

63 Kew Road, Heritage Statement

June 2024

Heritage - Impact upon the Conservation Area

Policy - Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that *'In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area...special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.'*

Furthermore Chapters 12 and 16 of the NPPF require great weight be placed on design quality and the preservation of designated heritage assets including their setting.

Paragraph 200 states when determining applications, *'local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance....'*

Paragraph 213 states that not all elements of a Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance.

Locally, Policy LP3 relates to conservation areas and aims *'to conserve and, where possible, take opportunities to make a positive contribution to, the historic environment of the borough. Development proposals likely to adversely affect the significance of heritage assets will be assessed against the requirement to seek to avoid harm and the justification for the proposal. The significance (including the settings) of the borough's designated heritage assets, encompassing Conservation Areas, listed buildings, Scheduled Monuments as well as the Registered Historic Parks and Gardens, will be conserved and enhanced...'*

Part B (3) of the policy states that with regard to proposed works in Conservation Areas Council will *'Resist substantial demolition in Conservation Areas and any changes that could harm heritage assets unless it can be demonstrated that....*

the building or part of the building or structure makes no positive contribution to the character or distinctiveness of the area.'

In the Central Richmond Conservation Area Statement, there is no particular mention of the existing building with regards to special heritage considerations and the building is not identified as a building of townscape merit.

Planning Assessment - The existing building dates from the late 1980s and has undergone several updates in more recent years - 2013 facade updates, 2021 reception, entrance and amenities updates. All of these updates have allowed the office building to reposition itself as the commercial adapts to an ever-changing market and tenant demands.

Whilst the office building is located in the Central Richmond Conservation Area, the building is not identified as being a building of merit in the Conservation Area.

The Application Site is located in Character Area 2 of the CRCA – Parkshot. Parkshot is characterised by a mix of building types, including more modern development, and feels somewhat separate and quieter than the town centre.

The Conservation Statement notes that the building heights vary from two to five storeys and roof treatments vary in the area. In general, the greatest virtue and benefit of the existing townscape is that no one building dominates and that the larger buildings do not spoil the appearance of the centre.

Along the Kew Road the architecture worthy of notable mention relate to its three fine public houses, the Bull and Bush, The Duke of York and the Orange Tree. All these buildings make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, although two of the public houses have painted over the bright red brick façade.

Given the Application site's relatively recent construction and current design it can be assumed that the building is of a lesser importance in the context of the wider Conservation Area. The buildings current design features do not strongly reflect the historical architectural styles, materials and function found in the wider area.

Overall, it is considered that 63 Kew Road makes a neutral contribution to the CRCA. The building is located on the periphery of the Conservation Area and was built much later than the main part of Central Richmond. The building is a simple and fit for purpose office building, with no significance architecturally. Whilst it adds to overall townscape of Richmond Upon Thames it does not currently detract from it.

It is quite clear that the Conservation Area's significance is largely reflected in and by the properties located within and immediately around the core of Richmond Centre, not along the north eastern edge of the designation where the Application Site is located.

The drawings submitted as part of the application package illustrate how the proposals have been designed so as to be sympathetic to the overall character and appearance of the existing building and surrounding context of the Townscape and Conservation Area.

The proposed alterations are to the rear of the site and do not have an impact on the wider conservation area or townscape. The overall appearance, as an office building, will remain and the street facing elevation will remain unchanged.

Heritage Conclusions/Assessment of Impact - The relationship between the Application Site and the Conservation Area is maintained and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area will be fully preserved as a result of the proposals which are compatible with the existing office building, improving the access, legibility and purpose of the existing office building.

The proposed rear alterations are modest in nature and will not cause any harm particularly given its location in the existing car parking area and away from street views.

As the Conservation Area Appraisal states, there is no distinctive local vernacular of 63 Kew Road and *the building or structure can be considered to make no positive contribution to the character or distinctiveness of the area.* As the proposal does not detract from the existing appearance and fabric of the Application Site it can therefore be concluded that no harm is caused to the

Conservation Area as a result of the proposals. The application can be considered to meet relevant policy and guidance and the recommendation considered to be in line with the statutory duty set out above.

Design – Proposed Works

Planning Policy – High quality and inclusive design is encouraged by planning policy at national, regional and local levels.

The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment in the NPPF. Paragraph 131 states that the creation of high-quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.

Paragraph 135 supports that, inter alia, planning decisions should ensure developments:

- Will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
- Are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
- Are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting;
- Optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development, and support local facilities and transport networks.

Policy LP1 of the Local Plan ‘Local Character and Design Quality’ states that the Council will require all development to be of high architectural and urban design quality. Development proposals will need to demonstrate a thorough understanding of the site and how it relates to its existing context, including character and appearance. The design should provide opportunities to improve the quality and character of buildings, spaces and the local area.

Part (1) is of particular relevance to this proposal stating that when assessing proposals and design there is a need to demonstrate *‘compatibility with local character including the relationship to existing townscape, development patterns, views, local grain and frontages as well as scale, height, massing, density, landscaping, proportions, form, materials and detailing.’*

Planning Assessment - The design brief was to deliver an outdoor amenity space, open and accessible to all building users, utilising existing external space within the car park of the existing office building. This outdoor element forms part of two linked amenity interventions within the site, with the transformation of a small office demise into a Business Lounge internally, adjacent to the building’s reception area.

The proposal provides the following design opportunities:

- Creation of a separate and screened terrace area within the curtilage of the existing car park;
- Creation of an outdoor amenity space which will be an extension of the new internal Business Lounge that is proposed;
- Improve the current entry arrangement into the building from the car park;

- Improve the presentation of the car park environment by refreshing the lighting, surface markings, landscaping and introducing natural screening.

The design is both respectful and contemporary and blends seamlessly into the previous upgrades that have been completed on the building since 2013 while delivering and comfortable outdoor space for building users.

With regards to the building footprint and scale, the modest terrace will sit neatly in the existing car parking area at ground floor level. It will not change the scale of the existing building.

None of the proposed alterations to the building façade will visually dominate the existing building and the alterations are in scale with and are appropriate to the existing building and the surrounding area.

The design strategy addresses policy LP1 in the following ways:

- The alterations are confined to the rear of the office building and the small nature of the works dictates that they will not be visible from the surrounding streetscape. The terrace will only be visible from the car parking area or when looking out from the ground floor office areas;
- The proposal is relatively minor and will provide improved and enhanced external amenity space. It will not visually dominate the existing building and is of a scale and massing that is appropriate to the existing and surrounding building;
- The design and materials carefully reflect those of the existing buildings and will complement and modernise the existing building (see the heritage section below for more details with regards to the proposed materials);
- The proposal provides enhanced access and entry to the building;
- The proposal improves the landscaping appeal of the current lacklustre car parking area.

In addition, it is important to note that these alterations and improvements enable the creation of enhanced office space that meets the needs of modern office occupiers.

Given that there is a presumption against the loss of office floorspace under Policy LP41 and the Council strongly supports the local economy, the proposed enhancements to the existing office accommodation should be supported. These works fully uphold the Council's objectives to improve existing office space.

Given the above, it is considered that the proposed works proposed comply with the provisions of local and national planning policy as related to design and townscape.