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Heritage Statement

25-26 Easton Street, High Wycombe, HP11 1NT

This Heritage Statement has been prepared by DWD in support of an application at 25-26 Easton Street for:

“External alterations to building including alterations to fenestration on side and rear elevations of the building and erection of cycle store and refuse storage area.”

The application has been submitted via the Planning Portal under application reference PP-09906696. The application is submitted alongside a secondary application (PP-09906646) which seeks prior approval for the change of use of the site from a Class B1a office (now Class E) to 8 class C3 residential units. This application is required in order to facilitate adequate daylight and access for the proposed residential units.

The Site

25-26 Easton Street (the “Site”) is located within the High Wycombe Town Centre boundary within the Town Centre Conservation Area. The property is not listed or immediately adjacent to any listed buildings.

The Site measures approximately 342 sq.m and comprises a B1(a) office unit (now Use Class E) across the ground, first and second floors.

High Wycombe Station is located 200m north of the Site and the closest bus service is located 110m to the west. The site is therefore considered to have a high level of public transport accessibility.

The Site is within Flood Zone 1, with a low annual probability of flooding, a flood risk assessment is therefore not required.

Pedestrian access to the upper floors is via a stairwell location on the right side of the Easton Street frontage.

The Site has 2 vehicle parking spaces and 10 cycle parking spaces.

Planning History

Prior approval was granted in September 2020 for “Prior notification application (Part 3 Class O) for change of use of building falling within Use Class B1(a) (Offices) to Use Class C3 (Dwellinghouses) with creation of 6 apartments” under application 20/06832/PNP3O.

Proposed Development

The Proposed Development is for alterations to the building elevations. The works proposed include:

- Removal of small roof structures on the western and northern elevations.
- Installation of 1no. door on western elevation.
- Installation of 7no. windows (4no. windows new openings and 3no. replacement windows) and 1no. door on western elevation.
- Removal of 2no. doors and 1 no window on rear elevation and replacement with 2no. windows.
- Works to rear elevation to fully enclose a narrow partially enclosed gap between two existing rear extensions.

The works proposed will support the conversion of the property from its current office use to a residential use. This is subject to a secondary application submitted to the Council under PP-09906646.

The works are considered appropriate to the building context and will be done in materials to match the existing finishes on the property.

Details of the specific door access locations and windows can be seen within the submitted plans.

Heritage Assessment

NPPF Chapter 16 ‘Conserving and enhancing the historic environment’ identifies at paragraph 189 that *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance”*.

It is considered that this Heritage Assessment is appropriate in the context of paragraph 189 of the NPPF when taking into consideration the works that are proposed and the building’s heritage significance.

Paragraph 192 that *“In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of ... the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation”*.

Paragraph 196 confirms that *“Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.”*

Local Plan Policy CP11 ‘Historic Environment’ states that the Council will promote the conservation and enhancement of the Historic Environment.

The proposed works are considered to improve the appearance of the building and as such will preserve and retain the Conservation Area’s significance. The works will also assist in ensuring the optimum and most viable use of the site for residential purposes and will enhance the living conditions for future residential occupiers compared to the extant prior approval granted under application ref. 20/06832/PNP30.

It is considered that the works that are proposed will preserve and enhance the visual amenities of the Conservation Area by replacing several windows in the west elevation with timber sash windows. Paragraph 196 of the NPPF requires that the public benefits of proposals, in this case securing the buildings optimum viable use to meet the need for housing, be weighed against alterations affecting heritage assets even if they cause less than substantial harm.

The proposed use of timber for the rear refuse and cycle storage space is considered appropriate in terms of providing a soft material that will not create a solid massing that could harm the conservation area. This hardstanding space is also considered to represent limited value to the conservation area due to its set back nature which is enclosed between modern buildings.

Summary

We consider that, for the reasons given above, the proposed works should be considered as acceptable in heritage terms as they will not impact the character of the conservation area.