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Introduction, Site Location and Description & Access

This design & access statement has been prepared in support of a planning application for the Proposed Conversion of existing 4 storey terraced house to 1No 1bed self-contained flat at basement level, and 1no 3bed self-contained apartment to the upper floors.

The existing house is located to the East of Mason Street which is set approximately mid way off George street that has pedestrian links to the A329 Oxford Road.

Mason Street is an established residential area which has good links to public transport, shops, commercial establishments and restaurants and is within walking distance of the Reading Town centre.

The houses are in the main set in a terraced arrangement and are of traditional construction with a mix of materials that have evolved over the years varying from fair faced brickwork and rendered external facades.

The roofs are in the main of slate grey finish with many of the houses having had UPVC replacement windows.

The application property is typical of these and has a front elevation that has been rendered with sand and cement and has had the loft converted creating the fourth storey.

The main floors are raised above pavement level with stepped access to the front door, and then a secondary access to the basement level also from the front down by 1.2m from the pavement level.

A few houses have had rear extensions, including application site, which has the advantage of being utilised to meet space standards and thereby allowing the split into two units.

There have been several applications in the area where the relevant properties have sought to split their buildings to as many as four apartments, but to meet the Councils current policy and to ensure that some family units remain, it is intended to only seek the conversion to two self-contained units.

The existing house is currently set so that the main entrance is via the raised stepped access off Mason Street, entering to a hallway with access to an upper level lounge and then to a rear bedroom with an ensuites bathroom at this floor level, with then access off the hall to the upper floors.

The entrance level lounge then has a stair access internally and down to the basement level.

The basement level is arranged so that there is an open plan living room and a kitchen to the front and mid-section of the house, and leading to a dining room, at the rear single storey extension that has been added at some time prior to the applicant’s interest in the property. There is a shower room located between the kitchen and the rear dining room

The first floor has been arranged so that there a stair access from this landing to the loft level, and then access to the front bedroom, and to a rear bedroom that has an ensuite bathroom accessed from within this room.



Aerial view of the site and its setting





View from mason Street showing access and existing loft conversion



View from rear garden showing single storey extension

Access

The existing arrangements for access do not work well for accessibility due to steps leading both to the ground floor and the steps that lead to the basement floor. It is not feasible and would be impracticable to make any improvements to this and would be against the current style of dwellings on Mason Street.

The existing steps are robust and of low maintenance requirements, and other than some guarding to protect falling or a handrail to the access steps to the basement floor, there is very little alteration that is required.

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 common with its neighbouring properties, due to site restrictions no car parking is proposed, although there is a residents' parking scheme in operation within Mason Street, and it would be expected that at least one permit would be allowed for the property's occupiers to reflect current eligibility.

Cycle storage and refuse storage can be accommodated on the front hardstanding for three cycles and for the larger family size bins as provided upon request to Reading Borough Council

New Proposals, Appearance and Scale

The key constraint is that of the relationship between the existing buildings, both in terms of location, height of building and aspect so that the new arrangement does not dominate and overpower the existing adjacent neighbours and those in its proximity.

The number of storeys has been in place for several years, and it is intended to utilise the shell as it exists and then improve the accommodation at roof level so that the internal heights are more comfortable than they are at present. It is proposed current construct a dormer roof to the rear of the house over the main roof, and to also lower the existing ceiling level internally so that although the 1st floor storey height is reduced, it is still more than sufficient to allow a balancing out to improve that of the loft. The front roof window would be raised so that it is set allowing a greater outlook that it does currently. There are some properties on Mason street that have already had dormer additions, and this would otherwise have been consented under a “certificate of Lawfulness” as typically it would not increase the volume by more than 40m³ that is usually allowed for a single house.

The internal staircase from basement to ground floor would be removed, the floor infilled and improved so that noise is mitigated, and fire safety enhanced and the access to the basement would remain solely from the steps down from Mason Street, as this would serve as the main access to the newly created self-contained apartment at this level.

The basement floor would then have an open plan and combined living, dining and kitchen area, with access to the existing shower room and to the rear room within the single storey extension used as a bedroom. The access to the rear garden would remain form this rear bedroom. The apartment would comprise a floor area of 42.8m² which is more than the 37m² required as part of the national limit for such a use.

As part of the newly adopted requirements, the accommodation should provide for at least one family dwelling, and it is intended to meet this requirement whereby the floors from ground level to the loft would comprise a single dwelling, that wit the new dormer extension would allow for a 3-bedroom “Townhouse” arrangement over the three floors. The combined floor area over the three floors would be 77.8m² which is a comfortable extent of accommodation for a dwelling of this nature.

Any new development should meet current design standards and achieve reasonable distances from neighbours, and the proposals do not alter or make further impact to their neighbours.

The principal aims of the design are:-
To provide two self-contained apartments in accordance with the Council's policies that seek to maintain standards of residential accommodation while restricting impact upon public resources;
To provide and retain at least one family dwelling.
To provide good quality residential accommodation that is affordable in the borough and in keeping with the residential nature of the locally surrounding area;
To bring an existing site into improved economic use without undue detriment to its surroundings, thereby maintaining the quality of the area in a sustainable way and in the long-term public interest.

Areas and density

the application site as it exists has a site area of 145m², comprising a plot approximately 4.70m across and 30.5m deep
Gross internal areas proposed are:
basement floor 42.80m²
Ground floor 29.50 m²
First floor 29.50 m²
Loft floor 18.75 m²
Total floor area for upper apartment plot77.80m²

Obligations/Infrastructure

In line with the government's current National Planning Policy Framework it is understood that developments such as the one described here, consisting of less than 10 new dwellings and overall less than 1000m² combined floorspace, are exempted from contributing towards pooled funds for the provision of affordable housing in the wider area. It is therefore understood that no such contributions should be sought by the local planning authority.

Similarly, As no additional floorspace will be created by the proposals it is understood that they will be exempted from CIL contributions.

Flood Risk

From data reviewed from the Environment agency, the site is not within flood zones 2 or 3 and therefore no special measures are required.

Biodiversity and Protected Species

The existing building is well maintained and there are no signs for the potential effect to protected species.

Conclusion

This Design and Access Statement has considered the local context and character and used this assessment to inform the characteristics of the proposed development to which it provides an appropriate response in terms of its scale, layout, use, and appearance. In addition,.

The proposed development is consistent with policies at the national and local level in relation to matters of design and access and responds to the requirement for the creation of safe and secure environments.

The proposed development is in an accessible location, easily accessible for public transport and also from a range of local services and facilities.

We trust this application will attract officer support.

Submitted drawings to which reference should be made:

- Block and site plan MS-001
- Location plan MS-002
- Existing floor plans MS -003
- Proposed floor plans MS -004
- Existing elevations and typical section MS-005
- Proposed elevations and typical section MS-006