

### **Proposed change of use of former Penny Black Café to residential accommodation at rear of The Post Office, 37 Broad Street, Lyme Regis DT7 3QF**

#### **1 Introduction**

This design and access statement has been prepared to support a planning application for change of use from class A1 (now class E(a)) to class C3 and the conversion of the former ancillary tea room, known as the Penny Black Café, to a one-bedroom apartment. The site is situated in the town centre within the development boundary and conservation area of Lyme Regis, but it is not a listed building.

#### **2 Site Assessment**

##### *Physical Context*

37 Broad Street consists of the current post office with two flats above, the former sorting office is now a retail unit and behind this is the former Penny Black café premises. While the rest of the building is as originally constructed in about 1928, the part of the building previously occupied by the café is a single storey addition of later construction.

The post office and flats are accessed by a communal street door. The retail unit and the café are accessed by a separate door and an alleyway leading to a small, pleasant courtyard. Behind the café is a large sunny courtyard garden which is screened from surrounding properties by brick boundary walls. A large shed provides storage.

The proposed flat has an area of approximately 67 square metres on the ground floor with a further 15 square metres in the basement. The courtyard garden at the rear is approximately 69 square metres in area.

The immediate surrounding area contains businesses, restaurants and shops with flats above.

The town centre of Lyme Regis provides for all day-to-day shopping needs. Buses to Axminster and its mainline railway station and the larger shopping and cultural centres of Bridport and Dorchester stop outside of the post office, as does the local town bus. A bus service to Exeter and Poole stops in the town centre.

##### *Relevant Planning History*

Planning permission was granted in 2010 for the alteration, extension and change of use of part of the post office building to shop (Class A1 Retail) and ancillary tearoom (1/D/10/001260 refers). Conditions attached to the planning consent imposed restrictions on the opening hours of the café and applications in 2011 and 2013 sought and gained approval for extensions to these hours to improve the viability of the operation.

##### *Social Context*

Lyme Regis has an oversupply of restaurants and eating places but insufficient small dwelling units to meet market demand.

In January 2020, the proprietors of the café gave the landlord 6 months' notice of their intention to quit and the premises were marketed as a café by Martin Diplock Estate Agents, but no tenants were found. The café ceased trading in March 2020.

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### *Economic Context*

We believe that our proposal for makes the best use of this site. We understand that Lyme Regis has very few sites that could enable the development of a dwelling of this size in such a central location. We believe that it provides a rare opportunity to create a lower priced accommodation unit, within the town centre, which would be suitable for people working locally.

### **3 Proposals**

This planning application is for the conversion of the existing café premises to a one bedroom flat with an open plan kitchen/living/dining room overlooking the courtyard garden.

#### *Layout*

Access to the flat will be from the existing courtyard.

The apartment will be separated from the retail unit by a new party wall. The current bathroom, lobby and toilet areas will be combined to form an attractive kitchen/dining area with a vaulted ceiling. A rooflight will bring in natural light and provide ventilation.

The existing café seating and servery area will be divided to give a good size living area and a double bedroom. Double glazed doors and windows to each will bring in light and give views to the courtyard garden.

A shower room will be formed in the large entrance hall.

The basement will provide a utility room, a second WC and storage.

#### *Access*

The smooth-surfaced paving to the entrance way and courtyard will enable wheelchair/pushchair users to access the flat from the street.

There is space for a cycle rack by the front door.

#### *Appearance and Scale*

There will be no changes to the size of the café area and only minimal changes to its external appearance. A new front entrance door and glazed screen will be installed, the existing glazed opening at the rear will be enlarged and divided to provide glazed doors and windows to the living area and bedroom and a new roof window will be installed above the proposed kitchen area.

#### *Environmental Considerations*

Sustainability issues have been addressed in the following ways: -

- Local contractors and suppliers will be used for both demolition and construction where practicable.
- The new dwellings will be highly insulated, to meet current building regulations standards
- All timber will be sourced from sustainable forests.
- An area will be provided near the rear door for storing materials for recycling.

#### *Landscaping*

It is anticipated that a detailed landscaping scheme will be submitted as a condition of the planning approval, following further consultation with the council and neighbours.

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### **4 Land stability considerations**

The site is in Zone 2 of the Lyme Regis instability zones, however as no additions to or demolitions of the building are proposed the proposals will not have any detrimental effect on ground stability and a ground stability assessment is not therefore required. Dorset Council Technical Department will verify this.

### **5 Evaluation**

The café has shown itself to be unviable but when it was operating, concerns arose over the years about noise from the external courtyard café area impacting upon the neighbours. Conversion to a dwelling will overcome this problem.

We believe the proposed new dwelling sits comfortably on the site and will help to provide the type of housing needed by Lyme Regis residents, while enhancing the neighbourhood and retaining the character of the area.