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Applicant: Michael Stirk
3-4 Liverpool Buildings,
Liverpool Road,
Worthing,
BN11 1SY

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT FOR THE PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE TO CREATE
1NO. 2-BEDROOM, 4-PERSON FIRST FLOOR UNIT AT
3-4 LIVERPOOL BUILDINGS, LIVERPOOL ROAD, WORTHING, BN11 1SY



Fig. 1: Photos showing front façade at 3-4 Liverpool buildings

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Fig. 2: Photo showing rear façade at 3-4 Liverpool buildings

1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application for the change of use of the first floor of Units 3–4 Liverpool Buildings, Liverpool Road, Worthing to provide a single self-contained residential flat.

The proposed development comprises:

“Creation of a 2-Bed, 4-Person unit. Change of Use of first floor accommodation from Class E to Class C3. Minor elevation alterations to rear, including the extension of existing extract duct to above first floor window level.”

Planning permission was previously granted under application AWDM/0156/21 for the conversion of the same floorspace to provide two residential units (a studio and a two-bedroom flat) with associated external alterations.

The present proposal differs from the previously approved scheme and therefore requires a new planning application. However, the principle of residential development at this location has already been accepted by the Local Planning Authority and the current proposal represents a less intensive and less contentious form of development, providing a single larger dwelling rather than two smaller units.

The proposed flat would provide a Gross Internal Area (GIA) of 99.4sqm, exceeding the minimum space standards required for residential development.

2. Site Description

The application site comprises the first floor of Units 3 & 4 Liverpool Buildings, located on Liverpool Road within Worthing Town Centre.

Liverpool Buildings forms a two-storey flat-roofed 1950s brick-built terrace building forming part of a commercial parade that fronts Liverpool Road and angles towards the pedestrianised Montague Centre.

The application relates to the first floor of Units 3-4 Liverpool Buildings, which currently comprises vacant space above the ground floor café 'The Coffee House and Kitchen'.

The building backs onto Bank Passage, a narrow service road accessed from Liverpool Road. This route provides servicing access to the rear of the building and surrounding properties.

The site is located within:

- Worthing Town Centre
- Central Shopping Area – Primary Zone A
- South Street Conservation Area

Liverpool Buildings itself is a modest mid-20th century commercial building which, while located within the conservation area, has limited architectural significance and makes a largely neutral contribution to the character of the conservation area (see Fig. 1 & 2 above).

The site is highly accessible and well served by local amenities, public transport and town centre services. Worthing railway station is located approximately 1km to the north, providing regular services to Brighton, London and the wider region.

The site lies within Flood Zone 3, and while the proposed accommodation is at first floor level, a Flood Risk Assessment has been included as required.

3. Planning History

The site has been subject to a number of planning applications relating to redevelopment and residential conversion.

Of particular relevance is planning permission AWDM/0156/21, which granted approval for:

- Change of use of the first floor of Units 3–4 Liverpool Buildings
- Creation of two residential units (1 studio and 1 two-bedroom flat)
- Associated external alterations including window replacement and refuse storage.

In determining that application, the Council concluded that there was no objection in principle to increasing residential accommodation within the town centre, recognising that flats play an important role in delivering higher density housing in sustainable locations.

The officer's report also confirmed that:

- the proposal complied with space standards
- the design and external alterations were appropriate to the character of the building
- the development would not harm the South Street Conservation Area or the setting of the adjacent listed building
- the highly sustainable town centre location justified the absence of on-site car parking.

The current proposal therefore builds upon an established planning precedent for residential conversion at this site, albeit in a modified and less intensive form.

4. The Proposed Development

This application seeks planning permission for the conversion of the first floor of Units 3–4 to create one self-contained residential unit.

The proposed dwelling would be a two-bedroom, four-person flat with a total floor area of approximately 99.4sqm GIA.

The internal layout provides:

1. Large open-plan living / kitchen / dining space
2. 2no. double bedrooms
3. Shower room
4. Utility room
5. Study space
6. Circulation space and storage
7. Step-free cycle, refuse and recycling storage at Ground floor level

The proposed flat significantly exceeds the national Space Standards, providing a high standard of internal accommodation.

5. Planning Policy Context

The proposed development accords with the relevant provisions of the Development Plan and national planning policy.

The site lies within Worthing Town Centre where policies support a mix of uses including residential development.

Relevant policies include:

Worthing Core Strategy (2011)

Policy 6 – Retail

Policy 7 – Meeting Housing Need

Policy 8 – Getting the Right Mix of Homes

Policy 16 – Built Environment and Design

Policy 17 – Sustainable Construction

Policy 19 – Sustainable Travel

Saved Worthing Local Plan Policies (2003)

Policy TR9 – Parking Requirements

Policy H18 – Residential Amenity

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Space Standards SPD (2012)

- Guide to Residential Development (2013)

National Planning Policy Framework

The NPPF encourages the efficient use of land and the reuse of under-utilised buildings, particularly in sustainable locations such as town centres.

The officer's report for the previously approved scheme also acknowledged that the Council cannot currently demonstrate a full five-year housing land supply, meaning that proposals which contribute to housing delivery should be afforded significant weight.

The conversion of underutilised upper floors to residential use therefore aligns strongly with national policy objectives.

6. Design

The proposed development has been designed to make efficient use of the existing building while ensuring that external alterations remain minimal.

Importantly, no alterations are proposed to the front elevation of the building, ensuring that the appearance of Liverpool Buildings along Liverpool Road remains unchanged.

Only minor alterations are proposed to the rear elevation, primarily associated with creating the cycle, refuse and recycling storage provision and creating an internal access stair to the first floor unit.

One further benefit of the scheme is that an illegal and dangerous timber stair currently providing access to the first-floor space (constructed by previous owners) can be removed – see Figs. 2&3.



Fig. 3: Photo showing fenestration to adjacent properties within the Liverpool Buildings terrace

This stair trespasses on land beyond the curtilage of the 3-4 Liverpool Buildings property, and its presence has been vigorously challenged by the adjoining owner who is very pleased it is being removed.

Associated with the above referenced stair is the incongruous white uPVC door and window unit at its summit which are to be replaced with a window in keeping with the other fenestration running along the rear faced of the terrace (see Figs. 2&3). Likewise the old window giving onto the Shower room which shows considerable signs of disrepair is also to be replaced, bringing the rear façade back into keeping with the remainder of the terrace which it currently significantly compromises.

The design approach therefore improves and enhances the architectural character of the existing building while respecting its simple mid-twentieth century form.

In assessing the previously approved scheme, the Council concluded that the proposed alterations would be sensitive to the style and character of the building and would not harm the character or appearance of the South Street Conservation Area or the setting of the adjacent listed building.

Given that the current proposal involves fewer alterations than the approved scheme, it follows that the impact on the conservation area and surrounding townscape would be negligible.

The development therefore accords with Policy 16 of the Worthing Core Strategy, which requires high quality design that respects local character and context.

7. Residential Amenity

The proposed development has been designed to provide high quality living accommodation for future occupants.

As noted above, the proposed flat significantly exceeds the minimum floor areas required under the Nationally Described Space Standards and the Council's Space Standards SPD (2012).

The layout provides well-proportioned habitable rooms, its dual aspect providing the accommodation with ample amounts of natural light and outlook.

As noted in the officer's report for the approved scheme, residential accommodation in this location can be made acceptable subject to appropriate mitigation measures relating to noise from surrounding commercial uses.

The present proposal would be capable of complying with similar conditions relating to sound insulation protecting the unit from commercial noise, and odour mitigation.

Although no private external amenity space is proposed, this is typical for residential development within town centre locations and was accepted as part of the previously approved scheme.

Furthermore, the site is located within easy walking distance of nearby public open spaces including Liverpool Gardens (2 mins walk) Steyne Gardens (7 mins walk) and Victoria Park (17 m ins walk), not to mention Worthing Beach (4 mins walk).

8. Access, Transport and Servicing

The site is located in a highly sustainable town centre location with excellent access to public transport and local amenities.

The Local Highway Authority previously confirmed that residential conversion of the upper floors would not give rise to a material highway safety concern or severe impact on the highway network.

No on-site car parking is proposed, reflecting both the existing situation and the sustainable nature of the site.

The previous approval provided cycle storage internally at first floor level.

In contrast, the current proposal provides cycle storage, refuse and recycling facilities at ground floor level to the rear of the building, accessed from Bank Passage.

This arrangement provides several advantages - step-free access to cycle storage, improved usability and convenience and a clearer separation of residential servicing functions from internal living space.

The proposed servicing arrangements therefore represent a functional improvement over the previously approved scheme.

9. Planning Balance and Relationship to the Previously Approved Scheme

In determining application AWDM/0156/21, the Local Planning Authority concluded that the proposal was acceptable in principle having regard to the policy context and the sustainable town centre location of the site. The officer's report noted that there is no objection in principle to increasing the level of residential accommodation within the town centre, with Core Strategy Policy 8 supporting higher density housing and recognising the important role that flats play in meeting housing needs in sustainable locations.

The officer's assessment also confirmed that the development would make effective use of previously underutilised upper floor floorspace and that the proposal would not undermine the vitality or viability of the town centre retail function. The limited loss of potential (but once again currently un-used) ancillary commercial floorspace associated with the provision of refuse storage was considered acceptable and not harmful to the function of the Primary Shopping Area.

In design terms, the Council concluded that the modest external alterations associated with the conversion would be sensitive to the style and character of the building and would not harm the character or appearance of the South Street Conservation Area or the setting of the adjacent Grade II listed Lloyds Bank building.

The officer's report further confirmed that the proposed residential units would meet the required internal space standards and that appropriate mitigation measures could ensure acceptable living conditions for future occupiers in relation to surrounding commercial activity.

The present application seeks approval for a revised scheme that differs from the approved proposal but retains the same fundamental planning principles. Importantly, the revised scheme represents a reduction in development intensity, replacing the previously approved two flats with a single larger dwelling. The proposed flat significantly exceeds the applicable space standards and therefore represents an enhancement in terms of residential quality.

Furthermore, the current proposals introduce improved servicing arrangements, with cycle storage, refuse and recycling facilities located at ground floor level to the rear of the building, providing convenient and step-free access. This arrangement represents a functional improvement over the previously approved scheme where cycle storage was proposed internally at first floor level. The proposed treatment of the rear façade will also result in a significant improvement of the existing elevation.

Having regard to the conclusions reached by the Local Planning Authority in granting permission for residential conversion of the first floor of the building, it is considered that the principle of the development has already been clearly established. The current proposal, which provides a single larger dwelling with minimal external alterations and improved servicing arrangements, should therefore be regarded as less intensive and less contentious than the scheme previously approved.

10. Conclusion

This application seeks permission to convert the first floor of 3–4 Liverpool Buildings to provide a single two-bedroom residential flat.

The principle of residential development at this location has already been established through the grant of planning permission for two residential units under application AWDM/0156/21.

The current proposal differs from that scheme and therefore requires planning permission; however, it represents a less intensive and less contentious form of development, offering several clear advantages:

- reduction in the number of residential units from two to one
- provision of a substantially larger dwelling exceeding space standards
- no alterations to the front elevation
- only minor rear elevation changes
- improved servicing arrangements with ground floor cycle and refuse storage with step-free access.

The development would deliver high-quality residential accommodation in a highly sustainable town centre location while preserving the character of the building and the surrounding conservation area.

Having regard to the established planning precedent at the site and the relevant local and national planning policies, the proposed development is considered to represent an appropriate and acceptable form of development.