iii Availability of an access cloakroom at Ground Floor level has been introduced.



Section 3: The Proposals in the context of the relevant Policies

The National Planning Policy Framework advises the Government to attach great importance to the design of the built environment stating that developments should be visually attractive as a result of good architecture. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is inseparable from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people.

The Applicant insisted that the proposed development should have these qualities as exhibited by the design principles of:

- Appropriate scaling of the proposals;
- Retention of original fabric;
- Retention of principal elements of more recent significant alterations;
- Introduction of harmonious architectural elements.

Policy CC7: Design and the public realm states all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including:

- Layout: urban structure and urban grain;
- Landscape;
- Density and mix;
- Scale: height and massing; and
- Architectural detail and materials.

In respect of Policy CC7 the proposals maintain these standards for the following reasons:

- The first floor extension is at a height well below the historic flat roof eaves and so clearly maintains the historic profile;
- The first floor extension height approximates to the historic pitched roof eaves over the entrance and to the extent that harmoniously balances the historic side elevation;
- The proposed render blocking detail to the South elevation of the First Floor extension relates to, but does not mimic, the historic blocking detail to avoid confusion of historic elements and development elements;
- The proposed brickwork quoins to the South and East elevation of the first floor extension relate to the brick and stone quoins of the historic First and Second Floor West elevation;
- The alterations to the ground floor frontage retain principal elements of the significant mid century bank alterations whilst reinstating a more historic retail appearance;
- The alterations to the ground floor frontage provide a more customer friendly, accessible and welcoming manifestation whilst respecting the principal of the significant mid century bank alterations.

Policy CC8: Safeguarding amenity states development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- Harm to outlook;
- Noise and disturbance;
- Artificial lighting;
- Vibration;
- Dust and fumes;
- Smell;
- Crime and safety; or
- Wind, where the proposals involve new development of more than 8 storeys.

In respect of Policy CC8 the proposals maintain these standards for the following reasons:

- The projection of the proposed First Floor extension is less than the projection of the existing Ground to First Floor staircase enclosure and will not significantly affect the First Floor residential accommodation of 9 Bridge Street with respect to:
 - the access to sunlight and daylight;
 - visual dominance and overbearing effects;
 - the outlook.
- The following aspects are either unaffected or improved:
 - privacy and overlooking;
 - noise and disturbance;
 - artificial lighting;
 - vibration;
 - dust and fumes;
 - smell;
 - crime and safety;

Policy EN1: protection and enhancement of the historic environment states that historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:

- Listed Buildings;
- Conservation Areas;
- Scheduled Monuments;
- Historic parks and gardens; and
- Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.

In respect of Policy EN1 the proposals maintain these standards for the following reasons:

- The development of this building of townscape merit on the main street frontage is limited to alterations to the frontage at Ground Floor pavement level. The existing frontage contains significant mid century banking alterations within a historic retail frontage. The proposed alterations to the ground floor frontage retain principal elements of the significant mid century bank alterations whilst reinstating a more historic retail appearance;
- The alterations to the ground floor frontage provide a more customer friendly, accessible and welcoming manifestation whilst respecting the principal of the significant mid century bank alterations;
- The development of this building of townscape merit at the rear comprise:
 - Minor alterations to the rear ground floor mid century elevation to insert louvred doors for a plant area and the insertion of folding sliding doors;
 - Removal of the mid century Ground to First Floor staircase and enclosure;
 - Construction of a flat roof extension at First Floor level;
- The alterations allow for:
 - the reinstatement of the likely historic Ground to First Floor staircase;
 - a modest increase in the office area of the existing financial/banking use.
- The alterations are designed and detailed to harmonise with the historic appearance, whilst maintaining the important profile of the historic edifice.

Policy EN3: Enhancement of conservation areas states that the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas. These may include:

- Reducing visual clutter caused by negative factors, such as poles and overhead wires, satellite dishes or unnecessary street furniture;
- Restoring original building features;
- Removing inappropriate additions or alterations to buildings;

- Protecting and encouraging the maintenance of green spaces and important trees, particularly where they are intrinsic to the history and character of the area;
- Improving signage and street furniture;
- Restoring or re-establishing appropriate paving, railings or walls;
- Sympathetic landscaping and planting;
- Improving or restoring green spaces, including front gardens, that are appropriate to the historic interest of a Conservation Area;
- Signage that reveals and promotes the Conservation Area and its boundaries;
- Interpretation panels to inform the public of the area's historical significance.

Where a Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan has been adopted for a particular Conservation Area, this will be a material consideration in determining applications for development.

In respect of Policy EN3 the proposals follow these guidelines for the following reasons:

- This building of townscape merit is located within the proximity of the junction of Bridge Street, Church Road and Church Street in Caversham. The junction is at the northern end of Bridge Street and is considered a significant element of the St Peter's Conservation Area;
- The proposals include retaining the building as a banking/financial institution;
- The development of this building of townscape merit on the main street frontage is limited to alterations to the frontage at Ground Floor pavement level. The existing frontage contains significant mid century banking alterations within a historic retail frontage. The proposed alterations to the ground floor frontage retain principal elements of the significant mid century bank alterations whilst reinstating a more historic retail appearance;
- The alterations to the ground floor frontage provide a more customer friendly accessible and welcoming manifestation whilst respecting the principal of the significant mid century bank alterations.

Policy EN4: Locally important heritage assets states that development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset. Planning permission may be granted in cases where a proposal could result in harm to or loss of a locally important heritage asset only where it can be demonstrated that the benefits of the development significantly outweigh the asset's significance. Where it is accepted by the Local Planning Authority that retention is not important, recording of the heritage asset should be undertaken and submitted alongside development proposals. Replacement buildings should draw upon heritage elements of the previous design, incorporating historical qualities that made the previous building significant. This may include appearance, scale and architectural quality.

In respect of Policy EN4 the proposals follow the guidelines for the following reasons:

- This building of townscape merit is located within the proximity of the junction of Bridge Street, Church Road and Church Street in Caversham. The junction is at the northern end of Bridge Street and is considered a significant element of the St Peter's Conservation Area;
- The proposals include retaining the building as a banking/financial institution;
- The development of this building of townscape merit on the main street frontage is limited to alterations to the frontage at Ground Floor pavement level. The existing frontage contains significant mid century banking alterations within a historic retail frontage. The proposed alterations to the ground floor frontage retain principal elements of the significant mid century bank alterations whilst reinstating a more historic retail appearance;
- The alterations to the ground floor frontage provide a more customer friendly accessible and welcoming manifestation whilst respecting the principal of the significant mid century bank alterations.

Policy OU5: Shopfronts and cash machines states shopfronts, individual features of shopfronts and cash machines will respect the character of the building on which they are located and their surroundings, as well as the wider street, in terms of design, colours, materials, lighting, and location. Features that positively contribute to the character of the building and street will be retained and, where possible, restored. Safety and security will be maintained and enhanced.

For shopfronts, the following criteria will be fulfilled:

- a) New shopfronts on listed buildings or in Conservation Areas will respect or enhance the building or area, and will respect the key features of the special historic interest;
- b) Where a shop occupies multiple units, shopfronts will not run in a continuous horizontal line across the different unit façades. The fascia and the shop windows should be broken up to ensure the features of each unit are not lost;
- c) Fascia boards should be lower than any first floor windows, and reflect the predominant height of historic fascia boards on surrounding buildings;
- d) Canopies and blinds over windows and entrances should be for the shading of the shop and should be retractable; and
- e) Shopfronts should present an active frontage to the street at all times. Where security is essential, security features will be internal, such as internal open mesh grilles. Opaque coverings on shop windows, such as paint and films, will be minimised and will not obscure the window.

In respect of Policy OU5 the proposals follow the guidelines for the following reasons:

- The development of this building of townscape merit on the main street frontage is limited to alterations to the frontage at Ground Floor pavement level. The existing frontage contains significant mid century banking alterations within a historic retail frontage. The proposed alterations to the ground floor frontage retain principal elements of the significant mid century bank alterations whilst reinstating a more historic retail appearance;
- The proposed new glazing and frame will appear subservient to the retained historic elements and significant mid century elements;
- Enhanced security provision will be carried out internally;
- The alterations to the ground floor frontage provide a more customer friendly, accessible and welcoming manifestation whilst respecting the principal of the significant mid century bank alterations,



Illustrations

- (i) Illustration of the present day shopfront with the non historic brickwork stall riser and glazed panels between joinery fluted pilasters all contained within the typical shopfront arrangement of masonry pilasters, capitals and fascias.



- (ii) Detailed illustrations of the present day shopfront with the non historic brickwork stall riser and glazed panels between fluted joinery pilasters



- (iii) Detailed photograph of front elevation showing stretcher bond brickwork, various types of windows and stone and brickwork quoins.

