



**Application by Ashtons**

Replacement shopfront  
No 29 Wigmores North, Welwyn Garden City

**Planning Report of Mark Williams BA (Hons), MA, MRTPI**

**DLA Ref: 15/184**

**August 2015**

The evidence which I have prepared and provided for this proposal in this report is true and has been prepared and is given in accordance with the guidance of the Royal Town Planning Institute and I confirm that the opinions expressed are my true and professional opinions.

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**Photograph 1. The application site**



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

This report relates to an application for a replacement shopfront at No 29 Wigmores North, Welwyn Garden City.

### 1.1 Summary

The report will demonstrate that the proposal would result in an attractive shopfront which would at least preserve the appearance of the building and the surrounding area. The proposal would facilitate internal changes which would provide an improved layout for visitors and additional employment opportunities. The new access arrangements would also provide improved accessibility for all users.

## 2.0 SITE & CONTEXT APPRAISAL

### 2.1 Site Location

This site is located to the south of Wigmores North and is within the Welwyn Garden City town centre.

### 2.2 Site Description

The site comprises a mid-terrace commercial unit with a Class A2 estate agent on the ground floor and ancillary offices above.

### 2.3 Proposals Map Notation and Other Relevant Designations

The 2005 District Plan proposals map shows the site to be within a Primary Retail Core, a Retail Frontage and a Conservation Area.

### 2.4 Surrounding Area

The surrounding area is characterised by commercial uses at ground floor level. These comprise predominantly Class A1 and A2 uses. The Howard Centre and Welwyn Garden City railway station are located to the south-east of the site.

### 3.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1.0 A summary of the previous planning history of the site is set out in Table 3.1

**Table 3.1:** Relevant Planning History, No 29 Wigmores North, Welwyn Garden City

LPA Ref No.	Description of Development	Decision	Date
N6/1992/0192	Alterations to shopfront and alterations to rear	Granted	30.11.92
N6/1992/7015	Externally illuminated fascia and projecting signs	Granted	30.11.92
N6/1997/0322	Externally illuminated signage	Granted	10.06.97
N6/2002/0699	Change of use from Class A1 to Class A2	Granted	24.06.02
N6/2002/1441	New shop front and alterations to the rear	Granted	09.12.02
N6/2002/1440	Illuminated signage	Granted	09.12.02

### 4.0 POLICY CONTEXT

#### 4.1 Welwyn Hatfield District Plan 2005

I consider the following policies to be directly relevant to this application: -

Policy No	Title
D1	Quality of Design
D2	Character and Context

#### 4.2 Supplementary Planning Guidance

The following guidance is relevant to this application:

Supplementary Design Guidance 2005

Welwyn Garden City Guide to shopfront and advertisement design 2012

#### 4.3 The National Planning Policy Framework

This sets out the Government's planning policies for England. Of particular relevance to this application are Sections 7 (Requiring good design) and 12 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment).

## 5.0 DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

5.1 This application seeks a replacement shopfront. The proposed alterations include the following:

- Replacement shopfront window with an aluminium frame
- A relocated glass entrance door with stainless steel fittings and ironmongery
- The door would be recessed with a ramped access
- The existing edge pilasters and cornice would be repainted

5.2 No alterations are proposed to the fascia and there would be no new signage.

## 6.0 EVALUATION

6.1.0 Based on the analysis set out in sections 2 to 5, I consider that the main issue raised by this application is the impact of the proposal on the character and appearance of the existing building, the streetscene and the Conservation Area. In considering this issue, I will assess the proposal against the Shopfront Design section of the Supplementary Design Guidance. First, I will set out the rationale behind the proposal.

### 6.1.1 The rationale

The proposal is part of a process by Ashtons to provide modern, attractive shopfronts for their offices. They have recently had similar schemes approved within both the St Albans and Harpenden Conservation Areas. The external alterations facilitate internal changes which provide an improved layout for staff and customers. The proposals would allow for a larger window display, extra desk space and an enhanced layout for visitors. The approvals at St Albans and Harpenden resulted in increased staff levels, and it is anticipated that the number of staff at the Wigmores North office would increase from 10 to 15.



Photograph 6.1.1 recently constructed shopfront at London Road, St Albans

- 6.1.2 **Supplementary Design Guidance, Paragraph 7.5 (i)** This provision requires shopfronts which harmonise with the existing building and streetscene by being designed to reflect the existing features and the façade. The Council's design guide 'Welwyn Garden City – Guide to shopfront and advertisement design' describes Wigmores North as an area with shopfronts comprising a designed entablature. This is identified as the most common type of shopfront in the town and is characterised by fascia and cornices on top of pilasters. The proposal would retain these important features to ensure that the historic appearance of the shopfront and buildings are not lost. No new materials would be introduced, as the existing shopfront comprises metal framed windows. I also note that many of the other shopfronts in the locality comprise metal rather than timber frames.
- 6.1.3 **(ii)** The proposal would not detract from the appearance of the building as whole. The shopfront would have a simple, elegant design which would complement the upper floor.
- 6.1.4 **(iii)** The scheme would not alter the basic proportions of the shopfront. The existing pillars and fascia would be retained and no new logos, lettering or advertisements are proposed.
- 6.1.5 **(iv)** The proposal relates to a single shopfront, it would not therefore create a harmful or uncharacteristic vertical emphasis of the ground floor.
- 6.1.6 **(v)** The proposal does not seek to replace any remaining original features of the building. The existing edge pilasters would be retained and repainted to match the existing high level column and cornice colour.
- 6.1.7 **(vi)** No internal or external security shutters are proposed. These are not necessary as the premises are not a shop which stores valuable goods. The shopfront would comprise Building Regulations compliant toughened safety glass.
- 6.1.8 **(vii)** The shopfront has been designed to provide easy access for disabled users. The new door would be recessed from the pavement and a new ramp would be inserted. The ramp would be at a 1:12 gradient, which, at a distance of less than 2m, would be compliant with Part M of the Building Regulations. It would be constructed using anti-slip tiles and would provide a level door access.
- 6.1.9 **(viii)** There is not an independent access to the first floor offices from the front of the unit. The first floor offices are accessed via a secondary entrance at the rear.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 This application relates to a proposal for a replacement shopfront at No 29 Wigmores North, Welwyn Garden City.
- 7.2 The proposal would ensure the retention of all historic features in compliance with the Supplementary Design Guidance and the Welwyn Garden City Guide to shopfront and advertisement design. The design would result in a simple, elegant shopfront which preserves the character and appearance of the existing building, the streetscene and the Conservation Area.
- 7.3 The new entrance arrangements would result in improved access for people with impaired mobility.