

Our Ref: H16018/KH  
Date: 18th June 2016

## **Design & Access (Planning & Sustainability) Statement:**

### **Corn Exchange, Crickhowell - Alterations & Refurbishment**



FRONT ELEVATION

#### **Introduction.**

Gil Chambers (Gil Chambers Associates) & Karen Hoole (Hoole & Walmsley Architects Hoole Studio Ltd.) have been commissioned by Corn Exchange Crickhowell Ltd., a community owned limited company, to produce a design for a planning and listed building application for the conversion of the existing Corn Exchange into retail/ business units with domestic accommodation over. The information within is to be considered alongside the Heritage Statement and application drawings.

Pre application discussions have taken place with Conservation Officer Rosie Burton in May 2016 to assess the proposals and establish a methodology for the alterations. A Bat Report commissioned by the owners Punch Taverns accompanies this application and confirms no bat activity in the building.

The Corn Exchange is situated in the designated Conservation Area of Crickhowell within the broader setting of the Brecon Beacons National Park. The proposals are in keeping with the existing commercial character of the area and will provide suitably sized A1 & A2 retail units with separate domestic accommodation above.

#### **Local Context.**

The Corn Exchange is a public house which ceased trading in 2014 with residential accommodation at first floor and also within the attic story. Set on the High Street it is Grade II listed for group value. Its accommodation is found within two distinctly separate buildings of a traditional vernacular, discussed in more detail in the Heritage Statement.

The general character of this area is of a traditional vernacular with painted render walls and slate roofs, although there is some variety of materials such as the classical stonework detailing to the covered market hall. Window styles are a mix of traditional sash and casements and larger fixed glazed shop frontages. The High Street's facades are further animated with a mix of signage materials and style and extending awnings.

### **Design Proposals.**

The design proposals are discussed in detail in the accompanying Heritage Statement. As shown on the application drawings the external appearance of the street frontage is maintained with some alterations to the window sizes to support the proposed use as retail units. A new opening is created to provide route through the building, via a ginnel, to the rear yard allowing direct access to the three residential units above along with emergency escape access from the rear of the shops. The rear of the lower building will be modified to allow replacement wc, kitchen and storage areas for the shops and access and amenity areas to the residential units above.

The proposed rear ground floor extensions will be finished with painted render walls with timber decks over for the residents amenity. The glazing will be contemporary fully glazed high performance colour coated aluminium to the rear with in a traditional painted wood casement/sash/ fixed pane styles on the front elevation as agreed with the Conservation Officer. Rooflights will be limited to allow fresh air purging of the interior bathrooms and to allow the sun pipe illumination of the ginnel. Landscaping will be minimal with the rear yard and ginnel finished in concrete ,as existing, or paving.

### **Accessibility.**

Design principles were applied during design development allow for inclusive access to and within the commercial units. There are level access thresholds at all of the commercial units entrance doors and the existing internal ramped approach of the third can be modified to a more appropriate pitch. The door widths could be made suitable for the passage of wheelchairs to allow safe inclusive internal and external mobility throughout. Any changes in floor level will be identified through the use of contrasting floor materials, or highlighting the edges to provide assistance to the visually impaired. In addition it is suggested that consideration should be given to the provision of contrast in the colour schemes and door furniture. The new ginnel will be well lit with natural daylight or electric light, with details approved with the local authority. Hand rails will be placed on either side of the rear access stair to assist and protect all users. Consideration was given in the above to the values and requirements set out in CABES "Principles of Inclusive design" (2006), Building Regulation Approved Document Part M (2013). Minimal maintenance will be required for the rooflights but if required can be accessed using internal ladders by a suitably competent person.

### **Character. (Scale, Layout, Appearance)**

The proposal is in keeping with the appearance of the surrounding buildings. The new and altered openings maintain a balanced frontage and are complemented by the signage arrangements. The proposed alterations to the rear elevation are at a scale in keeping with the existing building and surrounding buildings. The new zinc clad doorways are subservient in height and mass to the main roofs and the dark grey colour of the zinc will blend in with the slate roof finish. The new rooflights and sun pipe will not be visible from the main elevation, are unobtrusive from the rear being few in number and discreetly placed. The layout allows for public areas to the front of the building with private areas to the rear and above street level. Access to these areas is clearly legible through the use of a separate securely gated ginnel, as feature already evident within the town centre.

### **Community Safety.**

The proposal is appropriate for the location and will not present a hazard to the community. Use of this vacant building will improve security to the rear of the neighbouring buildings and also to the properties on the opposite side of the High Street through natural surveillance. There will be a minimal increase in traffic, with commercial deliveries already a long established activity on the High Street. The approach to the proposed building is readily legible and appropriate pathways are provided. A secure entrance gate to the ginnel will allow the rear areas to remain private with a quick release mechanism to allow emergency escape.

### **Environmental Sustainability.**

The proposal will be built to modern standards to create a high thermally efficient building fabric. with allowances as required by the listed building status. The orientation and fenestration will limit excessive heat gain and allow good internal light levels, thereby reduce the need for artificial cooling and light. The proposals allow for the efficient use of a vacant building. The site benefits from the existing public transport infrastructure and secure bike storage can be provided on site within the rear yard. The internal and outside amenity areas can accommodate the required recycling and

composting storage ready for kerbside collection by the Local Authority. Currently the surface water discharges into the combined sewer system and alternatives can be explored for suitability. The principles of the Considerate Constructors scheme would be used on this scheme to reduce CO2 production and energy use, adopting best practice in preventing water and air pollution, reducing transport distances, and as part of this scheme minimise the potential adverse effects on neighbours during the construction period. A Site Waste Management Plan would be implemented to reduce and recycle construction waste.

### **Movement to, from and within the development**

The proposed layout has clearly identified routes, which assist safe and inclusive pedestrian passage from the public domain to the interior areas. There are both public and on street car parking within the locality for both customers, staff, residents and visitors. Public transport to the site is available within 100 meters of the site to Abergavenny, Brecon via surrounding villages. There are both public and on street car parking within the locality for both customers, staff, residents and visitors.

### **Planning.**

The proposal is in accordance with the requirements of Planning Policy Wales, (PPW) as it meets the relevant Objectives of Good Design as set out in section 4.11, Figure 4.5, in that it is sympathetic in design, scale, mass and materials to the existing building and broader setting, does not damage the area's character and appearance: the public and private spaces are clearly identified, the residential flats provide an alternative choice to the predominant house type in the area, thereby improving their health and well being and it upgrades the thermal performance of the building. The proposed scheme provides safe inclusive access to and within, supporting community safety, while improving security of the area through natural surveillance. In addition the proposal will have no detrimental impact on the existing neighbours with regard to overlooking, amenity and overshadowing.

With regard to the requirements of Section 6.5, Development Management and the Historic Environment, it is understood that continuation of the existing use is not appropriate as it has been shown not to be viable and a new use is required. This new investment will ensure longterm survival of this rather neglected building through on going repair and maintenance. A thorough assessment of the Corn Exchange has been made and presented in the accompanying Heritage Statement which establishes elements of significance and methods to retain and/or enhance them.

Planning Policy Wales, Technical Advice Note 12: Design (TAN 12) key objectives to achieving good design are met as set out above. In addition the proposals are environmentally sustainable as they can be built using local skills and locally available materials. The site is environmentally sustainable as it is located in the town settlement, within walking distance of the nearby primary and secondary schools, health centre, shops, churches and public houses and also the bus stops on the A40. The thermal efficiency will be improved to give a highly insulated building fabric and good internal light levels reducing the need for supplementary artificial lighting.

It is considered that the proposals satisfy Brecon Beacons National Park Authority's current adopted planning policies, with the most pertinent being Policies 19 and 27, from the Brecon Beacons National Park Authority Approved Local Development Plan Dec 2013. The proposals meet the relevant criteria of these policies as it is considered that they will enhance the appearance of the Conservation Area through replacement of the poor quality fenestration and general improvements to the fabric and appearance of the Corn Exchange. The scale, form, layout and suggested materials are appropriate in appearance and proportion and in keeping with the local character of the area. The proposal will not have an impact on the qualities of the Brecon Beacons National Park. They will cause no loss of amenity to the area, adjacent properties or general public.

The proposed change of use to Use Classes A1 & A2 at ground floor level meets the requirements of the designated retail centre as shown on the Local Development Plan Proposals Map for Crickhowell and this change of use is in accordance with Policy 42. A residential use is already established at first and attic storey and is common to other buildings in the location.

The proposal will not cause an increase in traffic, and the site is readily accessible via local public transport to both Brecon and Abergavenny while within ready walking distance of Crickhowell's shops and services. The proposal takes a sustainable design approach through using locally available resources and materials, creating good internal light levels and having a thermally efficient fabric, which is readily maintainable if and when required.

## Conclusion

The proposals for the Corn Exchange creates no visual harm to its setting within the National Park, its character is in keeping with the local buildings and the surrounding area. Its scale, mass, materials and details respond to the context and will not harm the amenity of the surrounding properties, and broader area. As a local community investment initiative the proposals will enhance Crickhowell's distinctive character through support of the independent traders.

## Appendix

### Photographs.



Corn Exchange from the north



Corn Exchange from the south



Two examples of local ginnels on the High Street

