

2909C001P02 Design + Access Statement

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Applicant: Proven Works Property Limited
Application Site: 29, Castle Street, Reading, RG1 7SB

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Contents

1.0 ASSESSMENT.....	3
1.1 Introduction	3
1.2 Existing building and site description.....	3
1.3 Existing Conditions	5
2.0 PLANNING CONTEXT	6
2.1 PLANNING POLICY AND HISTORY	6
3.0 DESIGN + ACCESS	Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.1 Description of the proposal.....	7
3.2 Relationship with the conservation area	9
3.3 Amenity considerations	10
3.4 Energy Performance.....	11
4.0 CONCLUSION	12

1.0 ASSESSMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This Design and Access statement has been prepared by Hives Architects on behalf of the Applicant, Proven Works Property Limited in support of an Application for Planning Permission and for the proposed works to 29, Castle Street, Reading, RG1 7SB.

The proposals aim to improve the environmental performance and overall organisation of the building's roof areas.

The existing lower flat roof, currently used only for maintenance access and plant, as well as being an escape route, will be converted into a small terrace intended for use by office staff.

The mechanical equipment currently located on this lower roof will be relocated to the upper roof level, allowing the terrace to remain clear while consolidating plant equipment in a more discreet location. The proposal includes the installation of solar panels on the top roof.

In addition, the works include an upgrade to the roofs insulation to improve the thermal performance of the building and the removal of a small redundant pitched roof area which is not visible from street level as it is located behind the parapet when viewed from Castle Street.

These changes are confined entirely to the roof areas at the rear of the building and have been designed so that they do not alter the appearance of the building when viewed from the main street.

1.2 EXISTING BUILDING AND SITE DESCRIPTION

The building presents as a three-storey structure to the main street frontage, forming part of the established urban character of the conservation area. The front elevation aligns with the surrounding street scale and contributes to the continuous built frontage typical of this part of the town centre.

To the rear, the building steps down due to changes in ground level and the presence of later extension attached to the original main block that differs from the simpler form of the street-facing elevation. These rear elements create a stepped roof level that differ from the simpler form of the street-facing elevation.

At present, the lower roof accommodates mechanical plant equipment and is otherwise unused. This area is visually inactive and contributes little to the amenity of the building.

On the upper roof there is also a small, pitched roof structure. This element appears to be the remnant of a previous installation or structure and no longer serves a functional purpose. Its

removal offers an opportunity to rationalise the roofscape and create a more coherent arrangement of rooftop equipment.

The site has the benefit of a pedestrian entrance from Castle Street and a vehicular entrance at the rear from Simmons Street.

The building shares a party wall with No 27 Castle Street to the East and No 29 to the West.

The building is located within a walking distance of many services. It is 4 minutes by foot to Broad Street and the town centre, 10 minutes to the mainline train station and 2 minutes to a selection of bus stops on St Mary's Butts.



Figure 1 – Site Location



Figure 2 – View of the access from Castle Street (North)

1.3 EXISTING CONDITIONS

The front façade is comprised of white stone at the ground level, bricks at the upper floors, and white sash windows.

The rear consists in bricks and modern casement windows and doors for all the external walls.

The building has two flat roofs. Currently the lower one contains mechanical plant and otherwise remains unused. Although this roof is physically accessible for maintenance purposes, it does not currently contribute to the amenity of the building or its occupants.

Importantly, the lower roof sits behind the primary roofline and is largely screened from public views by the existing parapet and surrounding buildings.

Currently the building is used as offices, and the use will remain the same after the proposed works.



Figure 3 – Photo from the rear

2.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

2.1 PLANNING POLICY AND HISTORY

Full details of the site's planning history, relevant planning policy context and heritage considerations are contained within the accompanying *Planning and Heritage Statement* prepared by JMS Planning. This document should therefore be read alongside the Design and Access Statement and forms part of the overall supporting information submitted with the application.

3.0 PROPOSALS

3.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The proposal seeks to make better use of the building's roof areas through a series of modest and carefully considered improvements.

The existing lower roof will be converted into a small outdoor terrace intended for use by staff working within the building. The terrace will provide a simple breakout space where occupants can take short breaks during the working day.

To enable this change, the mechanical plant currently located on the lower roof will be relocated to the upper roof level. This area already functions as a service zone and is therefore a more appropriate location for building equipment.

As part of this reorganisation, the small redundant pitched roof structure currently located on the upper roof will be removed. Its removal will simplify the roofscape and allow the plant equipment to be arranged in a more orderly and efficient manner allowing more solar panels to be added. It also makes the waterproofing simpler, and the installation more continuous, thus reducing heat loss through the fabric.

The upper roof will also accommodate a series of solar photovoltaic panels. These panels will contribute to the building's energy efficiency by generating renewable electricity on site.

Importantly, all equipment and solar panels on the upper roof will remain set back behind the existing front parapet, ensuring that they are not visible from the main street.

In addition, the works will include improvements to the roof insulation, which will enhance the building's thermal performance and reduce energy demand.

Taken together, the proposal improves both the functionality and sustainability of the building while maintaining a discreet and unobtrusive architectural approach.

The existing raised area housing a water tank on the top roof will be removed to create the space for the plants.

The fire escape on the South elevation is no longer required and it will be removed together with the steel elements in front of the lower floors windows.

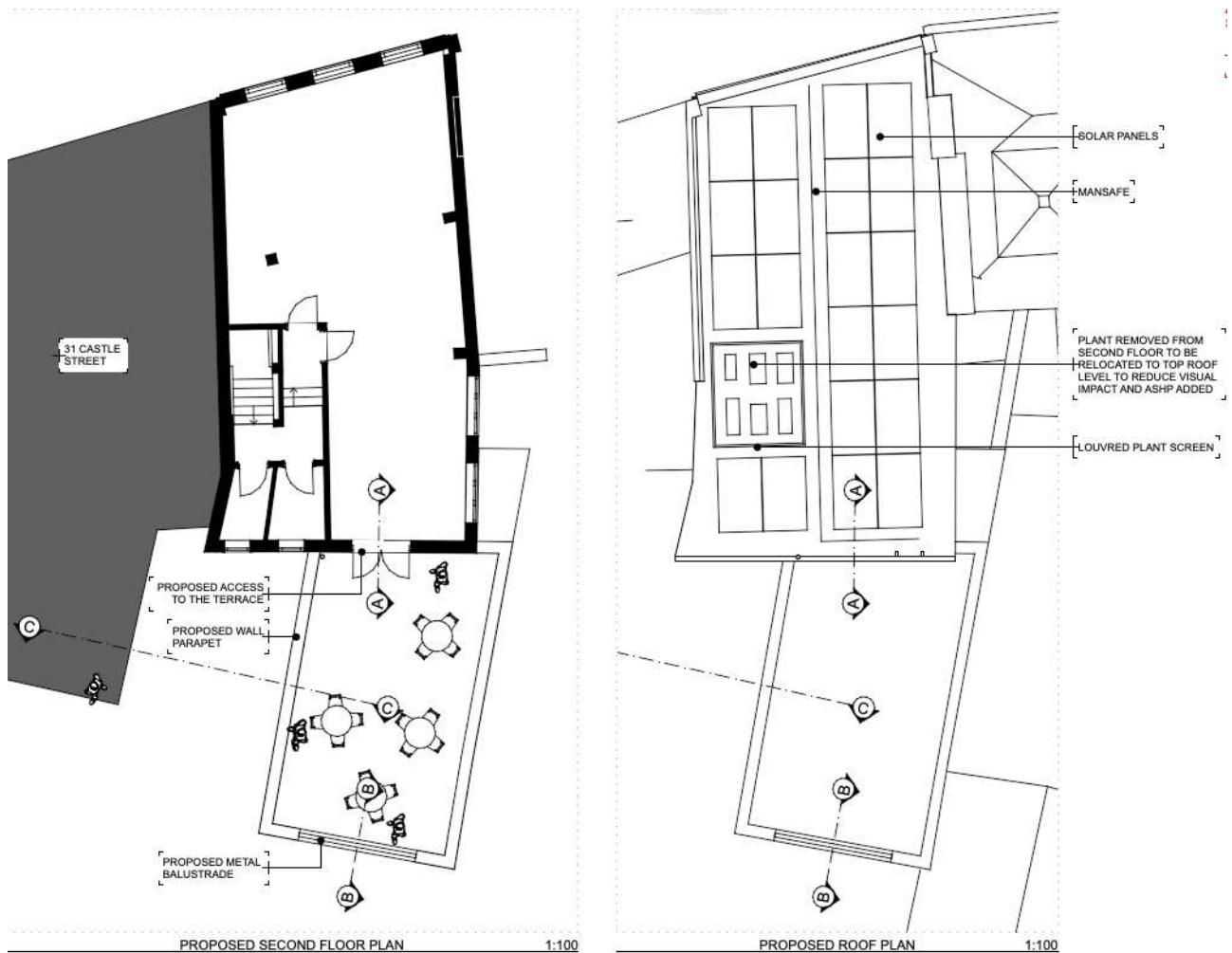


Figure 5 – Proposed floor plans

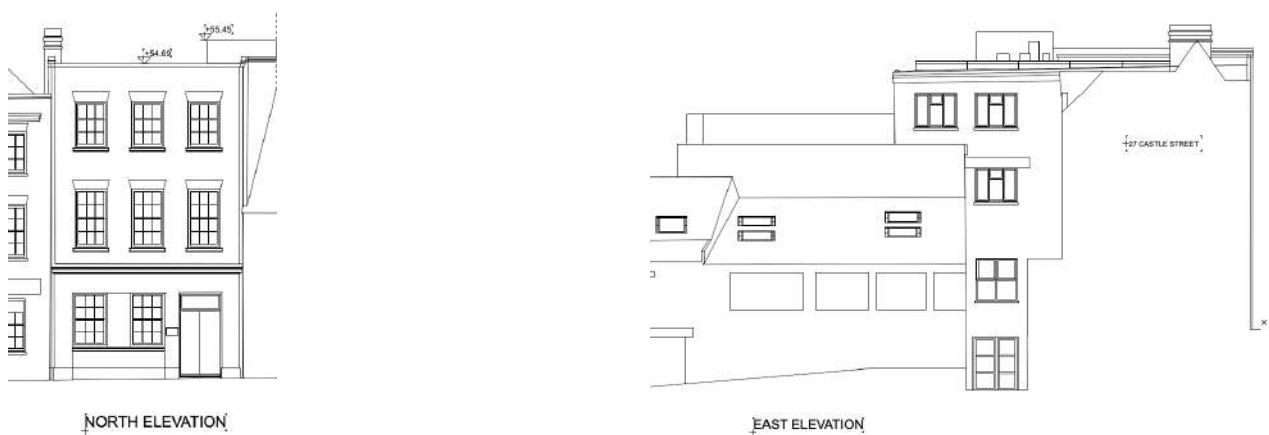


Figure 6 – Proposed elevations (North and East)

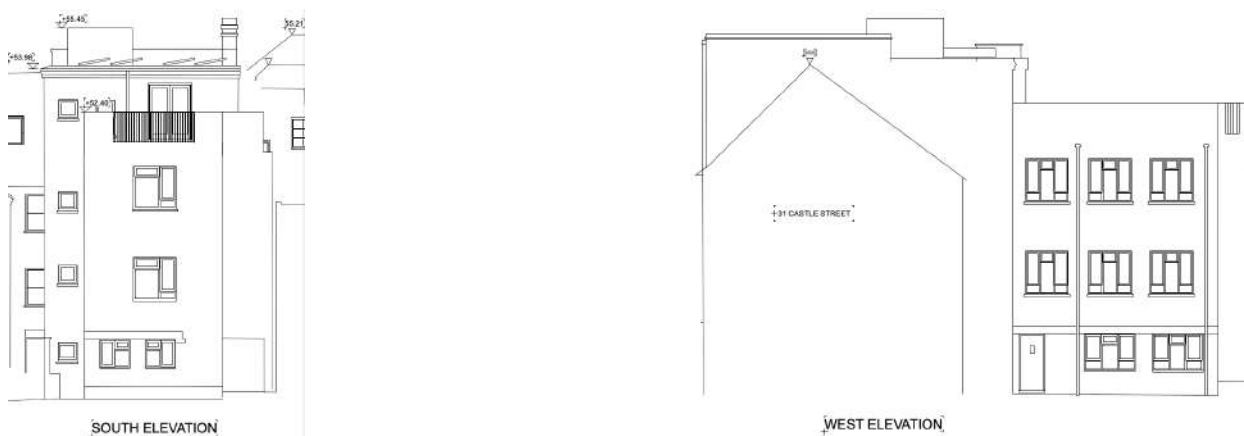


Figure 8 –Proposed elevations (South and West)

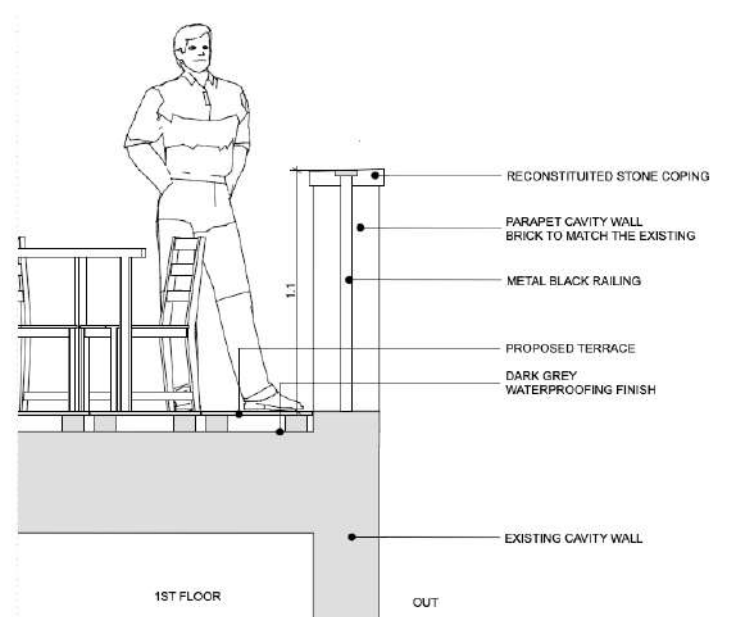


Figure 9 –Section through the parapet and balustrade

3.2 RELATIONSHIP WITH THE CONSERVATION AREA

The building lies within the Reading Conservation Area, and the proposals have therefore been developed with careful consideration of their potential impact on the character of the area.

The design approach has been guided by a simple principle: ensuring that any new elements remain visually discreet and largely hidden from public views.

The terrace is located on a lower roof at the rear of the building, where it is screened by existing building elements. Similarly, the relocated plant equipment is positioned on the upper roof, away from the front of the building, whilst solar panels are located to be hidden by the parapet also.

To clearly demonstrate this relationship, the application includes a comparison between an existing street photograph and a three-dimensional model of the proposed development viewed from the same location on the main road.

This comparison confirms that the proposal does not introduce any visible change to the building when viewed from the public realm.

Consequently, the proposals preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area.



Figure9– Photo of existing(left) and Proposed 3D (right) from Castle Street



Figure10 – Photo of existing (left) and Proposed 3D (right) from Castle Street

3.3 AMENITY CONSIDERATIONS

The proposal has been carefully considered in relation to neighbouring buildings to ensure that the introduction of the terrace does not result in loss of privacy or undue overlooking.

Particular consideration has been given to the relationship between the proposed roof terrace and neighbouring properties, including the residential accommodation at 31 Castle Street. The submitted overlooking assessment demonstrates that opportunities for direct overlooking are limited and that the proposed balustrade arrangement will further restrict views towards neighbouring windows.

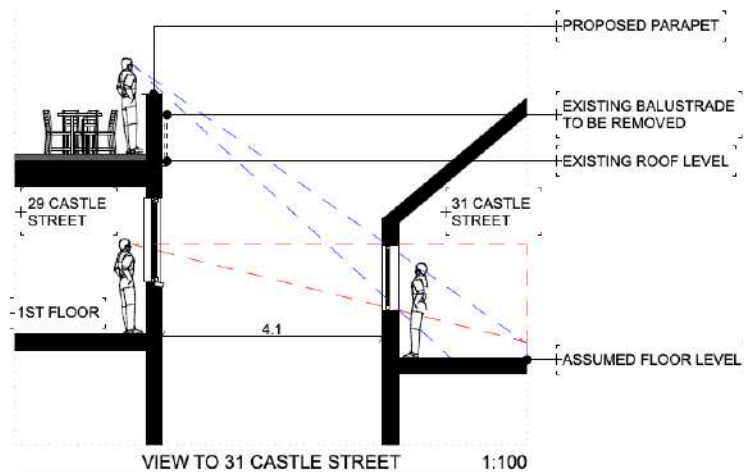


Figure 10 – View on 31 Castle Street.

Possible view from the terrace creates less impact than existing views from 1st floor

All other surrounding windows are located at a significantly greater distance from the terrace. In particular, buildings to the South are positioned more than 30 metres away, providing a substantial separation that prevents any meaningful overlooking or loss of privacy.

The design of the terrace has also incorporated measures to further limit potential overlooking. A solid parapet on the walls alongside neighbouring buildings ensure that overlooking is minimised in these directions, whilst a more open metal back balustrade with vertical uprights encourage views to the South.

A Noise Survey has been undertaken resulting in an assumed Noise Level Change (dB, LAeq)<3, with a. Noise Impact considered Negligible. Full details are contained in *15080 - 29 Castle Street, Reading - Noise Impact Assessment Report*, by Auric Acoustic Consulting.

The report also shows that the noise impact can be mitigated by screening around the roof plant, if it is 500mm taller than the tallest equipment, as has been included as part of the proposal.

Access to the terrace will be provided through the existing internal circulation routes within the building. The existing window facing the roof will be replaced by a patio door. No new staircases or external access structures are proposed. Access to the top roof for maintenance will be through a ladder from the terrace. The existing fire escape will be removed as not needed anymore.

3.4 ENERGY PERFORMANCE

The proposal includes several measures that improve the environmental performance of the building. The upgrade of roof insulation will reduce heat loss and improve thermal efficiency, while the installation of solar photovoltaic panels will allow the building to generate renewable energy on site. The rationalisation of rooftop equipment also provides a clearer and more efficient arrangement of building services.

4.0 CONCLUSION

The proposal represents a modest and well considered improvement to the existing office building.

By reorganising rooftop equipment, removing a redundant roof structure, introducing solar panels and creating a small staff terrace, the project enhances both the functionality and sustainability of the building.

All works remain confined to roof level and have been carefully positioned so that they are not visible from Castle Street. Visual studies confirm that the development does not alter the appearance of the building within the public realm and therefore preserves the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Given the existing building configuration, the separation distances involved, and the limited scale of the terrace, the proposal is not considered to result in any material harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupants. The proposal also maintains appropriate relationships with neighbouring properties and does not result in additional overlooking or loss of amenity.

We trust that the proposals can be approved via delegated powers by the officer and would welcome the chance to run them through the proposals in our 3D model should this be required.