



Gibson Architecture

Design & Access Statement

19 Alexandra Parade,
Weston-super-Mare,
BS23 1QT

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1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. Gibson Architecture have been appointed to undertake a design & access statement to accompany a full planning application for:

Conversion of first floor office to residential & rear dormer roof extension to form second floor accommodation.

- 1.2. This proposal is for 19 Alexandra Parade, Weston-super-Mare (see figure 3), which was previously a letting agent, and associated offices.
- 1.3. The proposal seeks to convert the first floor to residential. It is also proposed create a flat roof section to the rear of the property to accommodate a flat on the second floor.
- 1.4. Currently the entire building is one class E unit. A unit of this size, in this location is difficult to let. Due to this, it has been decided that the most appropriate approach will be to create a smaller retail/office unit to the ground floor with residential above. Per DM60 & CS21 as well as emerging policies.
- 1.5. Multiple nearby sites have undergone conversion from retail to residential in recent years, especially along Orchard Street and Walliscote Road.
- 1.6. Proposals such as this are supported in both local and national planning policy, per chapter 3.
- 1.7. This statement will provide a contextual description of the site and its surroundings. The development proposal will be explained in detail and justification will be provided as to why the development is acceptable with regards to local and national planning policy.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION AND LOCATION

Site Description

- 2.1. The site currently consists of a former letting agents, along with a number of associated offices and staff facilities.
- 2.2. The walls are constructed using stone and brick with a rendered finish to the first floor. The roof covering is clay plain roof tiles.
- 2.3. Windows are a mixture of timber and uPVC. The entrance to the retail unit (Alexandra Parade) is uPVC, while the entrance on Orchard Street is timber.
- 2.4. The doors and windows to the ground floor have moulded stone surrounds.
- 2.5. The building is uniquely shaped to address the building lines of both Alexandra Parade and Orchard Street.
- 2.6. The main roof of the building is of both a hipped and gabled construction.
- 2.7. The entirety of the site is developed.
- 2.8. The current ridge height of the property is 8.685m from Street level. This is higher than the neighbouring buildings and serves to 'bookend' the corner.



Figure 1. Images of the existing building

Location

- 2.9. The site is located on the corner of Alexandra Parade and Orchard Street. (See Figure 3).
- 2.10. The site is not listed but is located within the Great Weston Conservation Area. There are also a few listed and locally listed buildings nearby.
- 2.11. This site is within a large area of residential and retail units.
- 2.12. The site is within flood zone 3, although the Environment Agency identify the site as being in flood zone 1.
- 2.13. Per Figure 2 there is a mixed street scene and context to this area with a diverse mix of build types, materials, forms, layouts and uses. The surrounding buildings are typically 2 storeys. Both Alexandra Parade and Orchard Street have relatively consistent building lines, however.
- 2.14. There are standard apex roof builds, hipped roofs, flat roofs, and large parapet walls present, further adding to the diverse mix of architecture.
- 2.15. The area is typically urban with a large green area along Alexandra Parade.



Figure 2. Images of site setting



Figure 3. Location plan of site and surrounding area

3. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

3.1. The development proposal is described as follows:

Conversion of first floor office to residential & rear dormer roof extension to form second floor accommodation.

Appearance and Character

- 3.2. The north end of the roof will be gabled to create a more consistent appearance with the west end while also acting to conceal the rear flat roof area from the street.
- 3.3. The principal elevations will retain a similar appearance from street level, with the rear flat roof being lifted to ridge height in order to create the most appropriate head height within the second floor. There will be extremely limited visibility of this, however from the street.
- 3.4. The retail unit will continue to address Alexandra Parade, while the residential units will be accessed via Orchard Street through the existing secondary entrance.
- 3.5. The introduction of dormer windows will add light to the upstairs living space, while respecting the buildings unique presence along the frontages of Alexandra Parade and Orchard Street.
- 3.6. The proposal will be designed to be respectful of the Residential Design Guide SPD by respecting the existing building lines (where they exist).
- 3.7. The proposal will take an oversized commercial space, which is largely unused and introduce a new good quality residential development, with a smaller, more marketable retail space retained to the Alexandra Parade Elevation.
- 3.8. The area is well lit to both key elevations, and it is not anticipated that this proposal will contribute any light pollution to the area.

Size and Scale

- 3.9. The mass of the building from the principal elevations will not change.
- 3.10. The flat roof will be lifted to the rear in order to accommodate the second floor.
- 3.11. Both apartments are designed to comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards. For the sake of clarity, the total floor space of each apartment is:
 - 3.11.1. First Floor – 64.4m²
 - 3.11.2. Second Floor – 65.3m²
- 3.12. Both of these comfortably exceed the minimum of 61m².
- 3.13. All the bedrooms exceed both the minimum floorspace and widths for a room of their type. If in any doubt, please request annotated plans.
- 3.14. Minimum ceiling height and storage requirements are also adhered to.
- 3.15. The entire development will total 219m² gross internal space. With 159m² of this being residential.
- 3.16. The height of the proposed development will not change.

Layout and access

- 3.17. The proposal is intended to address Alexandra Parade for the retail unit, with the residential access introduced to the entrance via Orchard Street.
- 3.18. There will also be provision for 1 cycle space per bedroom, in line with North Somerset's Parking Standards. This will be housed within a secure area internally.
- 3.19. There will be no vehicular access. This site is located in a highly sustainable central location with plentiful transport options. This proposal seeks to promote sustainable transport choices. It should also be noted that the existing building has no vehicular access.
- 3.20. Based on the North Somerset Parking Standards the requirement for the existing use of this building would be 1 space per 20m² GFA. This would result in a requirement of 7.3 required spaces.
- 3.21. The proposal will require 3 spaces for the retail unit, and 4 spaces for the two dwellings. This will bring the total to 7 spaces.
- 3.22. Based on this there will be no increase in parking requirement for the site.
- 3.23. It should be noted that there are various options within the town centre with long term parking provision. Including:
- 3.23.1. The Royal Hotel (season ticket).
 - 3.23.2. Melrose Car Park (winter pass).
 - 3.23.3. Hampton Car Park (12 month permits).
 - 3.23.4. Madeira Car Park (12 month permits).
- 3.24. Level access will be introduced to comply with Part M of the Approved Building Regulations.

Landscape Strategy

- 3.25. The site is currently fully developed, so landscaping is not a consideration.

Additional Opportunities

- 3.26. The existing walls are made of brick and stone with a rendered finish. This is assumed to have a U Value of C. 1.5/m²K. This falls considerably short of the requirements for fabric elements as set out in Part L of the 2021 Building Regulations.
- 3.27. Per these regulations, the minimum required limiting U Value for an external wall is 0.26W/m²K. A new wall to an existing building should have a U Value of 0.18W/m²K. Conversion of the existing building will enable us to bring the thermal capacity of these walls in line with the requirements.
- 3.28. Introduction of residential dwellings would offer 'passive surveillance', which is of particular value to the local retail enterprises out of hours.

Local Amenity/Public Transport

- 3.29. The site has abundant access to public transport, with regular bus services serving the site, offering access to Bristol and the wider south west. These services are via the Weston bus interchange which is opposite the site.
- 3.30. The train station is an 8-minute walk from site.
- 3.31. This highly sustainable location is local to an extensive range of local facilities within walking and cycling distance of the application site. The Sovereign Shopping Centre, Doctors Surgery, Supermarkets, Leisure Centre, Various pubs, and Restaurants. These are all within a 5–10-minute walk of site.

Local Policy

3.32. In preparing this application, all relevant local and national planning policy has been reviewed, including:

- 3.32.1. The NPPF
- 3.32.2. North Somerset Core Strategy
- 3.32.3. Sites and Policies Plan parts 1 & 2
- 3.32.4. Weston-super-Mare Town Centre Regeneration SPD

3.33. Emerging policy such as the Local Plan 2039 has also been reviewed. Based upon the advanced stage of the consultation, we believe that these policies should be granted sufficient planning weight.

NPPF

3.34. The addition of 2 new dwellings within North Somerset contributes to the 5-year housing supply, for which the area is currently falling well short per the Residential Land Survey Headline Findings Report April 2022.

3.35. Per this report there was a shortfall of 7,695 completed dwellings as of April 2022, with four years remaining. This leaves a residual requirement of 1,924 dwellings per year over the remaining four years. This exceeds the average yearly completions over the previous 41 years over 892 per annum by more than 100%.

3.36. The report further notes:

The NPPF allows local planning authorities to include an allowance for windfall sites in their five-year supply if there is compelling evidence that such sites consistently become available in the local area and are expected to continue to form a reliable source of supply. Windfall developments across the district have made a significant contribution to housing delivery in previous years and this is expected to continue.

3.37. Per the Five-Year Housing Land Supply Initial Findings Statement April 2021:

The Council can currently demonstrate a deliverable supply of 7,762 units for the period April 2021 – March 2026, which equates to 4.8 years supply against the current requirement.

3.38. Per paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework:

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:

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

Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

3.39. Per footnote 8:

This includes, for applications involving the provision of housing, situations where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites (with the appropriate buffer, as set out in paragraph 74); or where the Housing Delivery Test indicates that the delivery of housing was substantially below (less than 75% of) the housing requirement over the previous three years.

3.40. Based on the proposal's accordance with all relevant current and emerging local policy, we believe this proposal to be sustainable development with the benefits significantly and demonstrably outweighing the impacts.

Core Strategy

3.41. CS12: Achieving high quality design and placemaking

- 3.41.1.** The proposal demonstrates sensitivity to local character by largely maintaining the appearance of the existing building. The addition of dormers to the roof is similar to nearby developments.
- 3.41.2.** This proposal supports town centre regeneration through increased housing density and footfall, as well as a more marketable and affordable retail space.
- 3.41.3.** The introduction of residential to the first and second floors will also increase natural surveillance in the area.

3.42. CS13: Scale of new housing

- 3.42.1.** The proposal offers 2 new dwellings on a site not previously identified for development by NSC. This windfall development helps toward achieving Priority Objective 1.

3.43. CS14: Distribution of new housing

- 3.43.1.** This proposal is within the Weston urban area, identified as a key area for new housing.

3.44. CS21: Retail hierarchy and provision

- 3.44.1.** Paragraph 3.267 states that local authorities should plan positively for the growth and development of town centres, in line with the NPPF, and should:

Recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites.

3.45. CS29: Weston-super-Mare town centre

- 3.45.1.** This proposal will reduce the requirement for car trips by concentrating residential development in the town centre, and close to both the bus and train stations.

Sites and Policies Plan

3.46. DM1: Flooding and drainage

- 3.46.1.** Per the attached FRA there is no tidal flood risk to site in 60 years' time, ensuring that the retail space will be safe for its lifetime.
- 3.46.2.** The residential space is also free from flood risk by virtue of its siting over 3m above any future modelled flood level.

3.47. DM3: Conservation Areas

- 3.47.1.** A heritage statement has been completed to demonstrate compliance with this policy.

3.48. DM32: High quality design and place-making

- 3.48.1.** Per CS12, this proposal is sensitive to the surrounding context.
- 3.48.2.** The proposal helps to deter crime through passive surveillance.
- 3.48.3.** The proposal doesn't prejudice the living conditions for the occupiers, or that of any surrounding neighbours.

3.49. DM36: Residential densities

- 3.49.1.** The proposal both maximises potential of the site, while also respecting and retaining the character of the area.

3.49.2. The site is in very close proximity to public transport opportunities.

3.49.3. The local area offers a large number of community facilities and employment opportunities.

3.50. DM60: Town centres (Clevedon, Nailsea, Portishead and Weston-super-Mare)

3.50.1. Per this policy:

Residential development within the centres is encouraged especially as part of mixed-use schemes using upper floors with other uses on the ground floor. The conversion of vacant ground floor units in residential style streets back to residential use outside of the primary shopping areas will be supported.

3.50.2. This proposal seeks to introduce residential units to the upper floors of this site, whilst maintaining a more typical and marketable retail unit to maintain the Alexandra Parade frontage. The proposal also does not reduce the availability of retail units in Weston-super-Mare.

Weston-super-Mare Town Centre SPD

3.51. The SPD strives to encourage more people to live in the town centre. It is noted that the SPD aims to incentivise developers and investors to bring forward high quality residential schemes.

3.52. The development meets and exceeds the minimum design standards.

3.53. Parking is currently not available at site, and this will continue to be the case. As previously noted, this site is ideally suited for this as it is both opposite the bus interchange and very near the train station.

3.54. This proposal makes better use of vacant space above shops and other premises within the town centre. This is in direct accordance with the aims of the SPD (Para 2.6).

3.55. The following design requirements have been adhered to:

3.55.1. Views toward the hillside area have been maintained.

3.55.2. The elegance, legibility, heritage, proportion and scale of the town's character has been maintained.

3.55.3. We have responded to the character area, and created a proposal that respects its context.

3.55.4. Materials will be re-used in order to maintain the historic context of the area.

3.55.5. The massing of the building will not increase on either of the principle elevations, except for the addition of some small dormers.

3.56. The character appraisal of 'Orchard Meadows' notes:

A concentration of poor quality dwellings and HMOs, which, coupled with vacancy and associated disrepair of commercial premises, are eroding the area's character.

3.57. This proposal is for two 2-bedroom dwellings, built to a high standard. This will offer a desirable living environment for a wide range of potential occupiers.

Local Plan 2039 (Reg-19 Submission)

3.58. SP1: Sustainable development

3.58.1. This seeks to define NSC's position on what constitutes sustainable development.

3.58.2. The proposal will improve the thermal efficiency of the building in line with current building regulations. This will massively decrease heating costs of the building.

3.58.3. The site is ideally positioned to take advantage of the various public transport options within the area.

3.58.4. This development adds to the choice of housing within the area.

3.58.5. Passive surveillance will help to support security within the local area.

3.58.6. Economic growth within the area is supported by creating increased footfall while also creating a more versatile and marketable retail unit.

3.58.7. The proposal prioritises previously developed land.

3.58.8. The proposal supports regeneration of the town centre.

3.59. SP3: Spatial strategy

3.59.1. The development is within the urban area and the development has been demonstrated to be safe from flood for its lifetime.

3.60. SP4: Placemaking

3.60.1. Per CS12 and DM32 this proposal seeks to create an attractive building that respects and enhances the local area.

3.60.2. The social, environmental, and economic benefits of the scheme have been highlighted above.

3.61. SP5: Towns

3.61.1. This policy states that proposals for new development within the settlement boundary will be supported, providing they:

3.61.1.1. Make a positive contribution to the built environment and sense of place and the creation of safe and attractive environments.

3.61.1.2. Support and enable walking, cycling and improved public transport, particularly in relation to connecting residential areas to the town centre, local centres, employment areas, educational establishments, and other destinations.

3.61.1.3. Optimise housing densities and the use of other land, particularly at town centres and at accessible locations such as transport hubs.

3.61.1.4. Can be successfully served by infrastructure such as transport, education, and health facilities.

3.61.1.5. This chapter has clearly demonstrated compliance with all of these requirements.

3.62. SP8: Housing

3.62.1. The requirement over the next 15 years will be 993 dwellings per annum. This exceeds the local average of the last 41 years by around 101 units, so the introduction of 2 windfall sites will be extremely beneficial.

3.63. DP1: High Quality Design

3.63.1. In line with CS12 and DM32 the proposal complies with all requirements.

3.64. DP2: Residential development within settlement boundaries

3.64.1. The proposal respects the street scene.

3.64.2. The design, form, scale and materials are in keeping with the area.

3.64.3. The living conditions of the occupiers or adjoining properties will not be prejudiced.

3.65. DP8: Efficient use of land

3.65.1. This proposal demonstrates efficient use of land, by:

3.65.1.1. Enabling the reuse and regeneration of previously developed land.

3.65.1.2. Ensuring that all parts of the site have a positive purpose.

3.65.1.3. Prioritising higher housing density at a more accessible location. The proposal is in a town centre and next to a transport hub.

3.66. DP9: Flood risk

3.66.1. The proposal is safe from flooding for its anticipated life.

3.66.2. The proposal offers wider sustainability benefits, per the draft local plan:

For development proposals on smaller non allocated sites, the anticipated cumulative benefits of focusing new residential development within the towns are considered to provide wider sustainability benefits in terms of reuse of previously developed land, proximity to services and public transport. Applicants will still need to prepare an FRA and demonstrate that the development will be safe over its lifetime.

3.67. DP24: Town centres

3.67.1. Within the town centre:

3.67.1.1. Proposals for retail and other complementary uses at ground level which encourage footfall and create an attractive and vibrant centre will be supported;

3.67.1.2. Development should enhance the distinctive character of the town centre, reflecting the identity and heritage of individual buildings, shopfronts or streets;

3.67.1.3. Support will be given to higher densities and the diversification of uses guided by good design and placemaking principles, particularly proposals which retain or enhance street level interest and active frontages;

3.67.1.4. Support will be given for proposals which use land efficiently, support the residential use of upper floors and for the re-use of underused, poor quality or vacant land and buildings including appropriate temporary uses;

3.67.1.5. Developments should prioritise walking and cycling both into and within the town centre to create a legible and accessible town centre environment and improve accessibility by public transport;

3.67.1.6. Support will be given to developments which increase job, education, and training opportunities; and

3.67.1.7. Support will be given to proposals which extend activities and interest into the evenings and night-time in a way which is safe and enhances the character of the town centre.

3.67.2. As previously demonstrated, this proposal largely accords with these objectives.

3.68. DP40: Built heritage

3.68.1. The associated heritage statement demonstrates compliance with this objective.

3.69. DP45: Residential space standards

3.69.1. The dwellings meet the nationally described space standards.

Relevant local planning history

- 3.70. There have been various applications submitted in recent years concerning the conversion of retail to residential in this area:
- 3.70.1. 23/P/0588/FUL – 11 Meadow Street – Conversion of upper floors to 1no. three-bedroom dwelling and replacement of existing windows, insertion of new front door and erection of steel gates to communal passageway – APPROVED
 - 3.70.2. 22/P/1351/FUL – 28 Orchard Street – Change of use of ground floor from retail (Use Class E) to 1no. flat (Use Class C3 dwellinghouse), including alterations to the front and rear elevations – APPROVED
 - 3.70.3. 19/P/1590/FUL – 18 Baker Street – Change of use of shop with managers accommodation above to 1 no 4 bed dwelling – APPROVED
 - 3.70.4. 19/P/0921/FUL – 1-3 Baker Street – Change of use of existing dance studio to 2no. three-bedroom dwellings with alterations and extension to front of the building. Alterations to windows and doors and the provision of 2no. sun tunnels in roof – APPROVED
 - 3.70.5. 19/P/0689/FUL – 12 Alexandra Parade – Change of use from Sui generis Massage Parlour/Beauty Salon to C3 dwelling – APPROVED

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1. The statement is based on our analysis of the site and surrounding area.
- 4.2. The statement has explained how the site context will influence the design, and detailed the concepts applied to development.
- 4.3. Influence will be taken from the surrounding context in terms of appearance, scale, materials, and character. Although it should be noted that these details are very diverse throughout the area.
- 4.4. The proposal will introduce two new dwellings in a sustainable area, providing a more appropriate use for the site. This current use is as a letting agent/retail space, but this amount of retail space is unusual in this area.
- 4.5. The current construction of the building is thermally inefficient. This proposal offers the opportunity to create modern, efficient living and retail space in a highly sustainable location.
- 4.6. This proposal will have minimal negative effect to the surrounding business uses but will offer potential custom to the retail units and passive surveillance out-of-hours.
- 4.7. The retail frontage will be retained, and no employment will be lost through this proposal as the retail unit is currently vacant.
- 4.8. Multiple residential schemes have been approved in this area in recent years.
- 4.9. This statement has highlighted how this plan complies with both local and national planning policy. As such, residential development in this location is acceptable in principle.
- 4.10. As such, we believe the proposal is appropriate for this site and should be granted planning permission.