



Hinckley Town Centre

The Old Post Office

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Design & Access Statement

25-69 PT1- DAS

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Preamble

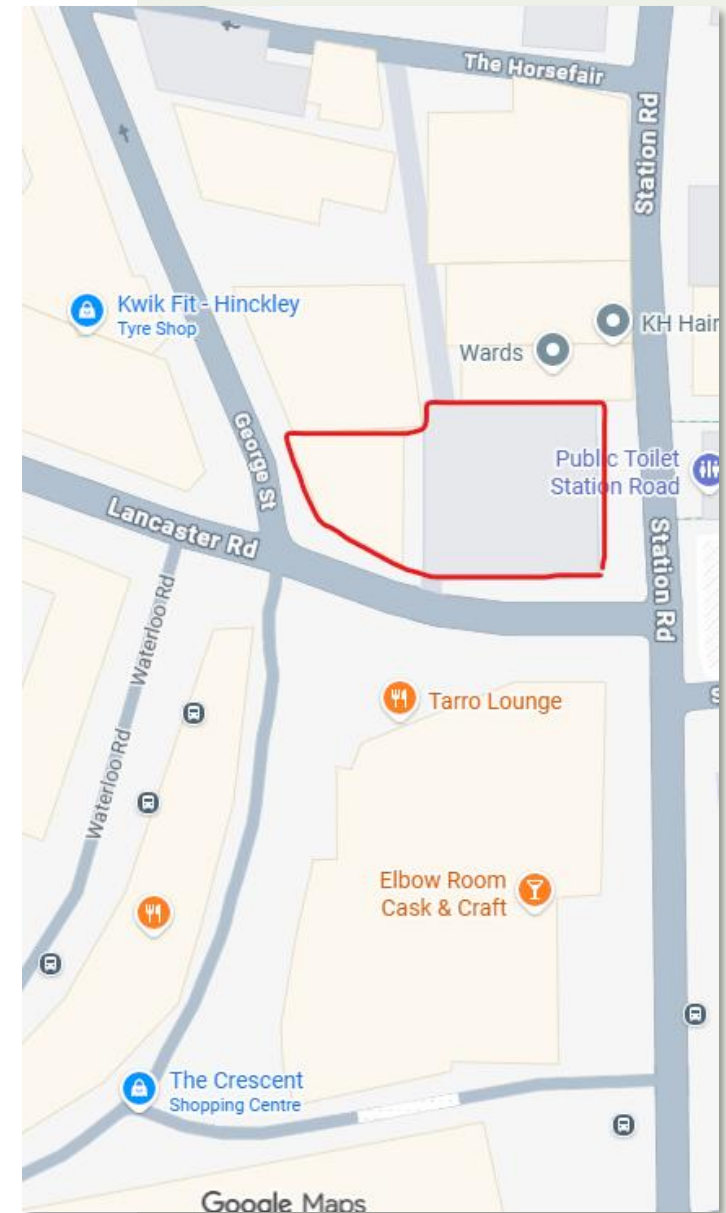
This Design & Access Statement has been prepared by Hayward Architects to accompany the submission for Full Planning approval for the conversion of the former post office building at 22 Station Road, Hinckley Town Centre into a house of multiple occupation incorporating up to 12 bedrooms

This statement is additional material which describes how the proposed development responds to its setting, as is relevant to the planning process as described in the *National Design Guide* and is to be read in conjunction with the submitted drawings and Heritage Statement

Please note that the applicant has appointed qualified and experienced architects to undertake the design of this development.

If the planning service should feel that the proposal is not compliant with national or local planning policies, please provide details of the specific policy and explain how this policy is being breached.

This will enable the design team to co-ordinate a full and appropriate response which accommodates all of the factors which inform good design, alongside those which are pertinent to the planning system.



Project Description

This application relates to the first part of a wider development, which seeks to bring a cluster of historic buildings in Hinckley town centre back into everyday use and consequently secure their long-term future and maintenance.

The site is naturally divided into 4 distinct parts with different historic uses and very different architectural styles. These are to be developed under 4 separate planning applications and with a phased approach, (the order of which is yet to be ascertained)

This application is for Part2 – The old Post Office

The former post office building (Parts 1+2) was constructed in Hinckley town centre in 1902 and designed by the Architect for Provincial Post Office: William Thomas Oldrieve.

A sorting office was added to the side in the mid twentieth century (Part 3) and a further ancillary building at an unknown date (part 4). The post office counter ceased trading in 2015 with the sorting office continuing until 2023. The buildings have been vacant ever since. The entire site has been purchased in full by the applicant (Investment Street Ltd)

Part 1



Part 2



Part 3



Part 4



Part two of the development is the old post office at 22 station road which was originally designed as the post office counter but was more recently closed to the public and used for back-of-house purposes.

It is currently Use Class E and this applications seeks to change this to Use Class C3
It will offer private bedrooms for single people and shared ancillary accommodation in the form of a common lounge, kitchen and laundry.

The existing building is structurally sound and in a good state of repair. For conversion to residential use it will need to be upgraded to meet current building regulations as far as is practicable.

This will entail the need for all windows to be replaced with new, U-Pvc thermally broken double glazed units.
A new main entrance will also need to be established and two dormers added.



The Existing Building



Proposal

Context

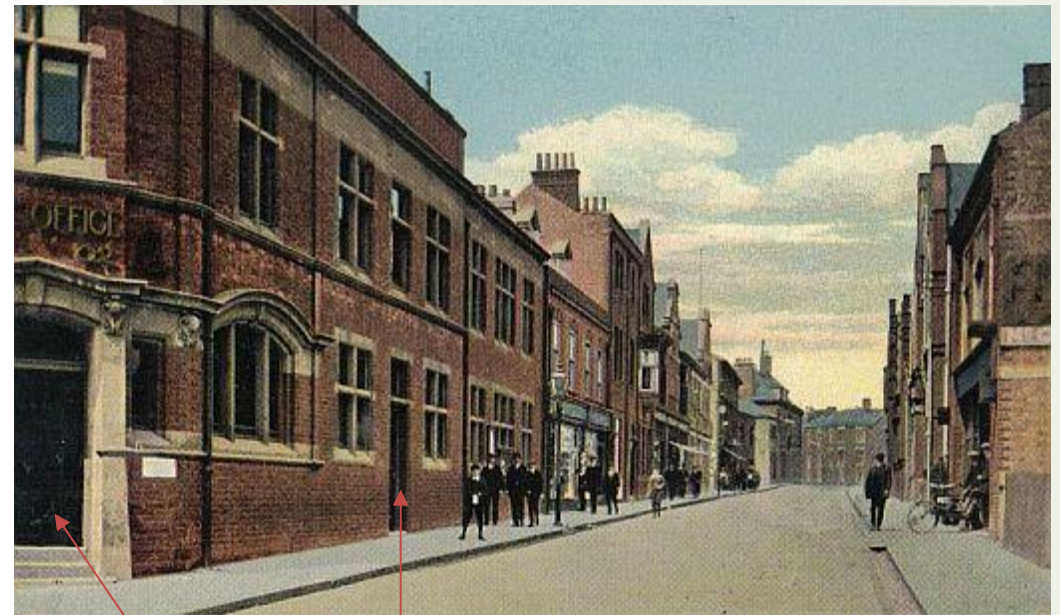
Please see the *Heritage Statement* for a detailed description of the context and a photographic record of the surrounding buildings.

Station Road was for the most part developed at the turn of the twentieth century and displays a distinctly Edwardian character. Please see the *Heritage Statement* for a more detailed description of the architectural character

This conversion proposes minimal and appropriate interventions so as not to detract from that character. The two significant changes to the exterior of the building are the new main entrance and the new dormers which replace existing rooflights.

New Entrance Door

The original entrance is easy to see on the corner, where the lower section has been blocked in and rendered. The ideal would have been to reinstate this door and make it the primary access point again. Alas, after exploring this we simply can't make it workable in a functional or building regs/ fire escape context.



Doorway to be reinstated

Doorway cannot be reinstated

Instead, we propose to reinstate the secondary entrance which can be seen on the 1902 photograph.

This will provide a main entrance with sufficient prominence to give legibility to the new purpose of this building and be functional for visitors, postal workers etc.

As well as providing a suitable main entrance this will restore the original design of the building to some extent, meaning that it is an intervention with a positive impact.

The door itself will be a composite SBD product in a traditional Edwardian style.

It will be fitted into the existing aperture beneath the transom.

The stone cill will need to be sawn through rather than replaced, leaving a glimpse of the journey of the building through the ages.

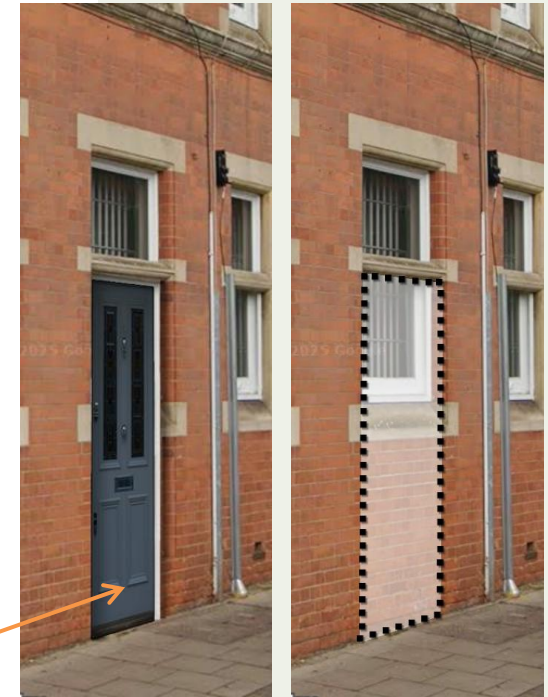
Rear Entrance

The rear door will also be replaced with a SBD composite product which will not be visible from the street.

The side entrance door will be removed and replaced with a lockable timber gate.

This will give access to the bin store for refuse collection and egress from the bike store for residents.

New front door



New rear gate



New Dormers

Two of the attic rooms currently have only rooflights.

This is not suitable for bedrooms in terms of the user experience. It is important that occupants have views out and ideally openable windows, as well as the ingress of natural light.

It is also important for bedrooms that light can be shut out completely, which can be difficult with sloping rooflights.

Furthermore, only rooflights in a bedroom does not comply with local planning policy

The ideal solution is to add dormers to the roofline. This is an approach which befits the age of the building perfectly, indeed the attached neighbour has two such rooflights, the style of which is to be emulated in the proposal.

Existing Rooflights



Existing Rooflights



Neighbouring Rooflights



Identity

The character of the street is distinctively Edwardian. The proposed alterations are entirely in keeping with the age of the building and the street, therefore making a positive contribution to the identity of the conservation area

Built Form

The re-use of an existing building which could otherwise become dilapidated has a positive effect on the built form of the Conservation Area. As an empty building, it is currently a ghostly gap in development which is a detriment to the town as a whole

Town centre living is an extremely sustainable location for dwellings. It is within easy walking distance of all necessary amenities and most usefully, there is a train station and a bus station withing 5 minutes walk, thus reducing reliance on private cars.

This walkability makes the building an ideal candidate for residential conversion.

Nature

This proposal does not have the opportunity to have either a positive or negative effect on nature

Movement

This proposal does not have any space to accommodate car parking, however it is suggested that the sustainable location and strong transport links will appeal to occupiers who do not rely on personal car use.

Hinckley railway Station is less than half a kilometre walk away, along Station Road. This offers a direct connection with surrounding major cities: Leicester, Birmingham, Nuneaton and Rugby.

All four offer employment opportunities for residents of Hinckley town centre.

For local journeys, Hinckley central bus station is mere metres from the site on Lancaster road.

There is a taxi rank close by, on George Street.

Ample cycle storage space will be provided with direct access to an external exit.

It is undercover and secured by a lockable gate, with cycles not visible from the public realm.

Should residents have a car, there is ample spare parking in Hinckley town centre in various locations. It is possible to arrange a yearly fee for spaces with local operators, if a tenant requires.



Use

The existing building has operated under use class E, however this application seeks to change it to use class C3.

Need

HBBC's **Housing Needs study (April 2024)** shows an identified need for homes for single person occupancy in the region.

Mainstream developers are reluctant to provide one-bedroom properties, particularly for private sale or rent. This leaves a shortage of suitable accommodation for younger people.

This planning application offers single occupant accommodation in the form of private bedrooms and shared communal facilities. These include a dedicated laundry plus a common lounge, kitchen and dining room where occupants can socialise. This method of communal living doesn't suit everyone, but for those it does appeal to, it can be an essential lifeline to avoid isolation and improve emotional wellbeing and mental health.

The building will remain in the ownership of the applicant (Investment St Ltd) who will act as the landlord. Investment Street are an established developer and manager of a luxury HMO brand with multiple properties already occupied in the midlands.

The business model offers higher quality accommodation and larger rooms for single people, all with private en-suites.

Couples, children and pets are not allowed. The rooms are all furnished with aesthetics in mind to appeal to a younger demographic.

General Needs

- 1-bedroom: 25%
- 2-bedroom: 35%
- 3-bedroom: 30%
- 4+-bedroom: 10%

Housing for Older People

- 1-bedroom: 40%
- 2+-bedroom: 60%

Housing Needs Study April 2024,



Typical Room with Investment Steet

Public Spaces

This proposal does not offer any new or changed public spaces.

This style of accommodation is not suitable for families and children will not be allowed to occupy.

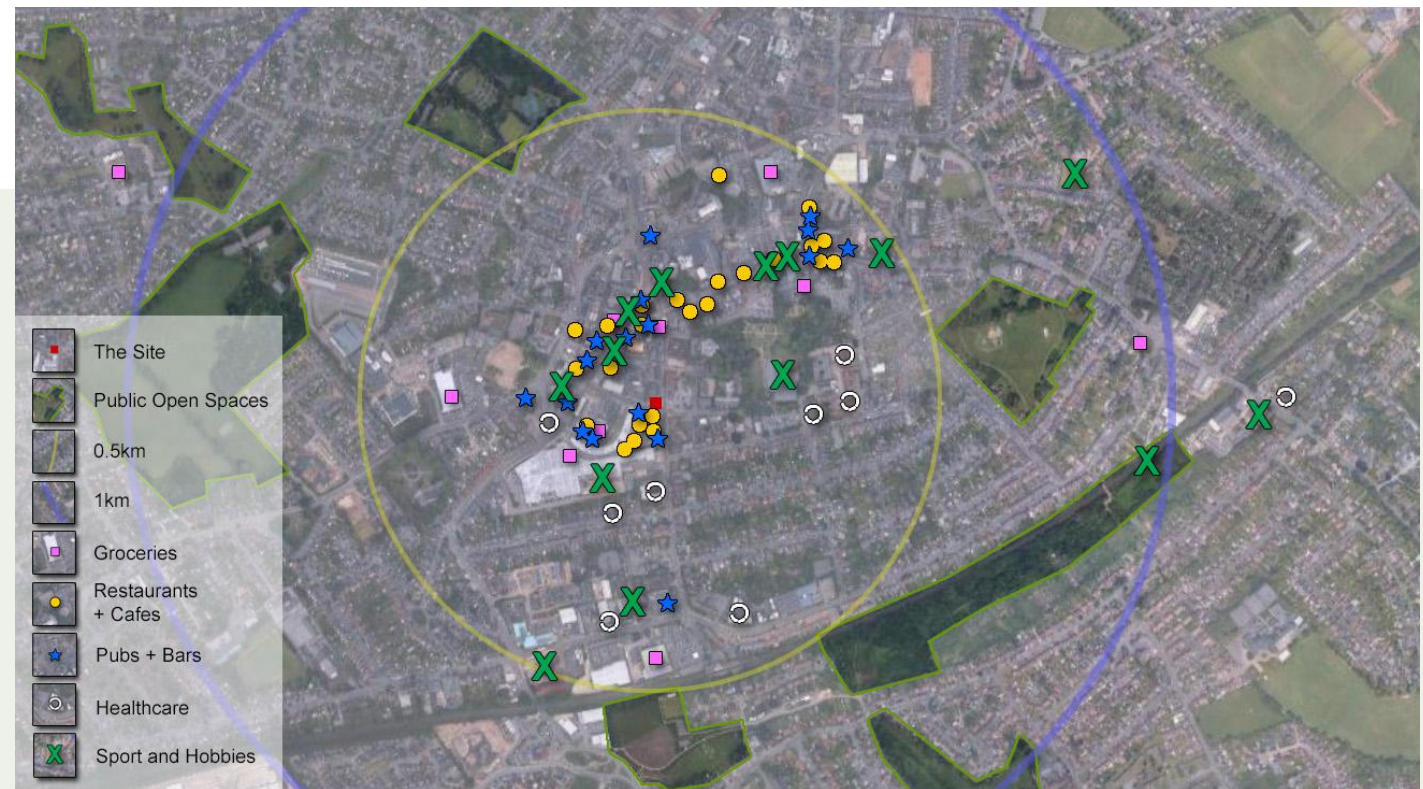
Homes and Buildings

The site is well located for residents to access a huge range of amenities on foot, within easy walking distance. This makes it a sustainable location and suitable for single occupier accommodation.

This also negates the need for car ownership

The internal layout incorporates space for secure, covered cycle storage.

A dedicated bin store will be located off the street and easily accessed by local authority refuse collection services.



Resources

This proposal is a good example of how to re-use an existing historic building rather than demolish and re-build.

This is recognised as a sustainable approach in terms of embodied energy cost.

It is also a sustainable approach in a wider sense, in that it prevents dereliction of a major building on the street scene and sets a good example for the town centre.

The insulation of the fabric will be upgraded as a matter of course as is required by Building Control, which reduced energy consumption in use

Lifespan

The technological revolution has resulted in a surge in on-line shopping and subsequently, the need for retail premises has dwindled.

This is disastrous for British high streets which now have to re-think their purpose.

The sustainable location means that such premises are often ideal candidates for conversion to residences to secure their future.

Our townscapes are littered with beautiful old buildings which have fallen into disuse, disrepair and then dereliction. There is a tipping point where the renovation of a building becomes too expensive to attract investors and this is where the rot begins.

The old post office has been quite recently vacated and is still in good condition. There needs to be general upgrading to meet current building regulations and to provide a comfortable living environment for the building users, but no major structural repairs are anticipated.

All windows will be replaced with current building regulations compliant U-PVC double glazed units. These will be fitted into the existing apertures and will not need any work to the stone surrounds or transoms.

It will of course be redecorated throughout the interior to create a homely and high-class environment, but the outside can remain much the same.

Access

Pedestrian access to the building is achieved via two external doors.

They are legible as a front and a back door.

The front door is easily visible to visitors and delivery services.

The back door is a viable fire escape and will be used for refuse disposal and cycle storage.

There is no vehicle access.



Summary

- This proposal offers the opportunity to bring the historic Hinckley central Post Office building back into use
- It is an opportunity to ensure the future preservation and ongoing maintenance of a valuable building in the Hinckley Town Centre conservation area, to avoid future dereliction
- The location is suitable for residential conversion due to its accessibility to local amenities within 0.5km. This makes it a sustainable location
- It offers a style of accommodation which is identified as '*under provided*' in the HBBC 'Housing Needs Study' (April 2024) by appealing to single occupants
- The history of the existing building is understood and respected in the proposal, which makes minimum impact on the historic fabric and setting
- The exterior of the building will remain largely the same, with only two interventions, the design of which benefit the character of both the building and its context.
- The preservation of historic buildings and the avoidance of dereliction in town centres contributes to the social and economic wellbeing of the town's population



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