

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

In Respect of

Proposed Car Park Extension

(Renewal of Planning Approval Ref 150391 dated 8th June 2018; now expired)

at

**Thames House
42 Portman Road
Reading
RG30 1EA**

for

Soni.Me Ltd

*(To be read in conjunction with
drawings 1804-01 Rev B & 1473/02*



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1.0 Introduction:

This Design & Access Statement accompanies a Full Planning Application for the construction of a *Vehicular Parking Extension* to the existing car parking provision serving the commercial premises of 42 Portman Road, Reading RG30 1EA.

The Application constitutes an application for the Renewal of Planning Approval 150391 dated 8th June 2015, the time period having now recently expired.

The Current application details Identical to those previously granted approval with the inclusion of additional information addressing Conditions nos 2 & 3 of the original Approval.

Background

The original (and subsequent current) Applications are in respect of an extension to the existing office parking area proposed to ameliorate a number of parking issues prevalent to the site, namely:

- A Shortfall of parking provision (*RBC Standards*) relative to Building Floor Area.
- The congestion of overspill parking within Albury Close and Lovelace Road.
- A lack of disabled Parking within the site.

Current / Relevant Design & Access Information (As Previous Approval)

2.0 Context:

42 Portman Road is a two-storey office block constructed in the 1970s. It has situated on the north side of Portman road with the existing parking located to the eastern end of the site. Its main elevations run east to west. The parking is currently enclosed by a brick and railing wall to the south.

It shares vehicular access to the site with 44 Portman Road.

Vehicular access to the site is only possible form Albany Close to the north east of the site with pedestrian access only directly from Portman Road.

3.0 Design Principles and Concepts:

Amount

42 Portman Road currently has a parking allocation of 17 spaces (See Drawing 1473/01 & 2).

The proposals constitute an extension to the existing car parking to create an additional 5 parking bays. Two of these are sized to serve as disabled parking provision as and when required see drawing 1804-1A (*now superseding original approved drawing1473/02*).

The additional parking bays are to be located at the front of the site, to the east, immediately adjacent to and in line with the existing vehicular forecourt of the adjacent car showroom, currently Vauxhall Eden external sales forecourt.

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The increased parking provision is **not** required as a result of a current or future increase in work-placements. They are required to address as practicable the current shortfall of provision for the building and further reducing the extent of on-street overspill parking that is currently required.

The existing available parking provision does not meet current parking standards of 1 space per 25 sq M. The building gross internal floor area is 712sq M, whereas the parking allocation for the building is 17 spaces, a current shortfall of 11 spaces.

The proposed additional provision will also provide disabled parking provision which is currently unaddressed within the current parking layout.

As the current building occupancy / staff employment levels of the building are not changing the provision addresses current parking shortfall only. As such it does not have any adverse impact on current parking requirements and will not generate any additional demand on transport infrastructure or generate any additional trips to and from the site.



Approach traveling East.
Proposed parking area screened by existing mature planting.



Approach traveling East.
Proposed parking area screened by existing and new mature planting.



Approach traveling East.
Proposed parking area screened by existing mature planting.



Approach traveling West.
Proposed parking area screened by existing display Parking and advertising pylon

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Current Vehicular congestion within Albury Close



Existing Perimeter Parking at 10 Portman Road

This DAS has been written to meet the requirements of Article 4C of the Town & Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 (as amended).

Planning Policy

The RBC Planning Policies applicable to this application are as follows:

Local Plan:

- TRN1
- TRN11B
- EMP7
- CUD14

Local Development Core Strategy

- CS9
- CS24

Planning Policy Guideline PPG13

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Planning Obligations under Section 106, Town & Country Planning Act 1990.

The applicant is prepared to enter into a section 106 Agreement with regards to a financial contribution towards physical & social infrastructure costs in accordance with Local Plan Policy TRN11B and Policy CS9 of the LDF Core Strategy

The applicant also accepts the financial settlement of all reasonable costs incurred by the council's administration, for the preparation of such a legal agreement.

Planning History:

The proposals were granted Planning Approval Ref 150391 dated 8th June 2015.

This re-submission constitutes a facsimile of the previous approved scheme to address the statutory time period for commencement of the works which has now, unfortunately, recently expired.

The scope of works proposed is identical to that previously granted approval with the inclusion of additional information addressing the items covered under conditions nos 2 and 3 of the original approval.

The Approved scheme addressed issues raised in a previous unsuccessful application (Ref 08/01546/FUL) submitted in 2008.

The Previous approval clarified / addressed the grounds for the original refusal (Ref 08/01546/FUL) as follows:

- 1 The provision of additional car parking would influence / encourage journeys to and from work to be made by private car which would be in direct conflict with PPG3, Transport saved policy TRN11B of the Reading Borough Plan 1998 and Policy CS20 of the LDF adopted Core Strategy 2008.*
- 2 The expansion of the car parking area would have an adverse effect on the visual amenity of the street frontage in addition to setting an undesirable precedent for the area of Portman Road, contrary to saved Policy CUD14 of the Reading Borough Plan 1998 and Policy CS7 of the LDF adopted Core Strategy.*

Point 1: it should be noted that the number of parking spaces available to 42 Portman Road is significantly below current RBC standards (currently a shortfall of 11 spaces with no bespoke disabled parking spaces). The proposals thus improve these statistics. They also provide disabled parking provision.

Whilst PPG13 presents recommendations for an overall transport strategy it does not present constructive subjectivity on the micro scale. Practicable implementation of the recommendations, in a commercial sense, are therefore, in many instances unattainable.

The long established business users of 42 Portman Road, predominately construction industry based, operate business logistics / travel plans which, whilst aiming to keep vehicular trips to a minimum, do necessitate frequent daily travel, from the point of business to distant clients and construction sites throughout the south-east of England and beyond. As the proposals are not required to address the needs of additional staff, the current travel plan arrangements of the building users will not change.

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They are also subject to periodic visits to their offices from clients, other consultants, contractors and building trade representatives and deliveries.

The frequency of these journeys to and from the premises, vary on a daily basis, both in terms of number of vehicular movements and duration of each visit but it is noted again that the proposed parking will not increase the number of trips to and from site.

The nature, frequency and distance traveled also negate the practicality of reliance on public transport, either road or rail. It is noted that the site is in an area without local public transport provision which is another reason that the use of private cars for commuting is prevalent. The closest public transport (buses) is approximately ½ mile away on the Oxford Road.

Since this time the vehicular parking provision in the vicinity of 42 Portman Road has got progressively worse with on street parking now becoming an increased safety hazard. This is a cause of concern for Staff using the building and currently presents an additional issue regarding parking space availability, relative to the number of users in the neighborhood.

In terms of the second item, in comparison to the visual impact of the adjacent garage forecourt, the parking proposals and the mitigation measures proposed present an almost imperceptible impact on the current visual amenity of the streetscape. The provision of hedging in front of the extended dwarf wall will also assist in this.

Finally, it should also be noted that since the time of the previous application, similar off road parking provision can also now be seen to have been implemented in the area, e.g. no 10 Portman Road (See photos).

4.0 Access:

The Parameters of the previous approval remain unchanged:-

There is no change proposed to the vehicular or pedestrian access to the site which will still be from the north east of the site.

Access to the proposed additional parking area is to be gained from the existing car parking area.

The existing front boundary screen wall is also to be maintained with a new access formed through this wall to serve the new extended parking area.

Site security is to be maintained by the incorporation of sliding colour coated metal gates, of similar design and scale to the existing railings. These are to be secured during out of normal Office working hour periods, thus ensuring restricted use of the new extended parking to Office hours only.

The new security gates are designed to be compatible with the existing parking layout with the sliding operation designed to run parallel and adjacent to existing parking spaces.

It is proposed that the new parking area be bounded by a new face brickwork low level wall, with brickwork and detailing to match the existing boundary wall to 40 Portman Road.

The remaining zone between this wall and the back edge of the existing pavement will be enhanced with additional soft landscaping.

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The resultant changes to the existing security boundary, (dwarf walls and railings, and enhanced planting / landscaping) will therefore have no detrimental visual impact on the existing street scene.

Layout and Landscape

The existing site vehicular and pedestrian access ways remain unaltered.

The soft landscaping and shrub planting to the front elevation, (Portman Road), is to be retained and further enhanced, (see drawing 1804-01 Rev B and supplementary Planting Specification *Appendix A*). The existing landscape will therefore visually screen the new parking area from an easterly direction of approach along Portman Road. Similarly, the existing car showroom vehicle display forecourt will have a similar visual effect for the westerly directional approach.

A grass margin, matching and extending that of the adjacent Vauxhall garage, is to be maintained, thus retaining visual continuity of landscaping to the road frontage.

A 1.5m nom height screen hedge (to match / extend the existing landscaping) is also proposed to be incorporated to the front of the parking area as an additional screen.

The existing low level vehicle security hoops to the front boundary are to be re-located, in line with those of the adjacent premises (Vauxhall Eden). Any possibility of illegal 'over kerb' access from Portman Road, is thus obviated.

The proposals will therefore have minimum detrimental impact on the existing street scene.

The existing obsolete pedestrian access gateway adjacent to the building entrance is retained unaltered. The use of this gateway is long redundant and the gate is permanently locked. It remains is surplus to user requirements.

The extent of the existing soft landscape screen and the proposed additional enhancement will ensure there is no adverse visual impact on the street scene as a result of the proposals.

5.0 Conclusion:

Business parking within the Portman Road Commercial Area is at a premium and street congestion becomes progressively worse year on year.

As a result, the availability of 'overspill on-street parking' is decreasing and problems of indiscriminate vehicle damage, vandalism and theft, are becoming more prevalent.

As with the majority of successful business premises in the vicinity of the application site, 42 Portman Road suffers a shortfall of on-site parking.

The buildings, dating back to the late 1960's / early 1970's and their business uses have changed dramatically over the intervening years, as have their logistical requirements in terms of business operations and transportation.

The application proposals seek to address the current shortfall experienced by our clients, by adapting existing underused space within the site in a manner that will present no detrimental impact on the visual aesthetic of the building and its setting, in terms of scale, layout and appearance within the existing street scene.

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PPG13 states that 'reducing the amount of parking in new development (and in the expansion and change of use in existing development) is essential, as part of a package of planning and transport measures to promote sustainable travel choices' It also promotes an increase in the amount of good quality cycle parking within developments.

Whilst the principles of the policy are commendable, in the case of 42 Portman Road, the logistics of undertaking these visits by alternative means other than private vehicle (in accordance with the recommendations) are totally impractical when equated to the complexities involved and the applicant's business requirements. Even within a 15 mile radius of Reading, the time frame required for public transport connections would prove wholly impractical in terms of competitive business needs.

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The daily continued use of a motor vehicle is therefore essential. In the context of the application, the preparation of a 'green travel plan' can have no material relevance.

The additional parking proposed will have no adverse impact on the current transport methodology of the site users and will not result in any greater impact on current transport congestion levels.

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APPENDIX A

Supplementary Planting Specification

(Prepared in response to Condition no 2 -Planning Approval ref 150391 dated 8 June 2015)

Information in relation to the clearance of Planning Condition no 2 Planting Specification

1. Proposed Low level Screen Hedge

Species: Prunus Laurocerasus (Otto Luyken)

- Height and spread: "Otto luyken" is available that grows only to about 1m x 1.5m (3ft x 5ft),
- Position: full sun, partial shade or shade
- Soil: any except shallow chalk
- Rate of growth: fast-growing
- Flowering period: April
- Flower colour: white
- Hardiness: fully hardy, not suitable for very exposed positions
- Uses: Specimen / Hedging / mixed border
- Planting distance when used for hedging: 60cm, 24"
- Clipped height: 1.-1.5m, 3-4.5ft.
- Number of times to clip per season and when: 1, after flowering
- Pruning: Prune after flowering in May.

2. Replacement Grass (Perimeter edge making good into existing grassed area)

- Cultivation of topsoil for area to be seeded;
Areas of compacted topsoil adjacent to the works to be broken up to full depth.
Reduce topsoil to a tilth suitable for blade grading. (depth: 150mm; max particle size 2/3mm).
- Grading / topsoil condition to be reasonably dry and workable
- Finished levels after settlement: 25 mm above adjoining paving, kerbs, manholes etc.
- Final cultivation – (after grading and fertilizing). Reduce seed bed to a fine, firm tilth with good crumb structure. - Depth: 25 mm.
- Surface preparation: Rake to a true, even surface, friable and lightly firmed but not over compacted. Adjacent levels and extend cultivation into existing adjacent grassed areas sufficient to ensure full marrying in of levels.
- Seeding: Grass seed to be applied appx nom 35g /M2.
- First cut of grassed areas - Timing: When grass is reasonably dry. - Height of initial growth: 15-20mm. - Preparation: - Debris and litter: Remove. - Stones and earth clods larger than 25 mm in any dimension: Remove. - Height of first cut: 12mm.

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APPENDIX B

Previous Transport / Highways Response

DEPARTMENTAL MEMORANDUM

To: Planning Manager

Your Ref: BP

From: Development Control Transport

My Ref: NL

Ext: 74703

Date: 24 April 2015

Application no.: 150391

Proposed development: Proposed Car Park Extension

Development address: 42 Portman Road Reading RG30 1EA

Transport comments

This application is for a proposed car park extension to create 5 additional car parking bays of which 2 are for disabled users. A similar proposal was considered under application 08/01546/FUL.

This proposed development site is located on the north side of Portman Road approximately 750 metres from its junction with the Oxford Road. Portman Road is a busy distributor road with a 40 mph speed limit. A shared foot/cycleway is present on the north side of Portman Road.

The site currently provides a parking provision of 17 spaces. In accordance with the Council's adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, the building would require 1 space per 50m. However, under exceptional circumstances, the Local Authority can give consideration to a higher level of car parking.

The applicant states that there is significant congestion in the site vicinity caused by an excess of private cars parking on the public highway. The applicant has also submitted further information regarding the operational requirements of the business to justify why additional on-site parking is required. Therefore, in the circumstances the provision of 5 additional parking spaces will not create a material change in trips to and from the site as employees are already travelling to the site by car and parking on the public highway.

Therefore, there are no further transport objections to the proposal subject to the conditions attached.

Suggested conditions on any consent

Provision of parking spaces (approved drawing)