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Broad Street - Reading
Design & Access Statement

November 2018

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 Site
- 3.0 Existing Building
- 4.0 Scheme Proposals
- 5.0 Landscaping / Highways
- 6.0 Access
- 7.0 Conclusions

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access Statement accompanies a planning application to amend the internal layout and outward appearance of 52-53 Broad Street, in order to create a reconfigured, efficient and modern retail space.

The building is currently divided into River Island and JD Sports retail units - with River Island now vacated there is the opportunity to amalgamise the units into space for a larger single retail tenant, and it is proposed that JD Sports take over the full space.



2.0 SITE

The building is located on the northern side of Broad Street, equidistant between the junctions with Queen Victoria Street and St. Mary's Butts. Broad Street is a fully pedestrianised and wide street, and is a well-renowned shopping destination, siting many high profile retail brands.

There are many local bus services providing easy access to this central retail district, and Queen Victoria Street offers convenient walking access to Reading Railway Station, providing links to local towns and into central London.



3.0 EXISTING BUILDING

The existing building of 52-53 Broad Street presents a mismatching and contradictory facade to the public realm. The building is three storeys tall, where each storey is treated differently from the next.

The first floor is predominantly clad in brown brick, with a combination of small punched openings and tall arched windows stretching up to the second floor. There exists a convoluted and overly complicated arrangement of protruding brick frames, tall gable walls, recessed niches and exposed concrete structure.

The second floor sits back from the first, and from the prevailing facade line of the street, creating an inset 'balcony' at this level and resulting in the need for a steeply sloping tiled roof with three pitched minor roofs over the three arched windows stretching from the first floor.

The ground floor is currently divided into the two retail tenants of River Island and JD Sports which have their own treatments to the shopfront. The JD Sports frontage is predominantly glazed, with a reflective black fascia running underneath a light grey painted panel, with a central opening closed by a roller shutter. The River Island shopfront has taller glazing in comparison, running up to a panel of brick slips (which contrasts and clashes with the main brick of the facade), again with a roller shuttered central doorway. In between these two shopfronts is a fire escape door, recessed back from the building line. This has been painted black, presumably in an attempt to lessen its visual impact, but this has the adverse effect of providing a location for anti-social activity, particularly out of retail hours, and causes an unwelcome break in the building's ground floor presence.

As a whole, the existing building's elevation, in particular the upper floors, does not appear cohesive nor legible due to the vast array of lines, planes and materials on show. The existing facade is not particularly well detailed and is in places in a state of disrepair.

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4.0 SCHEME PROPOSAL

INTERNALLY:

In essence, the existing building, with River Island taking up half of the ground floor, and JD Sports taking the remainder of the ground floor and the upper floors, will be amalgamated into one single retail unit, across all floors.

The final internal layout will be determined by the incoming retail tenants, but the works at this stage will include:

- Removal of dividing wall between the two units;
- Strip out of existing redundant internal partitions and shop fittings;
- Relocation of the fire escape route from the centre of the facade to the rear via a protected corridor;
- Cutting back the first floor slab at the front to create a double-height space at the entrance;

EXTERNALLY:

As noted previously, the appearance of the building offers very little to the local streetscape and currently detracts from the overall amenity and enjoyment of the town centre for the visiting public. It is intended to give the building a visual and practical uplift. In combining the two retail units into one, as described above, the opportunity arises for producing a unified facade which can overcome the visual issues presented by the existing elevation. Therefore, the works to the exterior would include:

- Introduce a modern and stylish sleek facade which will oversail the existing brickwork up to second floor level, covering over the undulating unattractive and confusing form;
- Simplify and rationalise the roofscape to align with a more modern street appearance;
- Expand upon the facade treatment already in place for the existing JD Sports unit - using large expanses of clear glass, dark dibond with yellow edge returns

Providing a cohesive single frontage to the street, to a scale appropriate for the size of the retail unit and in keeping with a modern shopping destination, will be a positive contribution to the streetscene.

Please note - there will be the need for retail signage to be installed for the use of the two new retail tenants – at this stage, however, this application is not seeking permission for these, as they will take the form of separate Advertisement Consent applications at the appropriate times. For full disclosure at this stage, signage “zones” have been shown on the proposed elevations.



EXISTING



PROPOSED



EXISTING



PROPOSED



EXISTING



PROPOSED

5.0 LANDSCAPING / HIGHWAYS

There are no works proposed to the front or rear approaches to the building, and the pedestrianised Broad Street surface will not be affected by these proposals.

6.0 ACCESS

The retail unit in its present state offers level access directly from Broad Street.

This will not change with these latest proposals, and this level access will be maintained. The proposed entrance to this unit entails a wide, open space, which will be kept fully open during trading hours. There will no longer be public retail space on the first floor, so no public escalator or lift will be required.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed works to this prominent retail unit within the popular and busy Broad Street shopping area will clearly be an improvement on the current building. In its existing state, the building offers very little in its outward appearance and does not contribute positively to the town centre streetscape.

The works will allow the increased presence of an important retailer in the area, invigorating the retail offering and allowing an uplift to the presence of the building within this important shopping destination.

The addition of a clean, fresh and modern treatment to the façade will obscure the currently dark, heavy and overbearing finish of the brickwork, visually unifying and cleaning up the elevation and giving the public and customers an improved experience of walking past and into the building.

Therefore through creating this one unit and improving the general outward appearance of the building through a high quality and measured design, considered within the context of the existing building and the adjacent retail units, the proposals will make a positive contribution to enhancing the existing streetscape and Broad Street in the wider context.

