



Background information provided in support of a full planning application for the Change of Use of:

Barclays Bank

70 Birmingham Road

Blackheath

Rowley Regis

West Midlands

B65 9BA

From a Financial Service (Class E, Commercial, Business, Service) to Self-Contained Apartments (C3)

For and on behalf of:

Dr. Baljit Bhandal

To be read in conjunction with drawings:

- 70BR/1 – Existing Plans & Elevations
- 70BR/2 – Proposed Plans & Elevations
- 70BR/3 – Existing & Proposed Site Plans

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## **01 Background Information**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.01**

This design and access statement has been produced in support of a full planning application for the conversion of 70 Birmingham Road, Blackheath, Rowley Regis to a residential scheme of 6no. self-contained apartments.

#### **1.02**

NCR Architectural Design Limited (NCR) have been appointed as architects for the proposal.

#### **1.03**

The following pages illustrate the way in which the scheme has evolved, responding to the requirements of Dr. Bhandal's brief and the nature of the site. The layout has been formulated to deliver residential accommodation while preserving and enhancing the character of the building and its setting in the locality. Consideration has been given to sustainability and making the building work harder and run more efficiently at lower running costs. The proposals have been developed through several face-to-face meetings and reviews with our client and his building contractor.

## **02 Use**

### **PROJECT BRIEF**

#### **2.01**

The property comprises a modern (1970/80's) two storey detached building with associated car park and a strip of redundant land sandwiched between the flank wall on the right-hand side and the neighbouring property at 74 Birmingham Road (Bhandal Dental Practice).

The property lies on Birmingham Road (B4171) between the Market Place Road Traffic Island and the road traffic island (A4100) at Henderson Way. The town boasts a range of shops, cafes, restaurants, schools and other essential services and the Market Place has been a hub of activities for centuries.

It is a prominent plot in a predominantly commercial area.

#### **2.02**

Built in the 1980's, 70 Birmingham Road was until April 2023 the home of Barclays plc. The bank served the community but has shared in the decline of the High Street and its closure brought about by online and telephone banking.



2.03

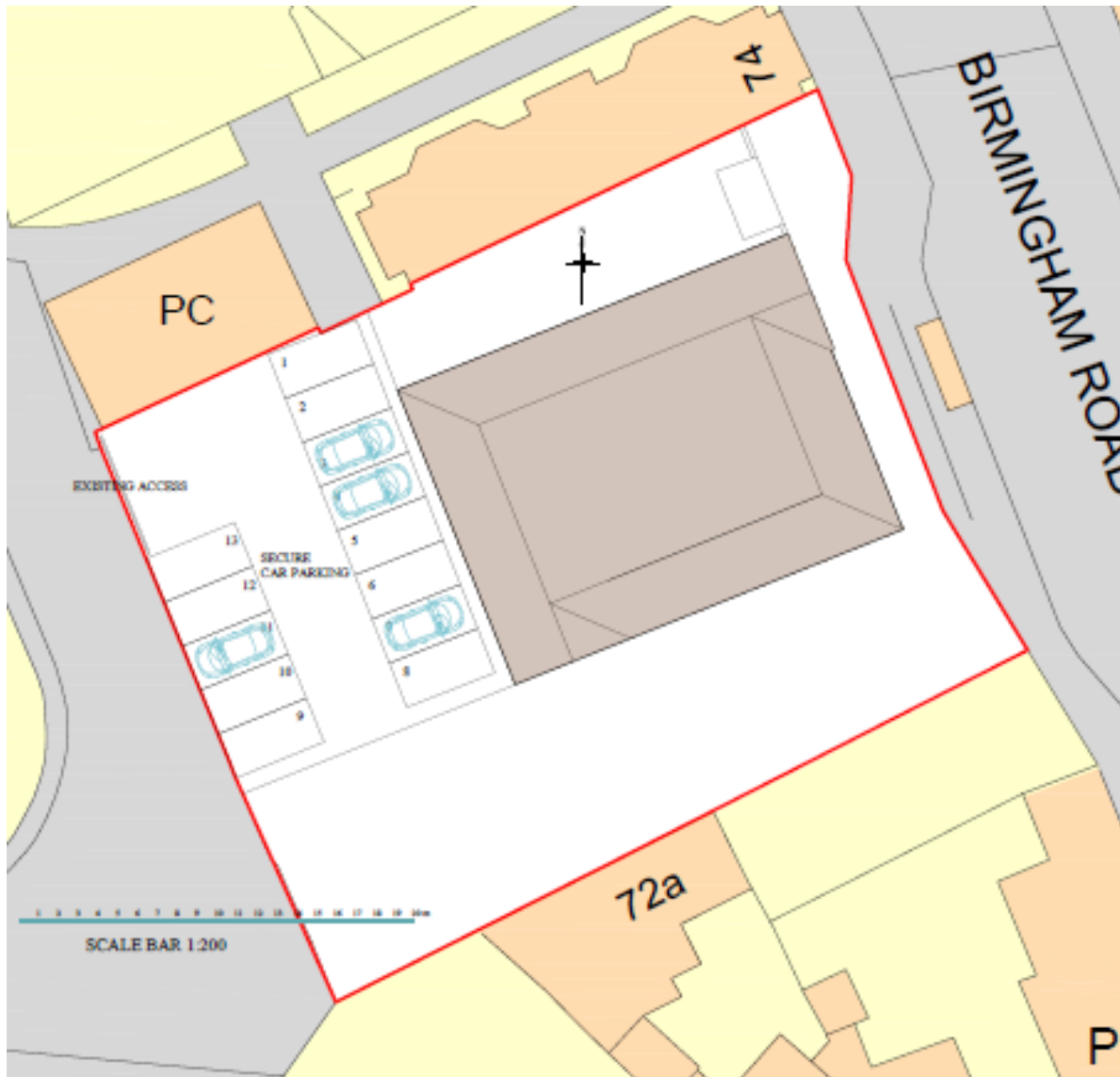
The provision will cater for profession workers with disposable personal incomes.

2.04

The basic requirements of the brief include:

- Six self-contained apartments
- Car parking
- Communal amenity space
- Secure complex
- Outside storage (bins, cycles)

## THE SITE



### 2.05

The application site sits on the south-west side of Birmingham Road and the south-east side of Henderson Way. Birmingham Road is a second-class B road which feeds traffic between Henderson Way (A4100), Oldbury Road (A4064), High Street and Archer Way in the town of Blackheath. It is within the Rowley Regis area, in the metropolitan borough of Sandwell, and the West Midlands urban conurbation. The postcode is within the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough and the constituency of Halesowen and Rowley Regis.



## 2.06

Blackheath has always been a predominantly working class area dominated by modest housing. The town was hard hit by the economic struggles of the 1970s and unemployment of the early 1980s. However, in the 1990's Blackheath became more prosperous with substantial development of town centre stores and improvement in housing stock and the road network. Blackheath has some of the strongest public transport links in the Black Country. It has direct bus and rail links (Rowley Regis) with Birmingham, while the extensive bus network gives locals a direct route to Oldbury, Halesowen, Dudley, Cradley Heath, West Bromwich, Wolverhampton, Merry Hill Shopping Centre and Walsall.

The property is located 3 miles south-east of Dudley, 5 miles north-east of Halesowen and 7 miles west of Birmingham.

## 2.07

The proposed development will provide:

- attractive and efficient use of space inside and out
- good access – on foot/for vehicles/by public transport
- equality of access ie. an easy, safe & inviting entrance for wheelchair users, people with disabilities or ambulant visitors.
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant facilities which adhere to Part M for Buildings Regulations
- replacement windows throughout to maximise natural light.
- design requirements for temperature and acoustics; use of double glazing, insulation
- security instalments
- storage for bins and recycling
- a small outdoor space – hard landscaped for recreation/benches
- on-site parking for residents
- bike storage

## 2.08

It is a modern contemporary building of traditional red brick. It has a pitch roof of concrete tiles on each elevation with a central flat top built around a steel frame construction.

The external doors and the top hung casement windows are of timber construct.

The existing car park is laid in tarmacadam for 13 vehicles. The foot path surrounding the building is also laid in tarmacadam.

The front elevation and main entrance currently face onto Birmingham Road. There is a bus stop directly outside, rear of pavement. The rear elevation faces onto Short Street with car parks which service the rear of businesses that operate in High Street. The property is east-northeast facing.

The property is in good condition without structural issues. The flooring, plasterwork, windows, doors (internal & external) and roof superficially appear sound.

## OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

### 2.09

The planning application seeks to ensure that this building can continue to contribute to the economic life of Blackheath.

The application seeks to change the use of:

- the **ground floor** from a retail bank which was designed with: Banking Hall, offices, a safe, stores, boiler, electrics and two sets of stairs (up; one front, one rear of property) - to 3no. high-end self-contained studio apartments and,
- the **first floor** from: offices, a safe, staff room, toilets (male and female), store, electrics, and two sets of stairs (down) to - 3no. high-end self-contained studio apartments.
- All have been designed to National Floor Space Requirements (NDSS) for two/three person use (two bed) with minimum gross internal floor area and storage of 70m<sup>2</sup>.

The layout and elevations are detailed on the submitted drawings numbered: 70BR/1 (existing), 70BR/2 (proposed), & 70BR/3 (site & location)

### 2.10

#### Site Opportunities

- increased housing provision will help attract and retain higher skilled and higher income residents to the Black Country
- keeping land in active use is a public benefit and strikes a balance between the loss to the locality of a known asset (retail bank) and the benefits of returning the site to use.
- the project will facilitate connectivity, define new public use which will enhance the public domain, and create legible spaces and buildings.

- the transformation of an unoccupied but sound building into new homes and the feeling of belonging to a distinctive community resource will bring public satisfaction.
- excellent access from existing road networks. Private, off-road parking via existing vehicular access with dropped kerb.
- nearby leisure and recreation facilities in Sandwell, Dudley and Birmingham set an attractive scene.

## 2.11

### Site Constraints

- the project will need to meet Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council's standards regarding room size, facilities, and fire precautions. The proposals in the submitted drawings meet these standards.
- any changes should preserve the character of the building and area in terms of size, height, design, and materials. The proposal will meet these requirements.
- the approach is sensitive, including the need to ensure that all works take account of Part L of the Buildings Regulations [Conservation of Fuel and Power] including ensuring that work done to improve thermal performance remains technically compatible with the existing structure.
- respect will be afforded to existing residential and commercial properties surrounding the site with regards to construction process and traffic. There will be ample room for storage of machinery and materials in the working area once the site is operational.
- to the rear of the building there is a car park approximately 280 square metres in area. This will become resident car parking space for 10no. vehicles, plus a Bicycle Shelter, and an external waste store.
- Security is currently provided by a low-level fence, bollards at the perimeter and a barrier at the entrance of the car park.
- road traffic noise and air quality will be determined, and standard mitigation measures adopted.

## 2.12

The standard of accommodation is projected to be very high with each unit comprising:

Apartments 1 and 4 (99m<sup>2</sup>)

Apartments 2,3,5 and 6 (72m<sup>2</sup>)

open plan living, dining & kitchen area well-appointed with laundry, two bedrooms with built in wardrobes, a shower room & airing cupboard, a hallway, highspeed broadband, heating and hot water, TV, with all maintenance and cleaning included in the rental charge.

## 2.13

There is a high demand for top end self-contained units of this type, and it provides flexible options for young professionals with disposable personal income. It adds another level of housing options in the community.



## SITE ANALYSIS

### 2.14

#### People, Business & Health: Town facts and figures

##### People:

In the 2021 census, there were 12,065 residents in Blackheath (51,255 in Rowley Regis as a whole). Population decreased by -0.19% in the 10 years since the last census.

The age group split: 0-19 years: 2787, 20-59 years: 6243 and 60+ years: 3036. The gender split is female: 51.6%, males: 48.4%.

Ethnic makeup is: 80.7% White British, 10.1% Asian, 3.8% Black, 5.4% mixed/multiple/other group. 89.6% residents were born in the UK. Religion: 48.9% Christian, 39% no-religion, 12.1% other.

Education: 18.8% full time students, 63.4% with qualifications 1-4 and above, apprenticeships 5.3%. The B65 postcode has 5 Primary Schools, 1 Secondary School, 6 Pre-schools and there is an academy close by in Oldbury (B68).

Housing: 5200 households, with one person 32.2%, single family 61.8%, other 6%. 1-2 bedroom 42%, 38% 3-4 bedrooms. 31.9% owns outright, 28.4% mortgaged, 26.3% social rent, 13.4% private rentals.

##### Business:

52.7% residents are economically active, 4.7% unemployed and 42.6% economically inactive. 21.2% work from home. 9.1% managers, 13% professional, 11.2% technical, 11% admin, 11.8% skilled trades, 10.6% care sector, 9.7% sales and 23.5% elementary occupations. Full time 72.4%

##### Health:

40.8% residents have very good health, 34.9% good health, 16.9% fair health, 5.7% bad health and 1.5% very bad health. 21.3% disabled. 10.8% residents provide unpaid care.

## CONSULTATION

### 2.15

Following an initial site analysis, we considered how the opportunities and constraints would influence the development. Development proposals will at every opportunity protect and enhance the environmental infrastructure. The layout has been designed as a two-storey building (existing).

### 2.16

The concept has been developed by NCR Architectural Design Limited in consultation with Dr. Baljit Bhandal and his building contractor. Without prejudice, the proposal seeks approval for an alternative use based on an in-depth analysis of the location and its needs and determines that a residential development of 6 no. self-contained studio apartments with small recreational space and parking would put this resource to viable use.

### **03 Amount**

#### 3.01

There are two vertical levels in the existing property.

The red line area of the application site is 1192m<sup>2</sup>.

The building has a gross internal floor area of 594m<sup>2</sup>.

#### 3.02

The amount of accommodation is based upon the constraints of the existing building. When developing the design, reference has been made to the relevant guidance documents to ensure that the current *Department for Communities and Local Government Technical Housing – nationally described space standards* and legislation are met.

#### 3.03

The scheme will provide some 594 square metres of gross floor space thus:

Studio Apartment 1 – 99 m<sup>2</sup>

Studio Apartment 2 – 72 m<sup>2</sup>

Studio Apartment 3 – 72 m<sup>2</sup>

Studio Apartment 4 – 99 m<sup>2</sup>

Studio Apartment 5 – 72 m<sup>2</sup>

Studio Apartment 6 – 72 m<sup>2</sup>

Entrance, Lobby, Corridors – 95.2 m<sup>2</sup>

Services – 12.8 m<sup>2</sup>

### **04 Layout**

#### **THE PROPOSED SCHEME**

#### 4.01

The proposed scheme aims to integrate the key elements of Building for a Healthy Life (written in partnership with Homes England, NHS England, and NHS Improvement)

##### **INTEGRATED NEIGHBOURHOODS**

- natural connections
- walking, cycling and public transport
- facilities and services
- homes for everyone

##### **DISTINCTIVE PLACES**

- making the most of what's there
- a memorable character
- well defined streets and spaces
- easy to find your way around

##### **STREETS FOR ALL**

- healthy streets

- cycle and car parking
- green and blue infrastructure
- back of pavement, front of home

#### 4.02

Within the scope of 'making the most of what's there' we have formulated a clear plan for:

- a good quality integrated design
- acceptable amounts of natural light and ventilation
- robust and attractive materials
- public open space where pedestrians are given priority over vehicles
- adaptability for future changes

#### 4.03

Attention has been given to key requirements of the brief from the client:

- respect the existing context
- rational use of resources
- safe and welcoming environment, fit for purpose
- calm and reflective and maximise natural light
- outdoor communal space for parking and resting/meeting

#### Site and setting

#### 4.04

The site is flat and level.

#### 4.05

The main entrance is at present front of pavement Birmingham Road but will move to the southeast elevation (left hand side of the building), along the access road. This will be the main entrance for all apartments on ground and first floor. The existing staircase, located at the rear of the property, will remain unaltered. This will provide access to residents living on the first floor. The staircase at the front of the property will be removed.

The building is immediately recognisable as it occupies a prominent plot midway between the marketplace island and island at the A4100/B4171. Once repurposed it will make an encouraging first impression.

#### 4.06

Alterations to the external appearance are necessary on all elevations and will result in an improvement on the aesthetics of the existing. New UPVC casement windows and a replacement UPVC door will be introduced (as per the Proposed Plan: 70BR/2). The window pattern will be similar; the existing has 44no. timber framed top-opening windows and 3no. timber framed doors

while the new will have 51no. UPVC casement side-opening windows and 1no. UPVC door with additional security.

The additional windows will positively contribute to and lift the building by adding some interest into the large expanse of brickwork which is currently featureless to some degree. Natural light is an essential feature to meet modern standards and aspirations. The building will generate new life, foot traffic, and surveillance.

#### 4.07

The car parking spaces meet local authority standards. An area of block paving of firm, durable, slip resistant material provides clear and safe separation for pedestrian and vehicular access. All walkways on site will be clearly defined and well lit.

There is additional parking provision in the immediate vicinity.

#### 4.08

A parking, management and service plan will be created for the securely gated car park. An external covered cycle store and covered bin store is indicated on the drawings at the perimeter of the car park.

#### 4.09

As far as practicable, full consideration will be afforded to The Equality Act (2010) in terms of access to and inside the building and follows best practice in line with BS8300 (2009) [Design of Buildings and Their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People]. Level access is provided for wheelchairs and pushchairs. There will be level flush thresholds throughout.

#### 4.10

The importance of natural light to wellbeing cannot be underestimated. We will ensure that occupied rooms can harness daylight energy and natural ventilation. Newly introduced windows will be harmonious with existing, and secure.

#### 4.11

It is not anticipated that any additional unwanted, inappropriate, or excessive artificial lighting that may pollute or spoil the aesthetic environment, will be created. Nor that, light or noise pollution from surrounding properties will have an adverse effect on occupants.

Consideration will be afforded to sophisticated and reflective choice of interior décor, exploitation of natural light, and eco-lighting.

#### 4.12

Internal temperatures will be controlled by individual heating systems, high-quality supply and fit of doors, windows, and flooring. Insulation in the roof space and underfloor will increase thermal mass.

We will strive to achieve a building that is economic and energy efficient and improves occupant comfort and health. All additions will be endorsed by Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM).

4.13

In its simplest form ventilation is achieved by opening windows and doors and using simple systems such as fans. The use of blinds/shutters will be explored.

4.14

The outdoor amenity space is a functional space for outdoor seating, 10no. cars to park, for cyclists to safely secure their cycles, and for the bins and recycling containers.

4.15

A planting programme and the provision of sensibly sited benches will be considered.

4.16

#### Ground floor facilities

The main entrance to the property is via a tarmacadamed walkway providing for clear and safe pedestrian movement.

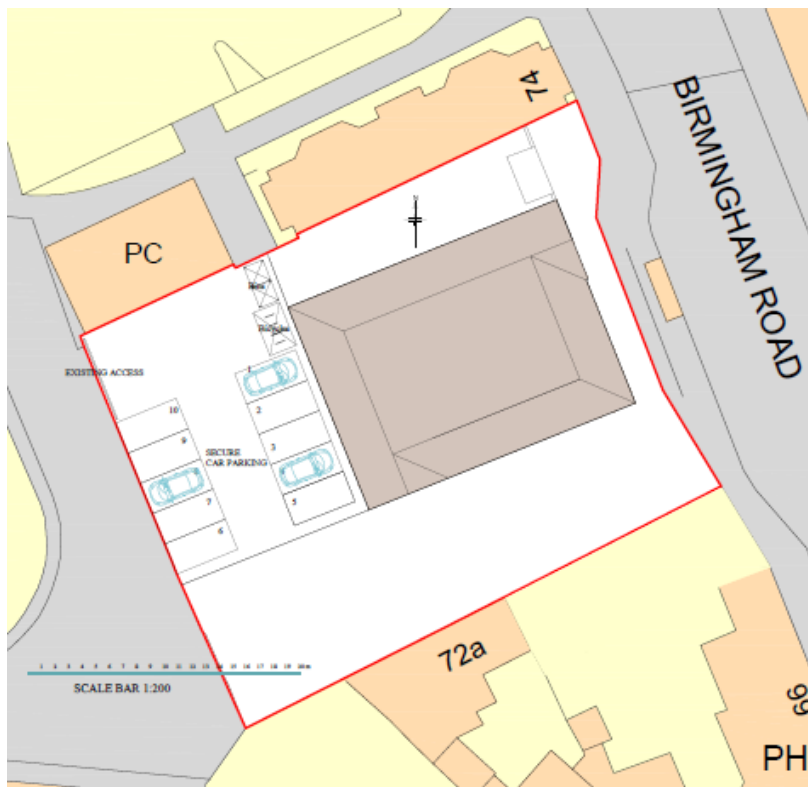
A new security door will open into an entrance lobby. This vestibule will control draughts as will a doorway to the staircase. Apartments 1,2, and 3 are accessed from this circulating corridor. Services are located at the end of the corridor.

#### First Floor facilities

A staircase at the entrance leads up to a first-floor lobby and corridor off which Apartments 4,5, and 6 are located. Services are located at the end of the corridor.

4.17

#### THE PROPOSED SCHEME – SITE LAYOUT



4.18

## THE PROPOSED SCHEME – FLOOR PLANS



## DESIGN PROPOSALS

4.19

The external masonry is red brick stretcher bond. Where openings are created for new doors and windows or brickwork is reinstated, the bricks will be reclaimed or matched like for like.

4.20

New UPVC casement windows are required on all elevations and will be sympathetic to the age of the original build.

4.21

Shutters or blinds will be fitted.

4.22

A new space and water heating system will be introduced with internal insulation. Insulation with high environmental credentials will reduce the carbon footprint without prejudicing the ability of the property to sustain its current approach to vapour exchange.

Radiators will be added to all rooms and thermal controls fitted to regulate zones accordingly.

4.23

A complete electrical overhaul (as opposed to replacements in place for existing fittings) will be introduced, to comply with Part M Building Regulations.

4.24

The floors will be covered with a new flooring specifically designed for safe, hygienic, and hardwearing use.

4.25

Walls and ceilings will be finished in plaster and paint.

## 05 Scale

### SCALE & MASSING

5.01

The internal restructuring will be done with internal timber stud partition walls and the existing drainage system will be re-used.

5.02

The plot length is 38 metres east to west and the plot width is 31metres north to south.

The height of the building is 8.66 metres (ground to apex of roof).

5.03

Neighbouring properties are mainly commercial where shops, food outlets, health care and industry are situated.

5.04

Every attempt will be made to maximise light and views out.

5.05

### PROPOSED ELEVATIONS



## **06 Appearance**

### **FORM & MATERIALS**

#### 6.01

We apply ethical standards to all our activities so this change-of-use proposal will convey authenticity, local distinctiveness, empowerment of ordinary people and individuality.

#### 6.02

Before 1841, *Bleak Heath* or *Blake Heath* was a small collection of farmhouses and inns on the turnpike road from Oldbury to Halesowen, within Rowley Regis. Throughout the remainder of the 19th century, *Blackheath* expanded as a dormitory town for the surrounding industries and is renowned for its industrial heritage. Workers migrated to Blackheath from across England and particularly from Wales until it grew with neighbouring towns to form the existing conurbation with nearby Birmingham.

#### 6.03

Our client's building contractor will ensure any material finishes are of suitable match and high quality.

## **07 Access**

### **ACCESS**

#### 7.01

Pedestrian access to the principal entrance is via an existing public footpath off Birmingham Road. All pedestrian routes will be clearly defined and well lit. Pedestrian movement within the site will be given priority and access routes are constructed of firm, durable and slip resistant materials.

#### 7.02

The site is flat and level. No steps are required to gain access however consideration is given to access for people with disabilities with flush fitting thresholds throughout the building.

#### 7.03

As far as practicable, full consideration will be afforded to The Equality Act (2010) in terms of access to and inside the building and follows best practice in line with BS8300 (2009) [Design of Buildings and Their Approaches to Meet the Needs of Disabled People].

#### 7.04

Vehicular access is off Birmingham Road (dropped kerb). There are bollards and a rise and fall barrier at the far end of the plot to prevent vehicular entry to the private car park.

#### 7.05

There are 10no. car parking spaces of which 2no. are for drivers with disability. A turning circle allows for parking manoeuvres or for emergency vehicles. There will be electric charging points.



7.06

The car park is secured by an existing low level metal security fence with a rise and fall barrier. Stretches of the boundary are planted but we will consider planting a green screen to mitigate noise and air pollution.

7.07

Cycle storage will be provided – 8-person bicycle shelter.

7.08

A timber framed bin store will be provided.

7.09

Presently, the building is laid out on the ground and first floor as a retail bank.

7.10

The property is ideally situated in a well-established area with easy access to highways and motorways, bus services and train stations/commuter rail network (Birmingham).

7.11

The surrounding towns at Halesowen, Bearwood, Oldbury have shops and entertainment venues. Public amenities such as schools, library, health centres, banks, post office, hospitals (Dudley Group NHS Trust), clinic, cinema (Quinton), college, parks (Leasowes, Haden Hill) and recreation, are all within easy reach on foot or by car or bus.

7.12

Access is an essential component of this type of accommodation, and the residents are highly likely to use local facilities and services. Businesses in Blackheath and the surrounding towns will also benefit from this development.

## **08 Summary**

8.01

This document requisitions the Change of Use of 70 Birmingham Road, Blackheath from a Retail Bank (Class E) to Residential (C3) providing x6 no. 2 bed apartments and enhancing existing housing areas within a sustainable network of community services.

8.02

The design provides a contemporary solution for the housing facility identified. It anticipates no negative impact on the positive contribution the building makes in its setting.

8.03

Proposals are fully compliant with National and Local Planning Policy.

## **09 Design Philosophy**

### **9.01**

*NCR Architectural Design Limited have over 30 years of experience, designing in the Black Country and Midlands counties. We bring together architecture and town planning professionals with insight and information on latest policy and innovative developments. Ethical design & construction is a key facet of our practice's responsibility, and we believe that the quality of place and presence of beauty should never be overlooked. With an emphasis on sustainability and environment, we design and renovate aspirational buildings. Central to this is an awareness of the positive impact that a sensitively designed environment can play regarding physical and psychological health. The buildings are seen as a valuable community resource. Where possible our structures are naturally lit and ventilated. We make every effort to improve our skills and competencies using current research to inform the buildings we design. And we take a human approach, apply it to current standards of best practice in the architectural field and trust that it changes the lives of those who use it - for the better.*

*Neil Ranford – Principal Architect, NCR Architectural Design Limited*

*Bev Cole – Architectural Assistant*