

TONY THORPE ASSOCIATES

CHARTERED TOWN PLANNERS

The Studio, 1 Durrant Way, Tilehurst, Reading, Berks, RG31 6TR.

Telephone: 0118 942 1855.

Mobile: 07831 432582 Email: tonyplan.office@gmail.com

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT:-

TWO STOREY CAR WORKSHOP AND OFFICES (RELOCATION OF UNIMPLEMENTED TWO STOREY CAR WORKSHOP AND OFFICES APPROVED 2013 - 130370)

SITE LOCATION:-

READING AUTO SERVICES, 782-784 OXFORD ROAD, READING RG30 1EL

PLANS AND DOCUMENTS:-

AJT/01	1:1250 @ A4	Location Plan.
19/11/01	1:500 @ A4	Existing Block Plan.
19/11/02	Various Scales @ A3	Proposed Block, Floorplan and Elevations.

Design and Access Statement (this document).
CIL Documentation.
Biodiversity Net Gain Small Site Metric.

1.00 BACKGROUND

1.01

Planning permission for a similar building was granted in August 2013 under reference 130370 for "***Part change of use of A1 bathroom showroom to MOT test centre (Sui Generis) plus two storey car workshop building to the rear.***". The permission lapsed in 2016 because a precondition requiring written approval of a CMS was never discharged. The current application seeks to revive the two storey car workshop and offices part of that approval. Subsequent planning permissions have already legitimised the current MOT and car-wash business.

1.02

The existing workshops are housed in a low-rise glazed building at the front of the site and are cramped and unfit for purpose. In order to allow a more spacious car workshop on site with sufficient headroom to allow a two-post car lift the applicant lodged a pre-application enquiry (220129/PREAPP).

1.03

This pre-application enquiry proposed demolition of the existing low-rise single-storey frontage glazed workshop and ancillary office building and its replacement with a 1.5 storey brick built workshop and ancillary office building. Whilst the proposal was considered acceptable in principle this was contingent upon the building being moved back some 5m from the highway frontage. Since this would lead to a substantial loss of floorspace the matter was not proceeded with.

1.04

In considering alternatives the applicant was mindful of the expired 2013 planning permission for a two storey car workshop building, with offices above, approved at the rear of the site.

1.05

We advised that whilst there would be no cogent reason for the Council to refuse a renewal of this permission we considered that the siting and design of the workshop could be improved. In particular we were concerned that the approved workshop doors directly faced the rear gardens of 5-7 Tidmarsh Street and due to the short distance in-between they may cause an unnecessary nuisance and be a bad-neighbour. In addition we considered that the first-floor office windows overlooked and caused a lack of privacy to the rear gardens and rear windows of this pair of semi-detached dwellings now converted to flats.

1.06

In order to overcome these concerns we have decided to move the proposed building further back to the northeast closer to the rear of the site. In this location the workshop doors and first floor office windows will overlook the existing commercial car-parking area instead of residential back gardens. This is a demonstrable planning gain and removes a potential 'bad neighbour' and conflict of uses.

1.07

A more recent planning permission 191084 (Erection of MOT bay and enclosure of car wash canopy – February 2020) has only been partially completed. The erection of the lean-to, dedicated MOT bay extension (see existing block plan for location) is no longer required following the upgrading of the main workshop into a Class 4 MOT bay. In addition there are concerns that the proposed new MOT building impeded what has settled into a safe one-way access from the front Oxford Road access through to the rear of the site. Although still approved and capable of completion we can confirm that this part of the development will not be carried out.

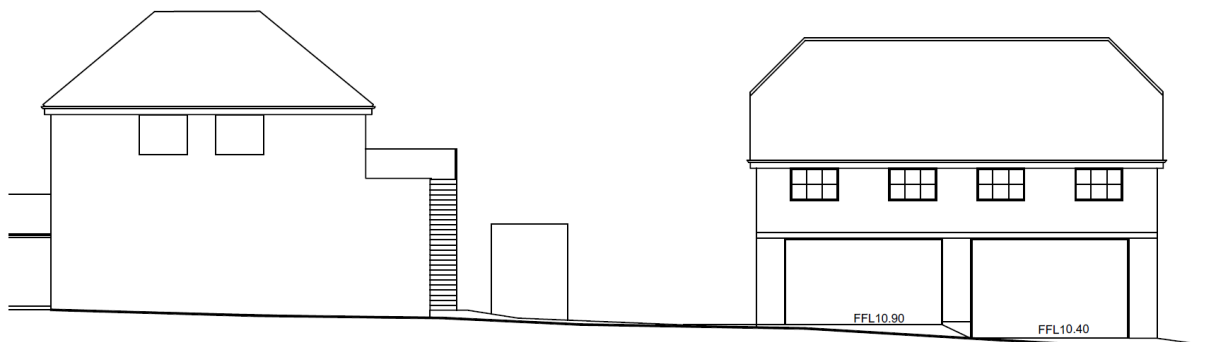
2.00 THE PROPOSED BUILDING

2.01

The proposed building is slightly larger than that previously approved. Comparative dimensions are as follows (using same ground level):-

Approved but expired.	Proposed.
Depth – 8m	9m
Width – 10.5m	15m
Eaves – 6m	5.8m
Ridge – 8.6m	10.7m

Ridge height in comparison to the existing frontage building is 1m lower (see plan 1 below).



PLAN 1. Existing building on the left. Proposed Building on the right.

2.02

The previously approved unimplemented workshop building was brick-built under a tiled roof using materials to match the frontage buildings. The proposed building will also be brick-built under a tiled roof using materials to match the frontage buildings and with roller-shutter doors to the GF workshops.

3.00 PLANNING POLICY

3.01

Government Policy concerning the need to promote business growth is set out at paragraph 85 of the revised NPPF. It tells us that:- ***'Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.'***

3.02

As such there is a clear general presumption in favour of fostering business growth in the national interest which is also reflected in local planning policy. The Local Plan allocates the front section of the application site and the whole of the site adjoining to the northwest for comprehensive residential development (West Reading and Tilehurst Site-Specific Policy WR3k (784-794 Oxford Road).

3.03

The proposal will not prejudice the WR3k aim and lies outside the area of land allocated for comprehensive residential development. Since the proposal is in essence a renewal of permission 130370 but in a location with less impact on existing residential development we consider that the proposal complies with the spirit and purpose of the Local Plan.

3.04

We would expect reasonable restrictions on hours of work that will protect both existing and future adjoining residential uses. NPPF paragraph 193 tells us that ***'Existing businesses and facilities should not have unreasonable restrictions placed on them as a result of development permitted after they were established.'*** We would expect any future planning permissions for adjoining residential development to incorporate suitable mitigation to avoid conflict between the proposed uses.

3.05

Accordingly we submit that the proposal strikes the correct balance between the Governments exhortation to promote business growth and the need to preserve the amenities of adjoining existing and future residential development.

4.00 HIGHWAYS AND ACCESS

4.01

The commercial use of the site is legitimate and long-established. The carwash facility approved in 2013 creates a baseline flow of vehicles in and out of the site involving vehicles queuing within the site that do not need to park. The planning permission did not specify an agreed flow through the site. However over its many years of operation we have found cars entering from the 5m wide Oxford Road access and leaving via Tidmarsh Street to significantly reduce initial conflict.

4.02

This through-flow of customers is why the new MOT bay approved in 2020 has been abandoned. It would have impeded the established smooth flow of traffic through the site. In recent years the original Tidmarsh Street egress has become little used since the landowner subsequently allowed access from the site via a new wider gate on to Sandford Court. This private road is properly surfaced with tarmac, does not suffer from blockage by parked cars and provides better visibility to pedestrians and vehicles.

4.03

The proposal will not contribute to the established through flow of carwash vehicles. The office and workshop uses already exist onsite and the proposal is more focussed on improving working conditions than an intensification of use. The existing frontage office and workshops currently use adapted buildings designed for other uses that are substandard and provide a poor working environment. The proposed purpose-built workshop and ancillary office will allow these existing areas to be reused for storage and free-up outside space currently used for storage to be allocated for onsite parking (see photo 1. below).



PHOTO 1. Google airphoto showing storage containers and abandoned vehicles currently parked on site together with the Sandford Court access.

4.04

Currently there are no defined onsite parking areas and the rear part of the site is characterised by a mixture of storage containers, abandoned vehicles and vehicles for sale parked at random (see airphoto). This proposal will ensure a proper parking layout and significantly improve the appearance of the site. Given that there is no existing formal provision for car parking the proposed 16 parking spaces represent an overprovision and can if necessary be reduced.

4.05

So far as we are aware there have never been any access or overflow parking issues. Therefore in our submission the proposed levels of defined off-street parking provision are acceptable to serve both the existing and proposed development. Accordingly the proposal will have no effect on highway or pedestrian safety or the free flow of traffic on the local network.

5.00 TREES, LANDSCAPING AND BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN

5.01

This is a long-established legitimate commercial site with no trees or planting of any kind within the site. No demolition of existing buildings is proposed. There are no ponds or evidence of use by any protected species therefore no further specific mitigation is necessary. There is no evidence of animal access routes and the proposal will not lead to fragmentation of habitat or the green network.

5.02

The accompanying BNG Small Site Metric confirms that all BNG targets are met and that the trading rules are satisfied. Materials left over from demolition will be recycled and building materials will be obtained from sustainable sources.

6.00 DEVELOPER CONTRIBUTIONS

6.01

The proposal is exempt from CIL and the relevant confirmatory form accompanies this application.

7.00 CONCLUSIONS

7.01

Having regard to the relevant national and local development plan policies and other material considerations as detailed above we submit that there are no sound and clear-cut planning reasons to object to the development. A similar development was approved in 2013 (RBC Ref:- 130370) and although not completed establishes a clear precedent. The proposal benefits from the NPPF presumption in favour of fostering business growth in the national interest, deserves support and we look forward to a favourable determination.

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AJT/SB/10/05/2024