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Design & Access Statement

Re: Demolition of vacant retail building & erection of 12no apartments, land off 9A Walsall Street, West Bromwich, B70 7NX



Aerial view of site next to the Herbert Street, the Bull Street, and the Walsall Street intersection. Application site has been marked in a red outline with existing neglected building to the rear of the site.

Introduction, Site Background & History

Highbury Design chartered architects have been appointed on behalf of the agents working for the owners of land at 9A Walsall Street to prepare a full planning application to erect a new three-story apartment building with entire site re-development. The scheme will provide a mixture of 10no 1 and 2no 2-bedroom apartments with associated parking and external works, following the contemporary precedent of residential development at 43 Bull Street, B70 6EU and Shintons Square, B70 6AX.

The site itself is just within the centre of the West Bromwich on land 790.65sqm in area, to the northeast part of town and south of A41. Site location offers convenient pedestrian links to nearby shopping centres, St. Michaels Sixth Form College, Sandwell College and West Bromwich Central, of which are within 10-minute walking distance. Right outside of the application site is a bus stop linking bus route numbers 64 & 66. The central location of the site has allowed for the development to move away from a car centric design, with each apartment having one parking space with an additional cycle space.

The design has been influenced by careful consideration of BCCS Policies and shaping the scheme to meet the needs of the area. Examples can be taken from CEN1 to CEN7 – where design sets out to offer convenient links with leisure, commercial and retail by alternative means from car travel, promotes cycling and enhances public transport viability within the area ensuring sustainability of existing businesses. In doing so the option for car travel has not been removed from residents,

allocating one parking spot per apartment. Parking has been set in middle of site landscaping, reducing impact of hardstanding wherever possible and giving green areas with sidewalks back to the pedestrians. Proposal offers significant impact on BCCS HOU1 Policy providing additional 12 apartments in a set back site from street scene while impact of BCCS HOU2 Policy is considered with apartment types offered. The development comprises of 10 two bed apartments and 2 single bedroom apartment ensuring variety. The middle-sized dwelling of two-bedroom apartment ensures flexibility in adapting to the future, with the scale of it suitable on small families, growing families, single individuals, and downsizing.

The proposal scheme looks to create an active frontage whilst accommodating numerous overlooking and massing requirements with visual appeal. The scheme impact is softened by natural effect cladding, low maintenance on the two-bedroom apartments accessed from the front. This contrasts visually to reduce the impact, set back at high level with the single story apartments. The site will blend with the church and its area frontage to visually enhance the street scene. The design looks to bring in landscaping features improving the ecological value of the site.

The area is made up of a mixture of different residential dwellings and a variety of retail stores. There is a retail complex directly over the road which can be accessed by foot. Residential dwellings range from single home bungalow rear of the site, two story terraced dwellings, to four story apartment buildings at the intersection next to the proposal site. Nearby residential developments offer similar comparisons to current proposal in scale and massing, such as the new four-story apartment block on Bull Street mentioned in the cover letter which offers 11 apartments over four stories with included balconies and a flat roof contemporary design.

The site itself has been vacant it is understood for close to 10 years, with no interest in lettings. Not a lot is known of the planning history within the site. We know from client and public records it has served as a retail office store but has not been in use since 2013 once our client moved location. In planning portal there are precedent examples of similar developments not refused adjacent to the site. In 2004 an outline application has been submitted and granted for building 16 flats (DC/04/42415), in 2011 (DC/11/53585) to the front of 9A Walsall an application was approved for demolition. Outside of these two examples, there is no information available regarding the application site.



Streetscene view along Walsall Road, leading to Walsall, Bull and Herbert Street intersection.

Site & Development & Design Appraisal

The existing site is quite diverse with traditional red brick and white/grey render façade, while newer developments have broken from the traditional and offer far more contemporary designs. The new design looks to follow previously mentioned precedents in principle blending in to the fabric of the centre. The new proposal will bring vibrance to the area, regenerating a forgotten site and allowing local pedestrianised businesses in the area to thrive. By allowing forgotten site to function, means reduced anti-social behaviour and fly tipping.

The scheme has been developed with the aspirations of the Supplementary Design Guidance for Residential Developments, SPD 2014 in mind. Overlooking distances are therefore in line of set council criteria, whilst the apartments provide good amenity well within guidelines in connection with minimum floor areas. In respect to amenity, separate refuse and cycling store has been provided to all of the apartments within the site, whilst there is flexibility to achieve the Design for Life 12 criteria. The architects are also Code for Sustainable Homes designers with a track record of working on schemes such as The Lyng, and would ensure the development achieves a minimum Code Level 4, using technology where flexibility allows. It is noted that the site purposely proposes limited external amenity so as to make the green edges to the site of a manageable nature. The emphasis will be for high quality planting which requires little maintenance and will soften the streetscene and blend with the vernacular proposed.

Internally apartments can be divided into two distinct options. A single-story dwelling and the emphasised two-story dwelling. The single-story dwelling has been designed with comfort and privacy in mind allowing for as many outside views as permitted and ensuring separation of spaces. The two-story dwelling allows for maximised use of the site without compromising comfort by engaging rear of the site into a garden space with set back living room on ground floor and allowing views from first floor level. The properties comply with Part M of the Building Regulations for disabled access, with 1:20 max ramps where level differences do occur. Parking spaces are designed per required standards with consideration on disabled parking and its requirement on additional manoeuvring space. The new properties are intended to exceed Part L of the Building Regulations with good thermal mass and air tightness while fully meeting fire separation between floors on Part B, and Part E of the building regulations will ensure that the amenity of the scheme users is not affected between properties and with any users adjacent. It is intended that the properties will meet level 4 of the Code for Sustainable Homes and the B energy rated or better, effectively at least 80% efficient by SAP assessment.

The site will use existing foul drainage connections, along with if ground conditions permit soakaways. The impact of hardstanding has been reduced where permitted while still meeting set out special requirements. Trees, hedges, and local greenery has been introduced in the site to allow better rainwater draining.

The new building will comply with the spirit of Secured by Design in that new windows or glazing will be either toughened or laminated glass at ground floor, whilst all doors will have five lever mortice insurance approved locks. Further all properties will be burglar alarmed, with low level pir lighting entrance doors. Defensible space around properties will be created by overlooking (in excess of minimum prescribed standards for amenity) with 1.8m high lockable gates to building lines for rear garden access, which generally backs onto rear gardens of other existing dwellings. Here as previously advised, fencing will be replaced or extended for a continuous 1.8m high close boarded screen around the site.

Climatic Change/ Environmental & Sustainability Statement

New building will use locally sourced materials. Wherever possible materials will be reclaimed such as bricks and tiles to match existing. Hardcore will be recycled, with the approval of Building Control. Robust details will be used throughout. Materials will be classed A on the Greening Agenda Register, and low CO₂ producing. Where possible, local labour and trained craftsmen will be used in the construction of the building to reduce vehicle movements and carbon emissions. As previously advised, drainage should be to existing mains drainage if any modification is required, with additional attenuation and no increase in hard standing areas. Water usage will be below 125 litres per person per day. Where any repair or new make up is required to the areas around the building, porous materials will be used for surfacing to match existing. All products such as windows and doors where the Building Regulations Part L applies, will comply with minimum standards and achieve an equivalent specification for a Code for Sustainable Homes Assessment Level 4. The scheme will use conventional gas condensing boiler class A efficient or equivalent electric direct acting boilers. The proposal will

seek to ensure future flexibility for new energy sources, whether installed at roof level or internally.

Conclusion

The application proposal sets out to improve on the existing site and improve on the local area, making use of a disused site while ensuring good living conditions for everybody. The scheme complies with planning policies set out by the local council, meeting local residential need. The scheme has been developed in consideration of the supporting local area ensuring the purpose and function of the design fits within the space. The scheme should therefore be supported, in line with previously approved development in and around the area.

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Offices also 1310 Solihull Parkway, Birmingham Business Park, Solihull, B37 7YB



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