

CLIENT	Mr Simon Fenwick
SITE	The Gallery, Hind Street, Ottery St Mary, EX11 1BW
PROJECT	Alterations and extension to provide a residential unit above the existing retail unit.
DATE	14 th February 2024

INTRODUCTION

This design, access and heritage statement is written to support the planning submission for the proposed change of use of the first floor to residential, and the proposed extension of the property at second floor to provide a duplex residential apartment. The ground floor retail unit is retained.

This statement should be read in conjunction with Kay Tregenna **Architects'** drawings 2326-SL, 2326-01, 02 and 03, 2326-21, 22 and 23, and 2326 – Flood Risk Assessment.

CONTEXT

The proposed building to which this application relates is located on the south side of Hind Street, opposite the entrance to Sainsbury's supermarket, in the heart of Ottery St Mary town centre. Known as 'The Gallery', the building was most recently an Art Gallery and Picture Framing business, although it now sits vacant.

The site is located within the Ottery St Mary Conservation Area. Please refer to the site location plan 2326-SL and the aerial views below for the exact location and context.



Site location outlined in red – showing wider context within the town centre.



Site location outlined in red showing immediate location.

SITE/PROPERTY ASSESSMENT

'The Gallery' is located on the south side of Hind Street, opposite the entrance to Sainsbury's. Hind Street is one of the main access roads into Ottery St Mary town centre and is occupied by a mixture of commercial business and residential properties.

'The Gallery' is located to the eastern end of Hind Street within a row of historically commercial buildings of different shapes, sizes and materiality. The application building itself, is asymmetric in shape, occupying its entire site and flanked with other buildings on all but its northern elevation, which provides the street frontage for the retail unit.

'The Gallery' is a two storey, brick property with a corrugated iron mono-pitch roof. The north elevation is the mainly glazed shop frontage at ground floor, with a long window at first floor extending across the entire elevation.

To the west of the site is a two-storey, brick building with a slate clad pitched roof gable fronting Hind Street. The building is occupied by 'Men's Shed' at ground floor level with three flats on the upper floors. Prior to this it was a bakery and offices.

Men's Shed is L shaped and extends round to the rear of 'The Gallery' with a single storey flat roof extension. The first floor rear window of 'The Gallery' overlooks this flat roof.

To the east of the site is another two-storey, brick building with a pitched roof gable fronting Hind Street. This building is set back from the road, with a commercial flooring company at ground floor level and residential accommodation at first floor. There is an existing door from 'The Gallery' on the west elevation, opening onto this property's forecourt.

The north elevation of 'The Gallery' provides the shop frontage of the retail unit and is accessed directly from the roadside.

'The Gallery' itself, as previously mentioned, was most recently occupied by a picture framing business and art gallery. Artwork was exhibited on the ground floor of the existing retail unit, with the picture framing workshop at first floor. 'The Gallery' has been vacant since July 2023.

The ground floor of the building is arranged as one large space, lending itself well to retail use. Internally, adjacent to the side access door, is a staircase up to the first floor workshop. The rear of the first floor accommodates a small office, kitchenette and WC, whilst the remaining space accommodates a large workshop.

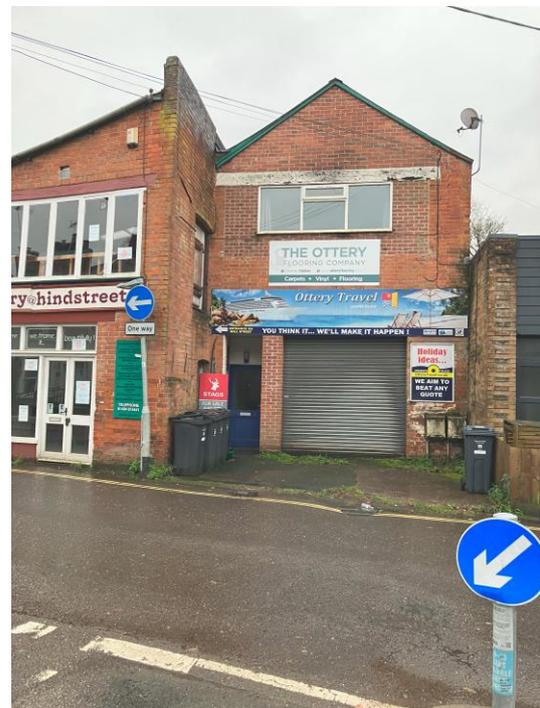
There is currently, at first floor, a large window to the front of the building, and a smaller one to the rear. The centre of the building is lit from above with corrugated plastic roof windows set within the corrugated iron roof.

'The Gallery' is in a sustainable central location within the town centre, within the Ottery St Mary Conservation Area. The area surrounding the site is primarily commercial and residential in nature, characterised by 2/2.5/3 storey dwellings.

Most of Hind Street is located within flood zone 3. Please refer to the separate Flood Risk Assessment which forms part of this application.

There are no listed buildings directly adjacent to the site, although it is recognised that 'The Gallery' is located within the Ottery St Mary Conservation Area, therefore careful consideration has been given to ensure that the development has a positive impact on its historic setting.

SITE PHOTOGRAPHS



Photographs of the existing front (Hind Street) elevation of 'The Gallery'. Note the existing door (behind the for sale sign) onto the forecourt of the neighbouring property to its right.



View over the flat roof to the rear of 'The Gallery' with the mono-pitch roof of the gallery between the two pitched roof neighbouring buildings.



Hind Street 'street scene' showing the gallery in context.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

'The Gallery' is located in the Ottery St Mary Conservation Area within the East Devon District Council planning authority.

Ottery St Mary is an ancient market town of great historic interest, which was designated as a Conservation Area in 1973 with a large expansion in 1993. It is an important area of historic townscape, including the historic market, St Mary's church and much of the 19th century suburbs. The conservation area contains around 50 listed buildings.

The town centre exhibits an informal but closely grouped network of streets which appear to be of medieval origin. The town has long flourished as a market and manufacturing centre but was swept by great fires in 1767 and 1866. It nevertheless retains many Georgian houses, especially near the church. Otherwise, the large majority of buildings within the conservation area are of 19th century or early 20th century origin.

The Hind Street part of the conservation area is dominated by Sainsbury's supermarket and its associated car park, the fuel station and other newer buildings. However, the group of buildings of which 'The Gallery' is a part is deemed to make a significant contribution to the townscape. These buildings appear, historically, to have had industrial rather than residential use.

The palette of materials is predominantly brick, with some painted render. Roofs are mostly slate. Rich architectural details such as classical detailing and wrought ironwork provide interest to many of the late 18th and early 19th century homes.

PROPOSALS

Amount

The proposed development is arranged over three storeys. The ground floor retains the existing retail unit with the exception of a small area accommodating the access and bike storage for the residential accommodation (duplex apartment) at first and second floors. The retail unit is 50m² and the ground floor access/bike storage is 5m².

The first floor of the duplex apartment is 50m² and is arranged within the existing building fabric.

The second floor of the duplex apartment is 34.6m². This area is an extension to the existing building and provides not only living accommodation, but a 17.5m² roof top garden.

Layout

The development is arranged with the retention of the retail unit at ground floor. The conversion of the existing workshop, and a proposed second floor extension provide a duplex apartment on the first and second floors.

The retail unit retains its existing entrance within the existing 'shop front' accessed directly from Hind Street.

The access to the residential apartment above is via the existing side door to the retail unit, accessed from the forecourt of the adjacent property to the west. This area also provides bin storage. A bike store is provided adjacent to the entrance to the retail unit.

The entrance to the duplex apartment opens directly into a private lobby and stair to the first floor.

At first floor, the apartment accommodates two double bedrooms, an office/third bedroom, a good sized bathroom and a generous utility/storage cupboard. Windows are within the existing openings. From the first floor, stairs rise to the second floor where there is an open plan kitchen diner and living area. Large doors open onto a roof garden terrace providing outside amenity space for the occupants. At the second floor, rear windows are at high level, allowing natural light and ventilation, but not affording views over the neighbouring properties to the rear on Mill Street. Roof lights provide additional light and ventilation into the open plan living space and stairwell.

Scale

The proposed development has been designed with minimal impact to the neighbouring properties and the existing building itself. The mono-pitch form of the front elevation has been retained but raised slightly to accommodate improved first floor accommodation and the second floor extension. The second floor extension has a flat roof and is set back 4m from the front elevation, allowing it to be subservient within the street scene.

Whilst the overall height of the building would be slightly higher than that of the neighbouring pitched roofs, its scale and set back from the front elevation would significantly reduce its visibility from neighbouring buildings and the street scene.

Access, parking and transport

The development has been designed with no onsite parking and encourages the more sustainable modes of transport such as walking, cycling and public transport.

The location of the development in the heart of the town, close to bus routes, and with easy access to cycle routes, means it is very well placed to take advantage of various sustainable transport options in the vicinity.

Cycle parking has been purpose designed as part of the development and provides secure and covered cycle storage.

There is access to local car parking facilities in very close proximity to the site at the Land of Canaan car park, as well as some more restricted local on-street parking and Sainsbury's car park opposite.

The nearby Land of Canaan car park offers annual residents' parking permits for a very reasonable fee.

Design

The proposed design of the development has been carefully considered to embrace the local context and character.

With 'The Gallery' itself and the surrounding properties having a simple palette of brick facades with slate roofs, and the more industrial corrugated metal roofs, the proposals seek to reflect this materiality. The red facing brick has been retained and extended where required. The flat roof extension has been clad using a grey standing seam cladding which complements the prevalent slate roof colour as well as the profiled metal roofs.

Existing windows and doors would be replaced with a timber equivalent. The new windows and doors within the second floor extension would be a powder coated aluminium to complement the cladding in which they sit.

The design is not intended to slavishly copy the appearance of the neighbouring properties but rather to complement and embrace the local context.

Sustainability

In addition to this development being car free and thus encouraging future occupants to utilise more sustainable modes of transport, the construction and operation of the building is also intended to employ sustainable construction methods and renewable technologies.

The developer will seek to achieve higher levels of sustainability through the construction of a very well insulated building fabric, along with complementary renewable technologies such as a heat pump and mechanical ventilation heat recovery.

Residential amenity

The new residential accommodation has carefully considered the residential amenity of the future occupants. Whilst most residential properties within the heart of the town centre do not benefit from any external amenity space, our proposals include a roof top garden to the front of the property. This amenity space would be flanked to the east and west with a brick parapet wall to provide the occupants with privacy. The front of the garden/terrace would be glazed, but maintaining the existing sloped profile of the existing roofscape, again to provide light and outlook whilst maintaining privacy.

The main habitable windows, to the front of the building, are existing with an outlook over the Sainsburys car park and properties on the opposite side of Hind Street. The new extension is set back from the main elevation, with a part brick/part glazed terrace offering further privacy to the occupants and neighbouring properties.

The development has been carefully designed to consider the privacy of neighbouring properties and indeed the occupants of the apartment themselves.

Refuse storage

Refuse storage is provided adjacent to the entrance of the new apartment, in the location of the existing refuse storage for the first floor residential property to the west of 'The Gallery'.

Drainage

It is anticipated that foul drainage from the development would be discharged to the nearest public combined sewer within Hind Street.

On the basis that there is no increase in surface water drainage through the development, we would also anticipate that surface water drainage from the development would continue to discharge into the nearest combined sewer within Hind Street. This is addressed within the Flood Risk Assessment which also forms part of this application.

STATEMENT OF IMPACT

The design of the proposed development has been very carefully considered to have a positive impact on its neighbouring properties and the conservation area.

With a suitable scale, matching that of its neighbours, it sits comfortably within its context. Furthermore, the proportions, architectural detailing and high quality palette of materials also serve to embed the development within the local distinctiveness of the Ottery St Mary Conservation Area.

This row of buildings along Hind Street has seen gradual updating and renovation over more recent years. Some of the improvements of these buildings have also involved their conversion, or part conversion into residential accommodation. These works have largely been positive for the Conservation Area and indeed the overall townscape, and have brought previously derelict and dilapidated buildings back to life in a sympathetic manner.

The respectful observation of scale, mass and proportion, careful detailing and high quality materials employed throughout the proposal, ensure that the development reflects and enhances the character of the area, resulting in a positive impact within the historic context.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT AND RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

The development plan for the area comprises the East Devon Local Plan and the Ottery St Mary and West Hill Neighbourhood Plan.

Relevant planning policy is as follows: -

East Devon Local Plan

Strategy 6 – Development within built-up area boundaries (BUABs)

Strategy 24 – Ottery St Mary

Policy D1 – Design and local distinctiveness

EN10 - Conservation areas

EN21 - River and coastal flooding

EN22 - Surface run-off implications for new development

H3 - Conversion of existing dwellings and other buildings to flats

TC2 - Accessibility of new development.

TC9 - Parking provision in new development.

Ottery St Mary and West Hill Neighbourhood Plan

NP2 – Sensitive, high quality design

NP3 – Infill, backland and residential garden development

NP22 – Ottery St Mary conservation area

NP23 – Ottery St Mary town centre public realm enhancements

Supported by Strategy 6 of the Local Plan, 'The Gallery' is located within the Ottery St Mary BUAB. Strategy 24 of the Local Plan supports development focused on meeting local needs and making the town a more vibrant centre - 'The viability of the town centre will be enhanced through additional housing development'.

The owner of 'The Gallery', Mr Simon Fenwick, was originally heavily involved in running 'The Gallery' and the associated picture framing workshop. In 2004 Mr Fenwick sold the business but retained ownership of the property. 'The Gallery' closed in July 2023 when the business owner retired. When this tenant gave notice of retirement, Mr Fenwick marketed the property nationally as a whole building with the framing business. The building and business were on the market for six months with no interest from anyone wanting to purchase or rent it for retail use. Mr Fenwick then marketed the property locally for a further six months. In this time, there were two retail enquiries, but both were only interested in the ground floor retail unit, as the overall space was too large. Since then, there has been little or no interest in the property as it stands, although there has been a small amount of interest in the property as a potential live-work unit.

As it stands, the property does not appear to offer a viable retail proposition in its current configuration. Our proposals seek to offer a development which retains an important ground floor retail unit, suitable in size for a small art gallery or independent retailer, whilst offering a modern and comfortable duplex apartment above. There is flexibility for both the retail and residential units to be utilised as a 'live/work' unit, or they could be unrelated, providing the town with a more suitably sized retail option, along with a home offering accommodation suitable for an individual, couple, or small family. This proposal seeks to offer a more viable solution for this property and as a result will enhance the vibrancy of the town centre.

Policies D1, EN10, NP2, NP3, NP22 and NP23 seek to ensure that development is of a high quality, reflects the local distinctiveness of the town, and respects the character of the conservation area in which it is set. The current building is in desperate need of improvement and revitalisation in order that it provides a positive contribution to its setting. Our proposal serves to address the requirements of the relevant policies and provide a high quality, sympathetic design that respects and enhances its setting within the conservation area and the town itself.

A separate flood risk assessment addresses the requirements of policies EN21 and EN22 and forms part of this planning application.

Planning policy H3 supports the conversion of existing buildings not in residential use into flats on the basis that they are compatible with the other relevant policies within the Local Plan, and the criteria of policy H3. The proposed development complies with this, and other relevant policies. It will enhance the character and amenity of the building itself, and its surrounding area. It is closely located to a range of accessible services and facilities to meet the needs of the residents. Adequate bike storage and refused storage have been considered and nearby car parking facilities are available.

It is demonstrable that the development proposals can be supported by all relevant local planning policies and offer a good balance of retail and residential accommodation within a high quality development.

CONCLUSION

The development has been considered with regards to the East Devon Local Plan and the Ottery St Mary and West Hill Neighbourhood Plan, to ensure that it aligns with all relevant planning policies.

The design of the proposed development offers a high quality conversion and extension which respects its context and local distinctiveness through its scale, proportion and materiality. It has carefully considered the amenity of its occupants and neighbouring properties and has included appropriate cycle parking and waste storage arrangements to further enhance residential amenity.

The central location of the site provides a sustainable, car free development which promotes walking, cycling and the use of public transport.

The current vacant building is unsightly and in need of renovation and occupation. The proposed development will provide high quality retail and residential accommodation in an attractive building. This will significantly improve the appearance of the street and the conservation area and will help to enhance the vibrancy of the town.