DEVELOPMENT
SERVICES

1 8 APR 2008

RECEIVED

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

FOR

DEVELOPMENT OF 10 FLATS

AT

STAMFORD HOUSE

1- 5 HILL STREET / 97 - 97a CASTLE STREET
HINCKLEY LEICESTERSHIRE

AMENDMENT 14 APRIL 2008

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
FOR
DEVELOPMENT OF 10 NO. ONE AND TWO BEDROOM FLATS
AT
STAMFORD HOUSE, 1 - 5 HILL STREET / 97 - 97a CASTLE STREET, HINCKLEY

1. Proposal, Design Process

The decision to redevelop the Stamford House site has been made after continuous efforts to market the first floor office accommodation have failed to attract any tenants other than one charity. The reasons given by prospective tenants for not taking the space is that the town centre location, on a one way system, makes it very difficult for visitors to get to them and find anywhere to park. This part of the town is not very business friendly for most companies, bigger than those requiring shop premises. Because the building is standing mostly empty and under used despite the marketing efforts it is starting to fall into disrepair through lack of revenue.

It is these factors that have lead the owners to look for a more suitable and sustainable use for the property, having explored all combinations of individual offices, office suites etc.

There is a trend now to reintroduce town centre living which will breathe life back into town centres after the shops close and hopefully make the streets safer after dark as more people residing in an area will slowly drive out the anti-social behaviour from the darkened doorways and Hinckley's famous 'jitties/yards'.

Originally built as a car showroom with offices above, Stamford House was a modern building in its time and part of the progressive move to modernise Hinckley by gradually replacing the old properties with new modern stock. Since then it became impractical to have a car showroom in the town centre and under its present ownership the ground floor was successfully converted to shops.

Thankfully, the fashion of demolish and replace has now died out leaving Stamford House standing out from its surroundings, for all the wrong reasons, with its banded brickwork and flat roof.

The design for this proposal looks to retain the facades of the existing building to reflect a period in the town's development but then increase the height of the property by adding an additional storey and a pitched roof thereby helping to blend it back in to its surroundings without destroying its own character, and be in keeping with the terraced houses, the bar/club opposite and the factory on Hill Street, both now currently being converted into flats.

Refer to photographs attached in the appendix, which identifies Stamford House and the surrounding buildings. The following section of this design statement describes the proposed development and explains how the completed scheme will complement the surrounding building styles and fit well within the surrounding area.

It is considered that the best use for the upper floor is to convert it to 5 flats and add an additional floor to accommodate a further 5 flats.

The mixed use of the site with shops etc on the ground floor and accommodation above should work well in the sustainable surroundings, without causing conflict or annoyance.

Size and Quantum of the Development

It is felt that the development is small enough to create a community in its own right, with 10 flats served from a single entrance, but also fit in well with the new larger community being created with the new accommodation being provided in Hill Street with the factory conversion, the existing terraced houses and the new flats on New Buildings and Wood Street.

This development, as with the others in the immediate area, will be readily sustainable with local shops, bars, takeaways, cafes, schools etc within easy walking distance and the close proximity of the local bus routes. Limited 'on site' parking (12 spaces) has been proposed on this site in a gated, secure well-lit area on the existing car park serving this site.

3. **Scale of the Development**

As stated above, it is believed the second floor extension will serve to reinstate the street scene sympathetically, that was interrupted and truncated with the building of Stamford House. As shown on Drawing No.s FP4.03/R10/002 & 03 the development sits comfortably within the parameters of its surroundings.

The proposed raised pitched roof section of the existing Stamford House building will be approximately 1500mm above the ridge height of its down hill neighbours (93 and 95 Castle Street) and approximately 2500mm lower than its uphill neighbour (99 Castle Street) which also faces the Hill Street elevation of the proposed development.

4. **Scale of the Parameters**

Details of projecting box bays and street facing gables have been taken from the surrounding properties, to continue the theme but in a modern way. The existing PVC windows, are relatively small when compared to the older neighbouring properties, but are nearer in size to that required by current building regulations. The scale of these windows has been addressed by using the much bigger windows in the new box bays, which makes the overall elevations and street appearance a careful compromise. The existing windows will be replaced PVCU windows with opening casements as shown on the drawings to give a more domestic feel to the property yet still reflect its history.

The sizes and positions of the windows work well and are of a comfortable scale for the occupants.

5. **Access Points**

Safe, easy access to the flats has been provided by retaining the existing entrance door to the Stamford House offices to serve all 10 flats.

The door has been retained on the outer face of the building so as not to leave recessed porches, which could attract undesirable uses and general street litter.

Since the proposed flats are on the first and second floors of the building and are positioned above existing businesses it is not considered practical or possible to provide fully disabled access to the accommodation areas. All access stairs are however, "slow stairs", which provide easier access for people with lesser mobility problems than being fully chair bound.

The parking area would be accessed as at present from Hill Street but would be protected by automatic gates and good energy efficient lighting.

There are very good, frequent local bus services passing the front of the building providing good access to the site and National Bus and rail services are only a short walk away.

6. **Landscaping**

The site currently has no soft landscaping and it is not proposed to create any as part of this development. The reason for this is that the only part of the site that could be used is the existing car park, which is being retained. The visual appearance of this will be enhanced by the use of decorative railings to enclose it and hard landscaping inside the site. Any landscaping that were to be introduced would encroach on the street scene and would not be in keeping with the surroundings as there is a continuous building line with no soft landscaping for over half a mile on the Castle Street side and several hundred yards on the Hill Street side.

The majority of the trees that used to line upper Castle Street and Hill Street were removed many years ago to facilitate road-widening schemes.

For the purposes of public amenities to serve the new accommodation there is Argents Mead and Queens Park within easy walking distance.

7. **Appearance**

As detailed above, this development has been designed from the outset to relate well to its surroundings, mimicking certain features, such as the bay windows and gables facing the street in a modern way and reintroducing a pitched roofline.

The design is intended to soften the harsh flat appearance of the existing building whilst at the same time complementing the surrounding buildings and enhancing the street scenes.

We believe that this will be a very attractive building once development is complete and be an asset in the ongoing redevelopment of the area.

The basic design principles have already been discussed and agreed with planning officers in an earlier application to redevelop Stamford House alone into 10 flats. This application (05/01368/FUL) has been approved. This previous application was the basis of a revised scheme where the only change was a new build section over the existing car park creating 15 flats (07/00131/FUL)

Detailed costings of the 15 flat development have proved it to be far from economically viable and so the scheme has reverted back to 10 flats. This proposed development for 10 flats is similar to the original scheme except that the external staircase, which would have allowed for a future extension over the car park has been removed, and there are minor changes to the window positions.