

The Former One Bell Pub, 90 High Street, Watford

Our ref: 0104/090HIG/PDAS

PLANNING STATEMENT

PREPARED ON BEHALF OF THE APPLICANT ASPECT PROPERTY GROUP

VERSION: 1.1



Stewart
Management & Planning Solutions

THE FORMER ONE BELL PUB, 90 HIGH STREET, WATFORD

PLANNING STATEMENT

Introduction

Stewart M&PS has been instructed by Aspect Property Group Ltd to seek planning permission for a self-contained first floor office above the ground floor restaurant use being carried on at the former One Bell Pub, 90 High Street, Watford. In addition, a new bin enclosure is proposed to the rear of the building together with certain alterations to the rear.

Site & Location

The site is located on the west side of Watford High Street, to the north of St Mary's Church and east of Church car park. It has frontages onto the High Street, Church Square and St Mary's Church.



The site is within the designated town centre and one of its Prime Retail Frontages.

It is also within the St Mary's Conservation Area and is subject to an Article 4 Direction which restricts external painting and demolitions.

The site comprises a three-storey building that occupies the whole of the site which has a long history of use as a pub with tied accommodation above.

Recent Planning history

Conditional Planning permission was granted on 22nd June 2017 for the erection of a part one, part three storey side and rear extension together with conversion to 4no. self-contained flats and a restaurant (16/01451/FUL). The application drawings showed the restaurant on the ground and part of the first floor with the residential accommodation in the remainder of the first floor and above. The number of flats was reduced from 4 to 3 on 12th October 2017 by

virtue of application 17/01324/NONMAT. Significantly, the location and arrangement of the restaurant element of the scheme remained unchanged.



Discharge of conditions precedent, including details of refuse storage, was secured in stages between June 2018 and July 2020 together with the stopping up of a public footpath along the northern boundary of the site.

Planning permission was granted for the formation of an outside seating area in support of the approved restaurant use on 22nd November 2019.

Proposal

The applicants are the owners of the site and in 2020, they undertook to implement the planning permission 16/01451 (as amended) whilst securing a suitable occupier for the restaurant accommodation who would be charged with securing consent for the final fit-out and scheme of advertisements for their element of the scheme. They would also be responsible for discharge of any outstanding planning conditions.

Terms were agreed with Taco Bell in the late summer of 2020. However, as they finalised their proposals for the restaurant, it became apparent that government-imposed restrictions on restaurant uses due to the COVID-19 crisis meant that conventional restaurant dining would not be possible for months or even years. It was therefore agreed with the landlord that they would restrict the restaurant use to the ground floor, making use of the consented outdoor dining area when weather permits. The first-floor restaurant space would be used as ancillary offices.

For operational reasons, the position of the staircase serving the first-floor accommodation has been relocated to the north west corner of the building. The approved door and window openings are reconfigured to enable the first-floor office accommodation to be independently accessed. Planning permission is sought for the formation of a separately accessible and self-



contained first floor office area together with the necessary elevational alterations. In addition, experience of using the site over recent months has highlighted difficulties in operating the approved refuse storage arrangements, especially in the time before and after the bins are due for collection and conflicting collection schedules for commercial and domestic waste. A new fenced refuse storage area is therefore proposed to house the bins and waste fat

and oils associated with the restaurant separate to the domestic and office waste.

All relevant details are shown P/01, P/02 and P/03 which form part of the application.

Planning considerations

The proposed and existing uses fall within Class E of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 so would not require planning permission as of right. However, a material consideration arises from the physical works of self-containment and the independent access, in particular.

Externally, these works involve the reconfiguration of the door and window openings on the rear and north side elevation at ground floor level. No new openings are created. The changes are achieved by simply dropping 2 window cills to create entrances and raising one entrance threshold to create a window cill. Simple, close boarded fencing is proposed to screen the proposed bin enclosure to the rear of the site which would not be roofed so that it can receive natural ventilation. The alterations are considered to be minor in nature and do not materially alter the appearance of the building.

Internally, a lobby and WC have been created on the ground floor adjacent to the re-located staircase. On the first floor, there is now an open office area measuring about 68m². With floor to ceiling windows facing south and west it is considered that the accommodation is of a high standard that will be attractive to a range of occupiers. There is no dedicated car parking associated with the existing or proposed use however this is considered to be acceptable as the town centre is an accepted location for car-free employment generating uses. Also, the location of the site, in close proximity to the Church public car park and the availability of bus and rail travel options nearby, means that a strict application of policies requiring the provision of car parking would be inappropriate.

Conclusion

The proposed alterations are reasonably required for the successful and sustainable operation of the site. Moreover, they are entirely consistent with local plan policy for the area. Planning permission should therefore be granted, pursuant to Paragraph 11 (c) of the National Planning Policy Framework.

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