

# **Design and Access Statement**

**Project: Proposed change of use from B1 (office) into 4 residential flats, with associated external and internal alterations**

**Location: Chequers House, 1, 3 and 5 Park Street, Old Hatfield, Herts AL9 7HF**

**27<sup>th</sup> September 2018**

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## 0 Introduction

0.01 This Design and Access statement has been prepared in support of an application for full planning permission the change of use of the existing grade 2 listed building from B1 office to 4 no. two bedroom residential flats (C3) with associated internal and external alterations in accordance with:

- "Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them" published by CABI (2006).
- National information requirements contained in "National Planning Practice Guidance Notes (Part 1)" published by DCLG (06 03 2014).

0.02 The proposed development is fully detailed on the following Good Architecture drawing nos. 16\_372:

- L 001\_B Location plan
- L 102\_B Proposed site plan
- L 110\_C Proposed basement plan
- L 111\_D Proposed ground floor plan
- L 112\_D Proposed first floor plan
- L 113\_B Proposed roof plan
- L 114\_C Proposed elevations 1+2
- L 115\_B Proposed elevations 3+4+5
- L 116\_B Proposed elevations 6+7
- L 117\_C Proposed first floor level jib door
- L 118\_B Proposed entrance hall party wall panelling
- L 120\_B Proposed basement ceiling treatment
- L 121\_C Proposed ground floor treatment
- L 122\_C Proposed first floor treatment
- L 123\_C Proposed first floor ceiling treatment

0.03 The following documents are submitted in support of the proposals:

- Good Architecture options floor plans:
  - Option 1 - Terrace of 4 houses
  - Option 2 - Terrace of 3 houses
  - Option 3 - Pair of semi-detached houses
  - Option 4 - One house and 2 flats
  - Option 5 - 4 flats
- Jon Skellern Associates survey drawings:
  - 135PS\_B Existing basement plan
  - 135PS\_B Existing ground floor plan
  - 135PS\_B Existing first floor plan
  - 135PS\_B Existing roof plan
  - 135PS\_E1 Existing elevation 1
  - 135PS\_E2 Existing elevations 2+3

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135PS\_E3 Existing elevations 4+5

135PS\_E4 Existing elevations 6+7

- Emma Adams & Partners Planning and Heritage Report
- Brasier Freeth Viability Assessment
- Robert Ward Booth Heritage Statement Rev B
- RWA Consulting Structural Report

0.04 This Statement explains the design principles and concepts that have been applied with reference to the following headings from the guidance documents:

### **Context**

1. Assessment – physical, social and economic characteristics of the area of the development, and relevant planning policies.
2. Involvement
3. Evaluation

### **Design**

4. Use
5. Amount
6. Layout
7. Scale
8. Appearance
9. Landscaping

### **10. Access**

### **11. Conclusion**

### **Appendix A Photographs**

## **1 Assessment**

1.01 Delegated officer report 6/2017/1368/FUL acknowledged that:

*"The building is considered to be in a highly sustainable location, in close proximity to alternative transport modes. It is not considered that the existing and potential infrastructure would be insufficient to absorb the additional development. The additional dwelling units would provide greater demand for local services and facilities, benefitting the local economy. There are no known physical or environmental constraints on the land which would restrict this form of residential development. The principle of the proposed development is acceptable in line with policies H2, SD1 and R1 of the Welwyn Hatfield District Plan."*

## **Physical context**

1.02 The site context and heritage asset definition are described in Emma Adams & Partners, Planning and Heritage Report.

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## Social + economic context

- 1.03 Gascoyne Cecil Estates (GCE) promoted a Charrette held in Old Hatfield in October 2008 at which much discussion centred on the state of Old Hatfield's built environment and options for improving it. The concerns of residents and people who worked in Old Hatfield included the following:
- Lack of attractive shopping;
  - Unattractive and inflexible public spaces;
  - Failure to exploit the opportunities for tourism;
  - Frustrations of unsatisfactory parking arrangements;
  - Chaos resulting from inadequate access to the Railway Station.
- 1.04 The Post Charrette Paper (December 2008) included:
- A building usage study which illustrated the diversity of building types within Old Hatfield and the ways in which the buildings were currently used by their inhabitants. Most the Old Town is comprised of residential properties, including individual houses, terraced houses and flats. Offices and shops are primarily concentrated in Salisbury Square, Park Street and the Broadway, and there are 3 pubs.
  - A frontage study which assessed the outward appearance of properties throughout Old Hatfield. Only Fore Street and Church Street were rated of good appearance, but the application corner building with its shopfront from a previous use was also rated good.
- 1.05 Following on from the Charrette, projects that have been implemented include:
- Redevelopment of Dunhams Courtyard to provide 15 dwellings and two B1 offices.
  - Construction of 12 dwellings in Church Street.
  - A major reconfiguration and improvement of the transport interchange at Hatfield Railway Station.
- 1.06 A revitalisation and partial development of Salisbury Square is planned with mixed use, retail, residential and office uses, and significant public realm works.
- 1.07 Willow House to the west of the application site has recently been converted from B1 office use into 5 flats.
- 1.08 The application building provides an opportunity for residential intensification, contributing 4 no. additional dwellings, and reinforcing the general direction of regeneration for Old Hatfield.
- 1.09 Economic context is described in Brasier Freeth's Viability Assessment.

## Planning policy context

- 1.09 Relevant heritage planning policies and guidance affecting the site are set out in Emma Adams & Partners, Planning and Heritage Report.

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## 2 Involvement

### 2.01 Planning history:

- The previous owner submitted planning and listed building consent applications S6/2013/1785/FP and S6/2013/1787/LB which were withdrawn on 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2013.
- Request for pre-application advice 6/2016/0978/PA was submitted on 27<sup>th</sup> May 2016. The Council's written response, including conservation advice, was received on 13<sup>th</sup> October 2016. Further conservation advice dated 7<sup>th</sup> April 2017 was forwarded in an email on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2017.
- Planning and listed building consent applications 6/2017/1368/FUL and 6/2017/0369/LB were submitted on 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2017 and refused on 19<sup>th</sup> January 2018.
- Request for pre-application advice 6/2018/0955/PA was submitted on 10<sup>th</sup> April 2018. The Council's written response was received on 4<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

## 3 Evaluation

3.01 Assessment of significance and application proposals are set out in Emma Adams & Partners, Planning and Heritage Report.

## 4 Design - Use

4.01 The previous owners appointed Brown & Lee Chartered Surveyors to place the building on the market between February 2010 and May 2016. In spite of full marketing, the building was only partially occupied at ground floor level by a tenant for 12 months in 2012-13. Apart from post-2008 general economic recession issues, Brown & Lee identified three other main issues from marketing that have contributed to the building being hard-to-let:

### 1. **Layout**

The layout of the building is very fragmented, especially at first floor level, which means that an occupier will be unable to make best use of the space for their own occupation.

Whilst cellular office space was at one stage a popular layout for professional firms such as solicitors and accountants, in 2010 the majority of companies looking to take office space preferred open plan environments which would allow them to fit out the accommodation to their preferred layout rather than being restricted with offices already in existence.

Owing to the building's Grade II listed dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, any alterations would be difficult and costly to undertake.

### 2. **Lack of Car Parking**

The fact that the property had no car parking was deemed to be a major disadvantage to an occupier looking to relocate to the building.

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### 3. Age of the Building

Owing to the building's Grade II listing dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century, a tenant considering taking a lease on the building would be cautious about the repairing obligations imposed on them by the landlord which would be far greater than repairing obligations of a recently constructed office building.

4.02 As stated in paragraph 1.08 above, the application building provides an opportunity for residential intensification, contributing 4 no. additional dwellings, and reinforcing the general direction of regeneration for Old Hatfield.

## 5 Design - Amount

5.01 The application site area: 213 m<sup>2</sup>. The building footprint is 200 m<sup>2</sup>, with the difference made up by a small courtyard within which refuse storage will be provided.

5.02 The existing gross internal floor area totals 257.93 m<sup>2</sup>. Gross internal floor areas for each of the proposed flats are as follows (excluding basement space):

- Unit 1: 72.2 m<sup>2</sup> (2b/3p flat)
- Unit 2: 53.4 m<sup>2</sup> (1b/2p flat)
- Unit 3: 76.6 m<sup>2</sup> (2b/3p flat)
- Unit 4: 79.9 m<sup>2</sup> (2b/3p flat)

5.03 The DCLG's Technical housing standards - nationally prescribed space standard recommends a gross internal floor area of 50 m<sup>2</sup> for a 1b/2p flat and 61 m<sup>2</sup> for a 2b/3p flat.

## 6 Design - Layout

6.01 The location of the proposed new entrance door leads into a common Entrance Hall and through, in turn, to the fine historic staircase which the Heritage Statement identifies as wholly consistent with early 17<sup>th</sup> century construction. The stair will serve first floor Units 3 and 4. Ground floor Units 1 and 2 have individual entrances. The Council's written pre-application response (13<sup>th</sup> October 2016) confirmed the layout advantages to the relocation of the entrance door which protects the use of the internal staircase.

6.02 Each flat has a large, single cooking/ eating/ living space:

- In Unit 1, this allows the 29.65 m<sup>2</sup> 'corner' open space to be retained.
- In Unit 2, the formation of a generous shared Entrance Hall, allows 31.46 m<sup>2</sup>. The Heritage Statement acknowledges this space originally would have included one of the principal rooms. However, this room has been heavily altered during the 1970's office conversion, including 'smashing out' the original 17<sup>th</sup> century building end wall.
- In Units 3 and 4, spaces of 30.11 m<sup>2</sup> and 29.97 m<sup>2</sup> respectively are created by removing modern, timber stud office partitions which reinstates important, high status rooms.

6.04 Bedrooms and bathrooms will be created by sub-dividing minor/ secondary spaces with timber stud partitions. The second bedrooms in each flat could alternatively be used as an office for home working.

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6.05 Basement access will be provided from the Entrance Hall via the re-opening of the early brick staircase below the historic timber staircase:

- Units 1, 3 and 4: Secure stores will be created for each flat below Unit 1.
- Unit 2: Secure store beneath the Entrance Hall.

## 7 Design - Scale

7.01 The proposals would result in no changes to the building's scale, setting and relationship with adjoining buildings.

## 8 Design - Appearance

8.01 The Victorian box sash windows will be overhauled and thermally upgraded in accordance with Historic England publication 'Traditional Windows: Their Care, Repair and Upgrading', apart from 1 no. ground floor window which is to become the new entrance door position.

8.02 The 20<sup>th</sup> century 'shop front' will be replaced by a more traditional pattern of a 'shop front' with a stall riser. The subdivision/ proportions of each window section is derived from the proportion of the existing Victorian sash windows. The existing pair of doors will be replaced by a single entrance door with glazed sidelights.

8.03 The existing 20<sup>th</sup> century mass produced stormproof fanlight windows in north and east elevations will be replaced with simpler casement windows.

8.04 20<sup>th</sup> century doors and windows on south elevations will be replaced with windows which maximise glazed and openable areas for natural light and ventilation sufficient to comply with Building Regulations.

## 9 Design - Landscaping

9.01 It is not possible to provide private amenity space for occupiers. Residents of Old Hatfield have a right of access to utilise the grounds of Hatfield House. The provision has been accepted with other applications as being appropriate, e.g. S6/2014/2763/FP Change of use and alterations to Willow House. Furthermore, it is also likely that occupiers of the proposed flats would be without young children.

9.02 The small courtyard in the south west corner of the application site will accommodate refuse storage as follows:

- 2 no. 240 litre rubbish bins.
- 2 no. 240 litre recycling bins with 40 litre boxes for paperer recycling.

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## 10 Access

10.01 Delegated officer report 6/2017/1368/FUL stated that:

*"The application site is within a sustainable location, within walking distance of a range of shops and services and with good access to public transport. In particular, the site is well situated to benefit from Hatfield railway station and the new bus/taxi interchange which is situated to the north east. From here buses provide local services as well as to destinations around Hertfordshire.*

*"Hatfield railway station has direct trains to London, Peterborough and Cambridge as well as to the north. There are also good pedestrian and cycle provision in the surrounding area with links to the Hatfield Town Centre and local facilities and amenities. Given the parking restrictions that exist around Old Hatfield, it is highly unlikely that any future residents would park on street. Visitor parking is available within several nearby public car parks.*

*"Given the site's accessible location, the number of units proposed, the parking restrictions around the site and the potential for bicycle storage on site, it is considered that a car free development in this location would not give rise to a detrimental impact to highway safety to warrant the refusal of the application."*

## 11 Conclusion

11.01 This Design and Access Statement and other submitted documents have:

- Justified the principle of conversion and use.
- Highlighted the social benefit that would arise from the proposed development.
- Undertaken a balanced analysis and weighing up of benefit and harm.

11.02 Accordingly, we look forward to the granting of planning permission and listed building consent in due course.

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## Appendix A

### Photographs of the application site and surrounding building



**Photo 1** West elevation



**Photo 2** South elevation



**Photo 3** View looking down Park Street



**Photo 4** View looking towards Salisbury Square



**Photo 5** View looking up Park Street



**Photo 6** View from adjoining car park