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PLANNING STATEMENT AND STATEMENT OF SCHEME BENEFITS

**PROPOSED SELF STORAGE &
OFFICES EXTENSIONS,
62 PORTMAN ROAD, READING
RG30 1EA**

ACCESS SELF STORAGE LTD

JULY 2016

CONTENTS

PAGE(S)

1.0	INTRODUCTION.....	3
2.0	SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA.....	4
3.0	PLANNING HISTORY	4
4.0	PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT AND ASSESSMENT	4
5.0	SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS.....	8

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement is submitted on behalf of Access Self Storage Ltd. in support of the Planning Application to erect B1 offices and B8 self storage extensions to the existing B1 offices and B8 self storage development at 62 Portman Road, Reading RG30 1EA.

1.2 The application site is 0.78 Ha in area, and is currently occupied by 5,662 m² of self storage space and 632 m² of lettable offices, and extensive areas of hardstanding. These Uses have been on the site for many years.

1.3 Planning permission is sought for the following (the development):

Erection of an extension over ground, first and second floors for class B1 purposes, with solar panels to the roof, and ancillary car and cycle parking. Demolition of approx. 275 m² of poor quality class B8 self storage space, and erection of an extension over ground, first and second floors for class B8 self storage purposes with ancillary car and cycle parking, and modification of an existing crossover. Enlargement of glazed screens to Customer Reception office, and enlarged windows to existing offices above. Overcladding of parts of elevations of the existing development

1.4 This Planning Statement sets out the key planning policies relevant to the site and assesses the proposed development against them.

1.5 In addition to DMWR Architects Planning Application drawings, the following documents are also submitted in support of this planning application:

- a. Design and Access Statement – by DMWR Architects
- b. Transport Statement – by Motion
- c. Travel Plan– by Motion
- d. Energy Statement – by Foreman Roberts
- e. Sustainability Report: BREEAM – by Foreman Roberts
- f. Flood Risk Assessment - by Curtins
- g. Habitat Survey – by PJC
- h. SUDS Drainage operations & Maintenance – by Curtins
- i. Drainage Strategy - by Curtins
- j. Ground Investigation – Desk Study Report July 2016 – by GEA
- k. Topographical Survey – by Rylance
- l. CIL Form

1.6 The Statement is structured as follows:

- Section 2 describes the site and its surrounding area;
- Section 3 considers the site planning history;
- Section 4 provides the strategic planning policy context against which the principles of the Proposals have been considered, and assesses the main planning matters against the policy framework;
- Section 5 provides a summary and conclusion.

2.0 SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

- 2.1 The application site is located on the north western side of Reading, between Portman Road and Loverock Road, and bounded by Wigmore Lane to the west.
- 2.2 The site is located within the Loverock Road Trading Estate, and is identified as employment use.
- 2.3 To the north of the site beyond Loverock Road, lies the embankment with main London/Bristol rail line. To the south of the site is Portman Road and then a zone of soft landscaping, with a 2-3 storey residential neighbourhood beyond. Wigmore Lane lies to the west of the site, with trade units including an MOT station, opposite the site. Immediately to the east of the site is a 2-3 storey unit occupied by a number of trade companies, with car parking to part of the roof, accessed from a ramp up from Loverock Road, at the boundary to the Application site.

3.0 PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 A map of 1959 shows a small building – Use not known – in the northwest corner of the site. In 1974 a 'Food Depot' is shown on the site. In 1976 the site is noted as 'Denmark House (Depot). It appears that the building has remained much the same ever since.
- 3.2 There have been a handful of planning applications over the last 15 years - but nothing of great significance - concerning signage, a 12m monopole, private hire vehicle operation, and introduction of 3 large glazed windows to the Portman Road elevation, and new glazed windows to Customer reception area at the southwest corner of the building.
- 3.3 There seem to be no other planning applications of any relevance pertaining to this site.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT AND ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires any planning application to be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan of the Local Planning Authority, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

- 4.2 The Development Plan consists of:
- National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012);
 - Reading Borough Local Development Framework – Core Strategy (January 2008)
- 4.3 The Framework was adopted in March 2012. The Framework sets out the Government's Planning policies and replaces the vast majority of pre-existing national planning policy documents. The central message of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 4.4 The Core Strategy Local Plan Proposals Map shows that the site is designated as a Core Employment Area. It sits within the Loverock Road Trading Estate.
- 4.5 Policies related to particular planning matters, for example, transport and energy/sustainability, are dealt with in the specialist reports which accompany the planning application.
- 4.6 NPPF Paragraph 8 states that: *'Economic growth can secure higher social and environmental standards, and well designed buildings and places can improve the lives of people and communities'*.
- 4.7 NPPF Paragraph 14 sets out the *presumption in favour of sustainable development* noting that development which accords with the development plan should be approved without delay.
- 4.8 NPPF Paragraph 17 sets out the core land use principles which should underpin both plan-making and decision taking. The 12 principles include the need to encourage the effective use of land.
- 4.9 NPPF Paragraph 19 emphasises that planning should encourage economic growth and not act as an impediment to it. It also states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system. The site is currently underdeveloped with large areas of hardstanding, including areas being used for secured parking of vehicles, and is located in an allocated Employment Area, and so the proposed extensions are consistent with the above LPA policy objectives regarding the protection and extension of employment use at the site. The proposal also complies with the need for redevelopment of Employment Areas to intensify land use.
- 4.10 Core Policy CS1 requires consideration be given to Sustainable Construction and Design, and the proposed development will be built to high standards of thermal envelope, and provide good

energy efficiency and conservation measures in the design. For example to avoid solar gain and glare, the offices are north facing, and have a high degree of natural daylight and natural ventilation. On-site generation of energy is proposed by PV panels to be mounted in an array on the south facing roof of the new offices. Given the nature and age of the existing substantial buildings on this site, a BREEAM rating on this proposed project will achieve Very Good, as demonstrated by the BREEAM Pre-Assessment document accompanying this application.

- 4.11** Core policy CS5 Inclusive access – The repositioning of the offices entrance, together with a new ramped access route for pedestrians, and increased car parking provision for less abled drivers/passengers, and close to the particular entrances, greatly improves inclusive access. Additionally, the proposals give greater and safer separation for offices users from self storage users.
- 4.12** Core Strategy 3.24 refers to premises in Employment areas as in many cases being “..in need of renewal to provide more up to date efficient and flexible space. In general the strategy promotes the regeneration, and environmental enhancement of these areas so they can continue to meet the needs of those firms that support the local economy..” . Similarly, Core Strategy CS7 refers to Design and the Public Realm, and seeks high design quality that enhances the character of the area while maintaining the local context by appropriate materials for the uses. The proposals include the enhancement of the existing buildings and streetscape along all three street elevations - by overcladding of existing facades to Portman Road and Wigmore Lane by quality and sustainable materials, and by quality design for the new façade to Loverock Road. The proposed cladding and glazing elements as well as the scale and massing, are quite appropriate to the local context, as is demonstrated by the contextual street elevation, and site sections.
- 4.13** Core Strategy CS5 refers to Inclusive Access. The proposals will improve the access arrangements to and within the site as they separate the uses of self storage and the offices much better than is existing on the site, for both pedestrians and vehicles.. Provision for disabled drivers/passengers is improved by the provision of an increased number of designated parking spaces, and located more appropriately in relation to the building entrances.
- 4.14** Core Strategies CS10 and CS12 seek to increase the provision and variation in size of appropriate starter / business units. The proposals have over 700 m2 of new office space in the form of small offices for fledgling businesses. There is flexibility within the planning of the new offices for a variety of floor areas sizes to be leased. The Applicant's desire to create additional B1 space is a result of their experience of increased demand in the locality for their existing small offices. The additional self storage also supports the rising demand of local businesses, and the two uses complement each other being cheek by jowl on the same site.

- 4.15** Core Strategies CS23 and 24 relate to Sustainable travel and travel plans, and car/cycle parking. Provision has been increased and is appropriate to meet the specific Reading policies – for more detailed information please refer to Motion’s Transport Statement and Travel Plan.
- 4.16** Core Strategy CS35 – Flooding – The proposal site is in an area which is not identified as being at high risk of flooding. It lies outside any flood zone. It is intended that surface water run-off rates will not be increased compared with the present conditions, due to the extensive hard surfaced yard areas throughout the existing site. Please see the accompanying Flood Risk Assessment report for more detailed information.
- 4.17** It is demonstrated above that the proposal clearly complies with the LPA objectives for the use of the site within this Employment Area. Mindful of the likely net employment gain and indirect employment benefit the proposal will bring, it is clear the scheme complies with relevant development plan policy in land use terms and will add to the employment offer within the borough.

Design, Massing and Height

- 4.18** All new development will be expected to ensure high quality architecture and urban design, both in terms of providing functional and attractive developments. It also states that new proposals will be expected to address issues of height and scale sensitively.
- 4.19** The application site is currently underused, and therefore the opportunity has been taken to optimise the site potential through a bespoke design approach, utilising the large areas of hardstanding to provide extensions to the existing building, to the north and the east. These extensions, particularly to the north, provide an ideal opportunity to create a lively and transparent design to an important elevation facing the rail lines, which will greatly enhance the presence of the building and provide an exciting and lively clean lined elevation, in place of the boring and uninteresting higgledy piggledy existing facades and yard area.
- 4.20** The south elevation is an important one fronting Portman Road, a busy road and the proposed overcladding with stylish and clean contemporary lines and materials, will greatly enhance the public realm. A key design objective is to ensure the building represents an improvement to the character of the area, in accordance with the NPPF and with the Core Strategy.
- 4.21** The proposed development offers the opportunity to improve the character and appearance of the site and local area through provision of a modernised contemporary image and quality sustainable materials, and because the opportunity is being taken to overclad the dreary existing elevations, the proposals will re-energise the whole development and unify it in terms of façade design vocabulary and performance.

- 4.22 The scale, massing and positioning of the extensions on the site complement the nature and character and consistency of nearby buildings and enhance the public realm.
- 4.23 More specific details on design can be found in the accompanying Design and Access Statement and the submitted drawings.

Transport and parking

- 4.24 The Framework transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. The transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel.
- 4.25 Whilst planning policies should aim for a balance of land uses within their area so that people can be encouraged to minimise journey lengths for employment and other activities, this may not always be possible depending on the type of development proposed.
- 4.26 The application is supported by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan in order to demonstrate compliance with the NPPF and the Reading local policies, and that the proposals are acceptable from a transport and highways perspective.

Sustainability

- 4.27 The NPPF provides at its core a presumption in favour of sustainable development (Paragraph 14) whilst Paragraph 17 notes that development proposals which deliver movement towards a low-carbon environment should be supported
- 4.28 The application is accompanied by a Sustainability Report and an Energy Assessment (both prepared by Foreman Roberts) which set out the proposed approach to sustainability in terms of materials and energy consumption.
- 4.29 As mentioned above, erection of the buildings will be to BREEAM 'very good' standard, and the accompanying Sustainability BREEAM report demonstrates how it is proposed to achieve this, to a "very good" standard, which is appropriate for the circumstances of these extensions to an aged existing building.

5.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 5.1 It is demonstrated above that the proposed development is entirely acceptable and accords with the development plan requirements, mindful of the following principles:

- a. The proposal makes best use of an underused site, which is occupied by a successful and expanding business.
- b. The land use meets the LPA policy objectives, delivering additional employment floorspace;
- c. When completed and occupied, the proposal will provide both direct job opportunities and significant indirect benefits in helping to make a positive contribution to the local economy as a whole;
- d. The proposal delivers a modern and practical building able greatly to improve the character of the area and the public domain.
- e. The proposals take the opportunity to unify the new extensions with the old building by recladding and generally rejuvenating the tired and uninteresting existing elevations of the old building, by using new contemporary materials consistently to all the elevations.

5.1 The accompanying reports supporting the planning application and this Planning Statement demonstrate that the proposed development reflects the principles of sustainable development highlighted within the Framework and has been designed accounting for the site context and the requirements of national, regional and local planning policies.