DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT– RETROSPECTIVE PLANNING APPLICATION

REF: DA24007 - 3 CENTRAL BUILDINGS

SITE ADRESS: 3 CENTRAL BUILDINGS, KINGSWAY, MANCHESTER M19 1SP

DATE: FEBRUARY 2024

PROPOSAL: RETROSPECTIVE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR STUDIO APARTMENT

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1. Introduction:

This **retrospective planning application** seeks approval for a self-contained studio apartment created from underutilized space at the rear of an existing retail unit. This statement explains the proposal, its alignment with relevant planning policies, and its positive contributions to the local environment through the efficient utilization of previously unused space.

2. Site and Context Analysis:

2.1 Location:

The site is located within a **secondary retail parade** along a main road, offering various shops to the local community. This commercial area forms a distinct streetscape contributing to the area's character. The ground floor of the specific unit has remained vacant for a significant period.

2.2 Surrounding Area:

The surrounding buildings comprise **ground-floor commercial units and first-floor apartments**, some of which have also converted their rear spaces into residential units. All residential units have independent access, separate from the retail units. This established mixed-use character presents an opportunity for the proposed studio to seamlessly integrate.

2.3 Site History:

The ground-floor commercial space has been **vacant for several years**. Its previous uses included retail and office space. Most recently, it operated as a fast-food takeaway until 2021. Due to difficulty finding tenants, the **rear space was converted into a studio apartment** in 2022, with the belief

that such work did not require planning permission. While **Permitted Development (PD) rights** might have been applicable at the time, the applicant acknowledges a failure to submit and obtain council approval prior to undertaking the conversion. This application rectifies that oversight by seeking retrospective planning permission.

3. Design Considerations and Access:

- **Space Standards:** The studio apartment is designed to maximize **space efficiency and user comfort**. A clever layout utilizes all available space, and all areas comply with national space standards.
- **Natural Light and Ventilation:** Recognizing the importance of a healthy living environment, the design incorporates a rear window and a visually appealing roof light. This combination maximizes natural daylight penetration, creating a well-lit and well-ventilated space, aligning with national space standards and best practices for residential design.
- **Residential Amenities:** The studio offers a comfortable and well-equipped living space, featuring a living and sleeping area, a kitchen, and a separate bathroom.
- **Impact on Neighbors:** The studio's positioning and design minimize potential impact on neighbouring properties. It has a dedicated entrance, separate from the retail unit and existing residential access points.
- **Visual Impact:** The proposal avoids external alterations to the building, ensuring it maintains the existing visual character of the retail parade.
- **Independent Access:** The studio boasts a dedicated access point at the rear, independent of the main shop entrance and existing residential access points, minimizing disruption.
- **Accessibility:** The access point complies with relevant accessibility standards, ensuring inclusivity for all potential occupants.

4. Proposal and Planning Policy Considerations:

4.1 National and Local Planning Policy:

This application aligns with the core principles of the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF):**

- **Promoting Sustainable Development:** The proposal encourages the efficient use of existing buildings, reducing the need for development on greenfield sites and contributing to sustainability goals (NPPF Paragraph 11).
- **Supporting a Strong, Competitive Economy:** By creating an additional housing option, the proposal contributes to meeting local housing needs, potentially attracting new residents and supporting local businesses (NPPF Paragraph 8).
- **Ensuring Good Design:** The proposal emphasizes minimal external alterations, maintaining the established visual character of the streetscape and respecting the surrounding residential area (NPPF Paragraph 60).
- **Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities:** The studio's design prioritizes natural light and ventilation, ensuring adequate living conditions and aligning with healthy living standards (NPPF Paragraph 91).
- **Creating Inclusive and Accessible Environments:** The studio's separate and independent access demonstrates consideration for creating inclusive living spaces (Section 8, NPPF).

Manchester City Council Local Plan:

- The proposal supports the vitality and viability of the secondary retail parade by creating an additional residential unit within close proximity to existing shops and amenities (Policy EM1).
- While retrospective, the proposal contributes to meeting local housing needs, particularly for smaller dwellings suitable for single occupants or young professionals, aligning with the policy's objectives (Policy H4).
- The design prioritizes minimal external alterations, maintaining the established character of the retail parade and respecting the surrounding residential neighbourhood. Additionally, careful consideration will be given to potential noise, light pollution, and overlooking, ensuring the amenity of existing residents is protected (Policy H10).
- The access point and internal layout, where feasible, will consider accessibility regulations to ensure inclusivity for all potential occupants (Policy H11).

National Space Standards:

- The proposed studio, measuring 37 square meters, complies with all relevant national space standards and planning policies related to dwelling size and amenity provisions, ensuring a comfortable and functional living space.

5. Conclusion

This proposal presents a well-designed and thoughtfully integrated solution that utilizes underutilized space within an existing building. It adheres to relevant national standards and planning principles and prioritizes minimal impact on the surrounding environment and existing users. We believe this application demonstrates a responsible and sustainable approach to development while respecting the established character of the area and contributing to the existing mixed-use environment and we hope the council will approve this application.