

Planning Statement

8-10 Castle Street
Cirencester

Prepared on Behalf of: Charing x estates

Project: 13126

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Executive Summary

Evans Jones Ltd have been instructed by Charing Cross Limited to submit a planning and listed building application seeking consent for the conversion of the upper floors to 3 no. residential flats at 8, 9 and 10 Castle Street, Cirencester, GL7 1QA. This statement forms part of the submission made by Evans Jones.

The first and second (upper) floors are in Class E use and are currently being used for ancillary storage and offices in connection with the shops at ground floor level. The proposals relate to the change of use and internal alterations only; no external alterations are proposed.

The building is collectively Grade II listed as a terrace and forms part of the wider Cirencester Town Centre Conservation Area. The site is located within the town centre, in Cotswold District Councils main settlement.

This application demonstrates that the proposal is acceptable in principle complying with the relevant Development Plan policies; and that there is no harm to the relevant heritage assets. Furthermore, it is shown that there would be no adverse amenity impacts in terms of the prospective occupiers and compliance with minimum space standard requirements, and neighbouring properties; and that the development is consistent with accessibility and highways.

It is concluded that the proposal represents sustainable development in line with the Development Plan; emerging policy; national guidance and other material considerations.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement is submitted in support of the applications seeking full planning and listed building consent application for the conversion of the upper floors to 3 No. residential flats at 8, 9 and 10 Castle Street, Cirencester, GL7 1QA.

1.2 This Statement sets out the main planning considerations and justifications for the scheme. In support of the application, this Statement demonstrates that the proposed scheme is acceptable in principle and expands upon issues relating to impact upon the historic environment (listed building and conservation area), residential amenity and accessibility.

1.3 The application submitted comprises the following plans and documents.

- Proposed Floor Plans: 12681 7-4
- Proposed Cross-Sections: 12681 7-3
- Proposed Second Floor Plan: 12681 7-2
- Proposed First Floor Plan: 12681 7-1
- Existing Ground and Second Floor Plans: 12681 1-2
- Existing First Floor Plan: 12681 1-1
- Site location and block plans: 12681 3-3

1.4 No external changes are proposed and as such elevations have not been provided.

1.5 This statement should be read in conjunction with the plans and documents that make up the application as a whole.

2. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 The application site comprises the first and second floors of numbers 8, 9 and 10 Castle Street in Cirencester. The site is within the urban area of Cirencester forming part of the town centre and the Cirencester Town Centre Conservation Area. The buildings are collectively Grade II listed by a blanket listing for 2-12 Castle Street (list entry 1204979). The location of the site is shown below in the excerpt from the submitted plans.



2.2 No's 8, 9 and 10 Castle Street are in Class E Use; No.8 is a card shop at ground floor level with ancillary storage at first and second floors; No.9 is comprised of a lobby at ground floor with offices above; and No.10 is a Jewellers at ground floor with ancillary storage at first and second floors. Although the uses were formerly classified separately under the previous Use Class Order, they all now form a Class E use. Most of the ground floor units are in retail use with the upper floors comprising a mixture of uses – some of which are residential.

2.3 The listed terrace is characterised by an attractive façade with intact original features. The buildings comprise shaped gables with moulded copings to the parapets and ball finials to the top. This can be seen in the Google Maps photograph below.



- 2.4 The site is effectively land locked with no access to the rear. There is no parking associated with the site by there are spaces directly to the front of the building on Castle Street (pay and display) as well as other public spaces within close proximity.
- 2.5 In addition to its historic contains as Grade II listed building and location within the Conservation Area, the site is also located within the secondary frontage, the primary shopping area and Cirencester development boundary.

3. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The application seeks planning permission and listed building consent for the conversion of the upper floors to form 3 residential flats, comprising a material change of use from Class E to Class C3. Two duplexes would be formed; one within No.8 and the other within No.10 which would utilise the existing staircases. The third flat would be located within No.9 with a mezzanine level inserted.
- 3.2 The ground floor of No.9 would remain as a lobby and would provide access to each of the three flats.
- 3.3 No external alterations are proposed.
- 3.4 The proposals would result in minimal intervention to the existing listed building and its historic fabric, and the conversion works would be limited to the following:

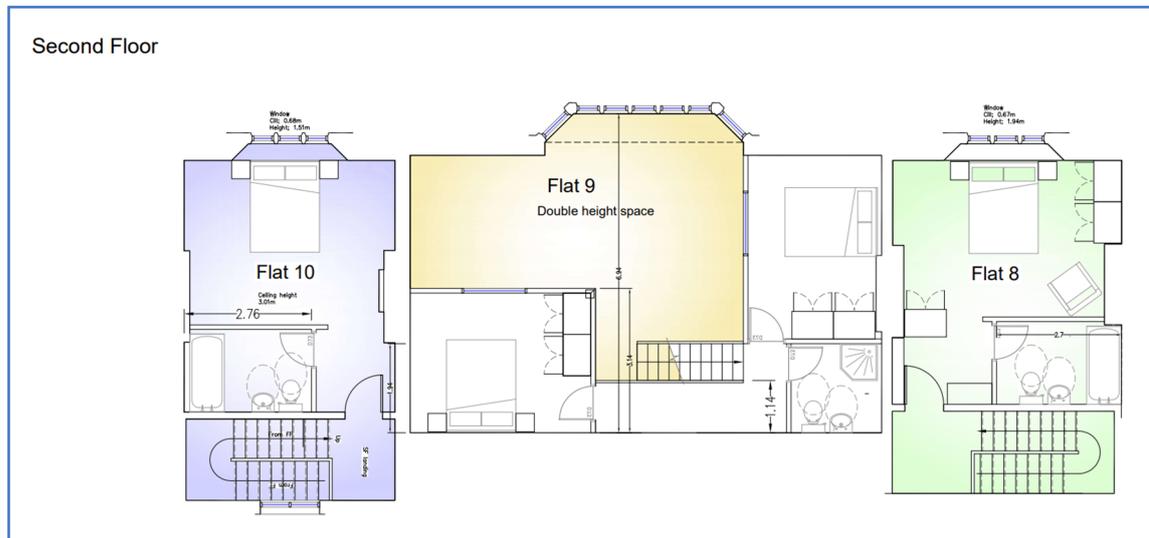
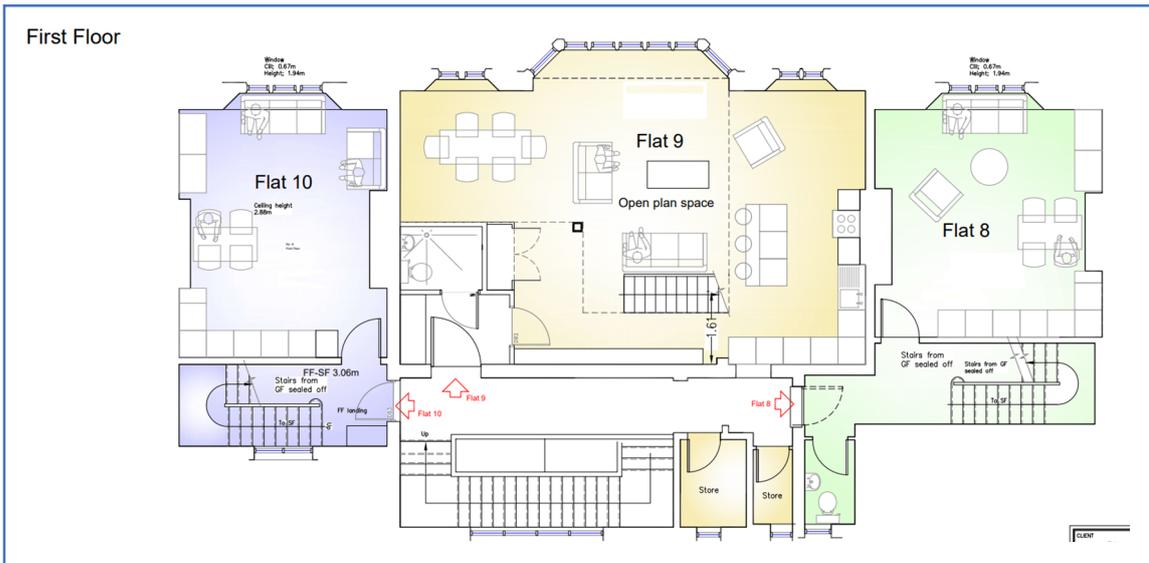
First Floor

- The removal of internal modern stud walling within No.9
- The erection of a staircase to lead to mezzanine floor

Second Floor

- The erection of stud walling within No's 8 and 10 to form en-suite areas.

- 3.5 The proposed floor plans are shown overleaf.



4. PLANNING HISTORY

4.1 A review of the Councils online planning register has revealed a number of planning applications which are of relevance. These applications are listed in the table below.

Application Number	Description of Development	Decision and Date
05/00117/LBC	Renew signage, woodwork behind and lead flashing and replace front step with a ramp	Approved on 22 April 2005
06/01249/ADV	Display of non-illuminated shop fascia sign	Approved on 19 December 2006
06/01367/LBC	Installation of non-illuminated fascia shop sign, re-painting of shop front to include door and window frames. Provision of hand rail (Retrospective)	Refused on 13 September 2006
06/02748/LBC	Fix a sign to the front of the shop and two handrails to assist access	Approved on 19 December 2006

4.2 As can be seen from the planning history previous applications have generally related to the commercial uses on the ground floor with an emphasis on signage and minor repair works.

5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

5.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning decisions should be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan

The Development Plan policy context for the site and the surrounding area is provided by the adopted Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 (the Local Plan). Although there are further adopted documents, none are relevant to this application.

5.2 The policies that are of relevance to this application are:

- DS1 – Development Strategy
- DS2 – Development within Development Boundaries
- S1 – Cirencester Town
- H1 – Housing Mix and Tenure to Meet Local Needs
- H2 – Affordable Housing
- EC8 – Main Town Centre Uses
- EN1 – Built, Natural and Historic Environment
- EN10 – Historic Environment: Designated Heritage Assets
- EN11 – Historic Environment: Designated Heritage Assets – Conservation Areas
- EN13 - Historic Environment: Conversion of Non-Domestic Historic Buildings
- INF3 – Sustainable Transport
- INF4 – Highway Safety
- INF5 – Parking Provision

National Planning Policy Framework

- 5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was revised on 20th July 2021. The Framework sets out the Government’s economic, environmental and social planning policies for England and details how these are expected to be applied. It is, in itself, a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 5.4 The Framework states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, which can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means *“approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date Development Plan without delay”* or *“where there are no relevant Development Plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, granting permission unless: i) the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or ii) any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework as a whole.”*
- 5.5 The Framework defines the three overarching objectives of sustainable development as:
- An Economic Objective** – *to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
- A Social Objective** – *to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being;*
- An Environmental Objective** – *to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to*

improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

- 5.6 These objectives should be delivered through the preparation and implementation of plans and the application of policies in the Framework; they are not criteria against which every decision can or should be judged. Planning decisions should play an active role in guiding development towards sustainable solutions, but in doing so should take local circumstances into account, to reflect the character, needs and opportunities of each area.
- 5.7 Paragraph 218 of the Framework advises that the policies within the Framework are material considerations which should be taken into account in dealing with applications from the day of its publication.
- 5.8 Paragraph 219 of the Framework advises that existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to publication. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with the Framework and that the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given.
- 5.9 Section 12 of the Framework provides context to design within planning. Paragraph 126 states *“The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”*
- 5.10 Paragraph 86 says that Planning Policies should recognise that residential development often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and encourage residential development on appropriate sites.
- 5.11 Paragraph 104 says that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making and development proposals, so that opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued; and the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse

effects.

- 5.12 Section 16 of the Framework relates to the historic environment and directs that in considering applications concerning designated heritage assets “*great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be)*...” (Paragraph 199). It also requires applicants 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. (Paragraph 184).

Other Material Policy Consideration

- 5.13 Outside of the Development Plan and the Framework, there are other material policy considerations that need to be discussed in relation to this development. In this case, the other material policy considerations are:

- Planning Practice Guidance
- S16(2), S66(1) and S72(1) of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Appropriate Weight

- 5.14 Regarding the weight that is given, Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that, determination of applications must be made in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance, full weight is given to the Cotswold District Local Plan 2011-2031 (the Local Plan) as it forms part of the Development Plan.
- 5.15 As it forms the basis of Government policy for planning applications, substantial weight should be given to the policies of the Framework.

6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 Having regard for the proposed development; the sites planning history; the relevant planning policy context; and all other material issues; the main planning considerations for the determination of this application relate to impact upon the historic environment (listed building and conservation area), residential amenity and accessibility.

Principle of Development

6.2 The main policy considerations relating to the principle of development are set out by Policies DS1 (Development Strategy), DS2 (Development within Development Boundaries) and EC8 (Main Town Centre Uses).

6.3 Policy DS1 identifies Cirencester as a Principal Settlement which is described as a socially and economically sustainable area including accessibility to services and facilities in which there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

6.4 Policy DS2 says that development within the Development Boundaries will be permissible in principle.

6.5 Policy EC8 says that proposal for residential development will be permitted on the upper floors of premises within the centre.

6.6 As demonstrated above, given that the proposal seeks residential conversion to upper floors, with no external changes proposed and no impact upon ground floor units, the principle of development is acceptable and fully in accordance with the policies set out within the Development Plan.

Impact upon the Historic Environment

6.7 Policy EN10 says that proposals which sustain and enhance the character, appearance and significance of designated heritage assets (and their settings), and that put them to viable uses, consistent with their conservation, will be permitted.

6.8 Policy EN11 says that proposals which preserve the special character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be permitted.

6.9 Policy EN13 says that proposals for the conversion of non-domestic historic buildings to

alternative uses will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that: a) the conversion would secure the future of a heritage asset; b) the conversion would conserve the significance of the asset; c) the asset is structurally sound; and d) the heritage asset is capable of conversion without substantial alteration, extension or rebuilding.

- 6.10 It is likely that the listed terrace formerly comprised townhouses and therefore the conversion would restore the building to its former historic use resulting in a positive impact. Equally, internally within No.9 modern stud walls are proposed to be removed, further restoring the planform of the building to a state of historic authenticity.
- 6.11 There is no demonstrated need for large ancillary storage spaces and the spaces are superfluous to the requirements of the existing ground floor retail uses and have therefore been subject to neglect. It is also important to note that, due to several factors the most pertinent of which is the effects of the pandemic upon the High Streets, the upper floors are now at risk of redundancy. The restoration and conversion of the spaces would sympathetically restore the spaces, ensuring the future conservation of the buildings within their optimum viable use.
- 6.12 Further to the above, the internal alterations would require minimal intervention to the listed building and its historic fabric and planform. Indeed, the only changes proposed would see the removal of modern partitioning, the erection of new stud walling and a mezzanine floor within the central unit.
- 6.13 The Heritage Statement submitted with the proposal concludes that the *“Proposals include realignment and remodelling of stud walling within the units to provide a more rational distribution of internal space within the context of residential units. These works will not cause any impact on existing historic fabrics or features, all of which will be retained and, where possible, enhanced such as the re-exposure of a currently largely hidden fireplace....*

...Overall the proposed refurbishment and the bringing back into use of the underused space is considered a beneficial outcome, providing new town centre residential accommodation. No harm or loss of significance is found in the proposals, either in respect of the historic fabric of the Listed Building or in its visual and spatial relationship with other heritage assets....

The Site's position within the Cirencester Town Centre Conservation Area has been carefully considered. It is concluded that the proposed works will result in no visual change in respect of the exterior of the Listed Building. No potential for harm has been found in relation to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area as a result of the proposal."

- 6.14 In view of the above, it is demonstrated that the proposed conversion works would result in no harm to the listed building and the development would therefore comply with the policies set out within the Development Plan.

Impact upon Residential Amenity

- 6.15 It is important to consider the impacts upon both a) the neighbouring properties; and b) the prospective occupiers.
- 6.16 No external alterations are proposed – including additional massing nor openings and as such the impact upon neighbouring properties (commercial and residential) would be unchanged. Equally, it is unlikely that any adverse impacts would arise from domestic noise or other variables and it is therefore considered that the impact upon surrounding neighbours would be negligible.
- 6.17 Policy H1 states that new housing is required to provide internal space standards contained in the 'Technical Housing Standards - Nationally Described Space Standard March 2015'. The recognised internal space standard for flats is 37m² – which each of the three units comfortably exceeds. Although there would be no external space available to the units, this is not uncommon for town centre units and there are several public parks and gardens in close proximity for prospective residents to utilise should they wish.
- 6.18 As set out above, the proposed development would have an acceptable impact upon residential amenity in accordance with the Development Plan.

Accessibility and Highway Matters

- 6.19 Policy DS1 identifies Cirencester as a Principal Settlement which is described as a socially and economically sustainable area including accessibility to services and facilities.

- 6.20 Paragraph 104 says that transport issues should be considered from the earliest stages of development proposals, so that opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued; and the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified, assessed and taken into account – including appropriate opportunities for avoiding and mitigating any adverse effects.
- 6.21 The proposal is for a car free development due to the fact that no on-site parking is provided. However, it is pertinent to consider that the site is located within a sustainable town centre location which is well connected to facilities accessible on foot, by bicycle and by public transport. Equally there are a number of public parking facilities in close proximity, briefly comprising the Forum Car Park; Old Station Car Park; Abbey Grounds Car Park; and pay and display spaces directly in front of the site.
- 6.22 The provision of residential units on the upper floors does not generate a materially different level of type of traffic than the current Class E use. On the contrary, with regard to the office use the change to residential is likely to lead to a reduction of vehicle movements.
- 6.23 Indeed, the lack of parking provision should be applauded for a) promoting the use of sustainable transport and lowering the environmental impacts of traffic; b) seeking to provide housing for those working within the immediate area; and c) sustaining the decongested state of Cirencester Town Centre.
- 6.24 In view of the above, notwithstanding the lack of parking provision, there would be many clear benefits due to this omission.

Need for Sustainable Development

- 6.25 The Framework provides a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It recognises that in order to achieve sustainable development gains should be sought in environmental; economic and social aspects.
- 6.26 In environmental terms the development will have a positive impact to the environment by providing centrally located residential accommodation designed in the spirit of the 10 minute town with a great reliance upon pedestrian and public transport means.
- 6.27 The economic benefits of providing housing are clear. The development would provide

work for local contractors and market housing would generate tax revenue, improving public services within the area contributing to safer and healthier communities.

- 6.28 The social benefits are found within the location of the site which is within to the town centre employment area so would provide a desirable place to live for local people and re-utilising underused space.

7. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The application seeks planning and listed building application seeking consent for the conversion of the upper floors to 3 No. residential flats at 8, 9 and 10 Castle Street, Cirencester, GL7 1QA.
- 7.2 It is demonstrated within this report that the proposal is acceptable in principle complying with the relevant Development Plan policies; and that there is no harm to the relevant heritage assets. Furthermore, it is shown that there would be no adverse amenity impacts in terms of the prospective occupiers and compliance with minimum space standard requirements, and neighbouring properties; and that the development is consistent with accessibility and highways.
- 7.3 This Statement has reviewed the relevant Development Plan Policy Framework as it applies in this case, together with the other material considerations. On the evidence presented it has been demonstrated that the proposal accords with all relevant Development Plan policies and national guidance, and there are no other material considerations present to override them.
- 7.4 It is therefore urged that the Local Planning Authority grant planning permission for this sustainable development.



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