

Proposed Extension and Alterations to Existing Store with New Accommodation Above

7a High Street, Mepal, Ely, CB6 2AW

Design and Access Statement



Proposed Front Elevation - NTS



Image of the existing Post Office Stores

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1 Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared to accompany the application for Full Planning Permission for a ground and first floor extension to the existing store, and new accommodation over.

The extended Post Office building will provide a vastly improved community facility for the village of Mepal.

The application also includes the complete renovation of the existing building, highways alterations to provide improved access and new parking, as well as outside amenity space for the accommodation and a new shop front with security. The advertising proposals will be detailed as part of a different application.

2 Site Description and Context

7a High Street is a detached one and a half storey village store in a prominent position on the High Street in Mepal. It is located within the curtilage of the neighbouring bungalow, No. 7 High Street. The occupants of which own the Post office store at 7a High Street. The building is surrounded by residential buildings, including single, one and a half and two storey dwellings. The closest aspect of No.5 is one and a half storeys high, No. 7 is single storey in height and No.9, the closest Neighbour to 7a, is two storeys in height.

The property was built using buff brickwork and painted white at the front, side and rear. It has changed in appearance over the course of it's history, varying in paint colour, advertisement, brand ownership and external openings. The character of the property as viewed from High Street is largely well preserved, however the building fabric is in need of attention to avoid it falling into disrepair.

Located within the development envelope in Mepal, the Post Office is close to but not directly overlooking two listed buildings that are located further up the High Street towards Laurel Close. There is no conservation area in Mepal and the properties in the local area are varied in style, age and size.



Existing images of No. 7a High Street over the years. Left: 2001-2005. Middle: 1978. Right: 1989

3 The Proposals

Store proposals are:

- A ground floor extension to the side to provide a larger shop floor area and more street frontage for a new shop window and sliding access door facing the high street.
- Renovation of the existing store, including the rear garages to provide ancillary provisions, such as a store room, new WC and staff facilities, bin store and office etc.
- Structural improvements to improve the appearance, thermal performance and longevity of the original building that is currently in a state of disrepair.
- 3 No.'s parking spaces have been allocated for the store in line with COM 8 Parking Provision in the East Cambs Local Plan 2015 (up to 1 car space per 20m² for non food retail). This was calculated using the increased floor area (19m² extension) and based on no existing parking provision in the existing arrangement. Parking spaces will be allocated for perpetuity and it is hoped the provision will be adequate.
- 2 No.'s parking spaces have been retained for 7 High Street, in line with COM 8 Parking Provision in the East Cambs Local Plan 2015. Parking spaces will be allocated for perpetuity.
- 6 No.'s cycle parking spaces provided.
- The parking area has been designed with best practice space allowances, turning circles, visibility splays, highways and building control regulations in mind. The proposed arrangement has been seen by highways and altered according to their comments.

Proposed accommodation over the store:

- It is proposed to convert the unused loft space over the store into a new three bedroom flat. This would be achieved by raising the roof by 1m to create the internal floor to ceiling height required and changing the building into a usable one and half storey property. The new flat will be a separate dwelling unit with an external terrace, open plan kitchen living arrangement and two bathrooms. All relevant building control regulations will be observed to see that the performance of the building as a whole will be improved by the proposals.
- The property would be accessed from the parking to the side.
- 2 No.'s parking spaces have been allocated for the flat in line with COM 8 Parking Provision in the East Cambs Local Plan 2015. Parking spaces will be allocated for perpetuity.

The existing building and village context of the property is the primary influence in the design of the extension and overall appearance. With these aspects at the forefront of the design, the materials are in keeping and the massing has been kept to a minimum in order to retain the original character of the Post Office building. The proposed materials will match the existing as closely as possible, or compliment them, with all new elements selected and installed with design quality, sustainability and thermal performance in mind.

The improved facilities will benefit the whole community and are vital to the ongoing prosperity and provision of a store in this building and on this site. Policies COM 3 and 4 have been considered at length as options for the site have been examined. To retain the store facility, it is necessary for the building to accommodate a changing retail climate and divergent business models.

Privacy has been considered at every turn in relation to the style and position of windows. The terrace and bedrooms are positioned at the front of the flat overlooking the street only for this reason, and the window in the lounge has been set back to achieve an opening window (for building control) that will not allow a view into the windows of No. 7. None of the new windows present new opportunities for overlooking neighbouring properties. New windows PR.W03, 04 and 05 overlook the roof and front garden of No. 9 only. All other glazing has been fixed, obscured, angled or concealed with trellis to prevent overlooking.

4 Planning History

Ref: 01/00336/FUL

Status: Application Permitted

Alterations and extensions to retail shop with living accommodation over

Ref: 89/01406/FUL

Status: Application Permitted

Extension to shop

Various licensing items.

5 Relevant Planning Policy

The design has been developed with high energy efficiency standards applied to the new extension, and with material improvements to the existing building in mind.

The design considers the material character and distinctive form of the existing property, and responds positively with a modest scale proposal in materials selected to match and/or compliment the existing and character of the immediate surroundings.

The proposal has been considered against the following Policies in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan April 2015:

- GROWTH 2
- COM 3,4,7 & 8
- ENV7

Residential amenity has been considered for occupants in the new accommodation and those living in the surrounding properties with new windows allowing overlooking. Outside amenity space in the form a generous roof terrace is included in the design as part of the new flat over the store.

The proposed height increase over the existing garage to the rear of the proposal will only impact a small portion of the evening light reaching the garden of No. 9 due to the solar orientation of the proposals.

3 No.'s integrated bat boxes provided as below to ensure that the development improves biodiversity on the site. These boxes are positioned in varied locations in line with manufacturer guidance.



6 Accessibility

The store is accessed directly from the High Street footpath via the glazed access doors. The access doors would be reached on foot from the local properties, from the new parking spaces provided or from the cycle parking. The landscape will be profiled to provide level access where possible, allowing for the retained existing structure with varied levels as existing.

Access to the living accommodation over the store is at the side, leading from the parking area.

The store and new living accommodation have been provided for in the allocated parking spaces.

Highways have been consulted about stopping up and for feedback on the parking design. Visibility splays, turning cycles and best practice parking bay sizes have been observed.

The entry sequence to No.7 is unchanged. The parking space allocation is new and No. 7 has 2 No.'s dedicated parking spaces.

Door widths will be DDA compliant wherever possible with wheelchair use observed in the design of the store layout.

7 Summary

The proposals have been carefully considered in relation to scale, appearance, overshadowing and privacy, and against the relevant planning policies laid out in the Local Plan.

Every effort has been made to ensure the proposals improve or protect the original fabric of the property, as well as protecting and enhancing the historic character of the immediate and wider surrounding area.

In addition to protecting the aesthetic character of the local area, the proposals will bring about important improvements to a much used community facility.