Design and Access Statement
For
Proposed Change of Use
Extension and Renovation,
in a Conservation Area



PLANNING AND
BUILDING CONTROL

29 JAN 2013

at

4-6, Lapwing Lane
West Didsbury, Manchester

Peter Summersgill Architecture 07971 458 730

Premises at 4-6 Lapwing Lane West Didsbury

Use

Previous History

These are existing premises situated close to the junction of Lapwing Lane and Burton Road. The application for change of use in a conservation area relates to the first and second floor with an entrance to the property at ground floor level.

Situated in the heart of the West Didsbury Conservation Area these premise were built some 150 years ago. They consisted of retail units at ground floor level with living accommodation at first and second floor above.

Some 12 years ago the ground floor was converted to licensed premises and operated as Noel's Wine Bar. About this time the use of the upper floors changed to offices and was occupied by a company in the business of audio visual production. At their height they employed 40 people on the site. Eventually they moved to other premises in the area due to expansion and the premises were then acquired by the present applicant Mr. Simon Barker.

Mr. Barker is a prominent local business man actively involved in the local community as the owner and operator of the Metropolitan Restaurant and Public House next door to the application site. The applicant is well known and respected locally and his business operations have breathed life into the local economy.

The usage at 4-6 Lapwing Lane changed eventually and now operates at ground floor as Piccolino's Italian restaurant. The office usage continued, at first and second floor, until almost two years ago when the premises became vacant and have remained so ever since.

The upper floors are in a good state of repair and have been well maintained but continued disuse is never advisable and this proposal offers a chance to bring the building back to life.

Proposed Use

This refurbishment will mean a change of use from offices to four residential units. The layout and construction will be modified to create four luxurious apartments complying with all modern standards.

The ground floor has a clearly defined entrance area leading to a generous lobby which will be retained with minor modifications of a largely decorative and aesthetic nature. There will be a new canopy over the front entrance which will also house a small refuse and bike store.

Layout

The internal layout will be significantly modified but the external foot print will change only slightly. Existing spatial arrangements do lend themselves to splitting into self contained units. From the entrance hallway a staircase winds its way into the central core of the building which is ideal. This stair requires no modification to its design other than some additional fire protection and will therefore be retained.
A secondary metal spiral staircase which acted as an inter office link will be taken out and the floor made good.

A two storey window which lit the well to the spiral stair will be filled at the new intervening floor level with a spandrel panel finished externally with natural cedar boarding.

A redundant brick and metal chimney/flue at the rear of the building is to be taken down and the adjacent bedroom extended into this area.

All the apartments have a safe direct access to the staircase. Apartment 1. has a second emergency door from the lounge to the stairway to avoid having to escape through the kitchen in the event of a fire.

Generally the layout works well and the apartments have good room sizes. The layout pays close regard to fire safety. The second floor rooms to the frontage are within the roof shape and as a result we have designed the rooms with the sloping ceilings and slightly diminished headroom as bedrooms.

Scale

The scale of the development is dictated by the size of the existing building, but care has been taken not to cram in more accommodation than reasonable. The only additions to the building are the small extension to the first floor bedroom at the rear and the refuse and cycle store at the front. This front extension is modest in scale and unobtrusive in the context of the whole of the building's frontage.
All the apartments are a good size varying from 79 sq. m and 69 sq. m at first floor with two at 65 sq. m at second floor. All the apartments have two bedrooms. Fully fitted kitchens and will have good quality bathroom fittings.

Landscape

There are no landscaping proposals on this project. Shrubs in planting boxes will be located at the frontage.

Appearance

There will be some modest changes to the appearance of the building. Replacement windows will exactly match the existing windows.

The small extension to the first floor bedroom in apartment 2 to the rear will be constructed with matching rendered masonry walls and a sloping slated roof. This extension is largely hidden from public view.

The infill of the spandrel panel to the long window at the rear will be in natural cedar boarding which will match the materials proposed for the new front door and the external cladding of the refuse and cycle store.

The canopy to the front entrance will be constructed using timber framing in conjunction with metal studs and posts and glazed with translucent polycarbonate sheeting. In appearance the canopy will closely resemble the canopy to the restaurant which covers most of the existing building frontage. With shrubs in planting boxes suitably positioned this modified front entrance should blend in well with the rest of the building.

All surplus wiring and extract equipment will be removed from the rear of the building. Existing air conditioning cassettes fixed to the walls of this property which are the property of the restaurant below are to be removed and re-sited by the restaurant.

Grey powder coated Juliet balcony railings will be fitted on the rear elevation as an amenity for the residents and a secondary means of escape.

At first floor level the apartments will have access to the rear flat roof area. This access will be subject to strict rules on usage by the residents. Apartments will be rented not sold and each tenancy agreement will indicate no deck chairs, sun loungers, barbeques, umberellas or parasols are to be used or permanently sited on the flat roof balcony areas.

Access

Access to the building has it's limitations. Every facility has been afforded by the applicant as landlord to the ground floor restaurant. The restaurant have been allowed to make provision for good disabled access and given additional space in which to create disabled toilet facilities. No such provision can be made for the upper floor apartments. Whilst there is good easy access to the main entrance to the apartments, there is no scope for improving facilities beyond this point.

Any improvements to access to the upper floors could not be made without major structural alterations which would destroy the suitability of the building for conversion to apartments.

Sustainability

This property is at the heart of the 'village' with easy level access to the full range of amenities. Residents enjoy regular bus services to all areas from stops immediately adjacent to the property.

The new Metrolink tram service due to open in April 2013 stops on Burton Road some 200 metres north east of the site with frequent services to the city centre and numerous points between and beyond.
The nearest main line railway station is situated at Burnage some 2.5 km. away, but trains to Manchester and beyond run regularly from this station.

Conclusion

This building suffers from a lack of it's own parking facilities. The situation has been ever thus and by this development, physically nothing changes. There is a considerable gain however in this proposed change of use. in that as offices the building has regularly housed in excess of 30 people, all potential car drivers.

This development is unlikely to generate car usage at more than four vehicles. The demographic these apartments attract tend to be professional couples or singles sharing, generally commuting by public transport to the nearby city centre. Car usage other than weekends tends to be minimal among this group because of the difficulties with, and high cost of parking within the city.

The applicant owns the adjacent car park at the Metropolitan, and never objected to the use of the car park by the former office tenants since so many of them were clients any way and some such tolerant understanding is likely to prevail with this situation. Nevertheless it must be clearly understood for legal and business reasons no formal arrangement for car parking can be entered into.

As office premises the building owners had their own private refuse disposal arrangements. The apartment residents as Council Tax payers will be entitled to local authority refuse collection hence the need to create on this restricted site bin storage facilities. We believe this arrangement well constructed and managed should prove no detriment to local amenity, and the management company for these premises have an excellent reputation in ensuring their premises are well kept and well run.

This building in its various guises has always had a commercial use at ground floor level and for most of its 150 year existence residential use above. This application seeks to restore and enhance that use. Approval of this scheme will reduce potential pressure on the already stretched parking facilities in the area. Approval will breathe new life into the building which will ensure it remains a viable and vital part of the community. The change of use is well considered and consistent with the building's location at the heart of the conservation area.

The change of use as a project closely allies with the Council's requirements and preferences for such premises and despite minor omissions presents an opportunity to create some splendid residential units.

We trust the Council will look favourably on our submission.