

Introduction

This design and access statement is for a proposed change of use to residential from the approved use as commercial for the building A in the approved planning consents PA/2023/0270 and 16/00111/AS at Mercers in Tenterden.

The approved development includes two commercial buildings to the south of the site buildings A and C and a residential block of five flats building B in the north of the site, grouped around a courtyard of car parking and amenity. The construction of the residential flats and a first commercial building A is substantially completed.



Approved Building A on the left and flats building B on the right from the courtyard

The proposed change of use to residential from commercial use for the part completed building A is following extensive marketing, which commenced in 2016 after planning approval was granted. The marketing has demonstrated that there is no demand for the proposed commercial use in this location. There is therefore a likelihood that the commercial building will remain empty and detract from the high quality residential for which there is demand. The proposed change of use from commercial to residential

within the same approved and high quality constructed building design would provide an appropriate use to enhance the development and surrounding context.

Client

Sweetridge Ltd
London Beach Hotel and Golf club
Ashford Rd, St Michaels
Tenterden, Kent

Architect

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1.2 Site Location

The site is to the north west of Tenterden and is located on Coombe Lane off Station Road. TN30 6HE

Adjacent to the site to the south is a dwelling at 9 Coombe Lane, to the north the Kent & East Sussex Railway Station; to the east is the field west from Eastwell Meadows, to the west corner there is the entrance to the site on Coombe Lane and opposite there are two newly built cottages adjacent to the spring cottage.

The entrance to the site is from Coombe lane, which is linked to Station Road to the west and to the High Street to the south. Along the south side of the site there is also a pedestrian route Church Path which leads to Church Road.

Mature trees and shrubs varying from 4 metres to rows of 14 metre poplar trees and 16 metre beech trees surround the perimeter of the site.

Previous to the planning approval PA/2023/0270 and 16/00111/AS permitting development of one residential and two commercial buildings with associated parking, the site was used by Mercers Garage which provided car repairs and car services and more recently used as a car washing business which has relocated to another site in Tenterden.

The previous unoccupied buildings are now demolished.

At present the development has commenced and comprises two buildings nearing completion in accordance with approval PA/2023/0270 with the third building yet to be commenced.

1.3 Planning History

Application reference: 16/00111/AS. In 30th September 2016 Ashford Borough Council granted planning permission for two commercial buildings to the south of the site and a residential block of five flats in the north of the site.

The approved residential building was of traditional design in brick with pitched roof and comprised two flats per floor over two floors and a single flat in the roof space.

The approved commercial buildings were of a contemporary design, with brick elevations and metal windows and with flat roof to provide a planted rooftop with solar panels. The two buildings were of similar design framing an open courtyard space and each comprised approximately 183m² gross internal floorspace on two floors.

A total of 14 car park spaces were proposed on the site, 14 for use by the two commercial buildings and a 10 car park spaces for use by five flats in the residential building. A paved courtyard provided shared vehicular and pedestrian access, along with planted and paved amenity space for the residential.

Application reference PA/2023/0270 was approved by Ashford Borough Council on 02-08 25. This application has the same land use and the same design as the previous planning approval reference 16/00111/AS. The application was requested because development had commenced prior to approval of pre- commencement conditions. The required conditions were addressed and approved in application PA/2023/0270 along with approval for some detail parts of the development which had commenced which were different from the 16/00111/AS approval.

Application Reference OTH/2025/0542 was approved by Ashford Borough Council on 27-08-25 with approval of conditions 3,6,7,10,11,13,14,16,24 for approved PA/2023/0270_including construction plan, refuse store, cycle store, telecoms, ev charging drainage, landscape, ecology and boundary fences.

Application Reference OTH/2025/0805 was approved by Ashford Borough Council on 27-08-25 with approval of conditions 4 and 8 for approved PA/2023/0270 including surface water drainage.

1.4 Context of application site

The site is within the conservation area. There are no Listed Buildings in the immediate surroundings of the site. The closest Listed Buildings are 130m to the south, they are the St. Mildreds Church and the buildings facing the High Street. To the north of the site beyond the Kent & East Sussex Railway Station is the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Tenterden is an historic English market town with historic buildings fronting the High Street and back lanes which originally led to a rural landscape the back lanes are a mix of terraced cottages, detached and semidetached houses.

Station road and Coombe Lane were originally lanes connecting the west of Tenterden High Street to the rural areas to the north and west crossing valleys with isolated farms and houses.

The introduction of the Kent & East Sussex light railway in 1903 changed the area making Station Road an important access to the town. The improved access resulted in more development of suburban housing in the west side of Station Road. The station was closed in 1954, part reopened in 1974 and today the station has been converted into the rail museum making this location a tourist destination.

The predominant use in the vicinity along Station Rd is residential, however the streetscape is varied. The part of Station Rd close to the High Street retains the historic pattern of clustered buildings along a back lane. This urban pattern however is more fragmented further from the High Street. New cottages were approved and built adjacent to the spring cottages which have in filled a gap to create a more cohesive character of clustered buildings along Station Rd.

South west of Station Road is predominantly 20th century suburban housing set back with front gardens, representing a change from the historic urban grain of Tenterden.

The area to the north east of the site has detached houses with large gardens and mature trees, therefore the views to the site from the east are predominately screened by trees and channelled down narrow lanes.

Church Path is a footpath passing St Mildred's Church to the north and forms the south boundary of the site joining Coombe Lane as a route to and from the town centre.

2 Design

2.1 Approved Use

Approved application reference PA/2023/0270 has the same approved land use to Application reference 16/00111/AS with two commercial buildings to the south of the site and a residential block of five flats in the north of the site.

The approved commercial buildings are of a contemporary design with flat roof to provide planted rooftop with solar panels. The two buildings are similar design and each comprised approximately 183m² each gross internal floorspace on two floors.

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Place 54 Architects V2_31-10-25

A total of 14 car park spaces were proposed on site for use by the two commercial buildings and a total of 10 car park spaces for use by residential building. New hard paving is proposed providing shared vehicular and pedestrian access, with planted and paved amenity space for the residential.

Approved site plan PA/2023/0270 planning approval 09-08-24
15048(P)101_rev R_1:200 @ A3_Proposed site plan_28-10-23_

OTH/2025/0542 planning conditions approval 27-08-25

15048(P)101_rev T_1:200 @ A3_Proposed site plan_24-06-25_

Approved Building A plans PA/2023/0270 planning approval 09-08-24

15048 (P)201_rev F_1:100 @A4_Ground floor plan_Commercial Building A_30-10-23

15048 (P)202_rev C_1:100 @A4_First floor plan_Commercial Building A_30-10-23

15048 (P)203_rev B_1:100 @A4_Roof plan_Commercial Building A_16-10-23

15048 (P)204_rev C_1:10 @A4_Section Elevation AA_Commercial Building A_05-08-24

15048 (P)205_rev C_1:10 @A4_Section Elevation BB_Commercial Building A_05-08-24

15048 (P)206_rev C_1:100 @A4_North East Elevation_Commercial Building A_05-08-24

15048 (P)207_rev C_1:100 @A4_North West Elevation_Commercial Building A_16-10-23

15048 (P)208_rev B_1:100 @A4_South East Elevation_Commercial Building A_16-10-23

15048 (P)209_rev B_1:100 @A4_South West Elevation_Commercial Building A_16-10-23



Building A north east elevation



Building A south west elevation



Proposed site plan for Building A for change of use to residential

2.2 Proposed Use

The applicant has sought occupiers for the commercial buildings since planning approval was granted in 2016 without success. The first commercial building in the west of the site adjacent the station boundary has been part completed in accordance with approved application reference PA/2023/0270. The applicant has still not had any success in finding commercial occupiers for the completed commercial building.

The proposed application is for change of use for the one completed commercial building A in the previous planning approval to be used for residential use comprising two 2 bedroom flats, one per floor.

The application site includes the existing building A, part of the courtyard and the parking adjacent to the building. Car parking was allocated for 7 parking spaces for commercial in the approved site plan, which will be amended to 4 parking spaces for the 2 flats. The amended layout allows for the provision of amended access to the proposed ground floor flat, private amenity space and planted threshold. The proposed site plan

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also has included proposed timber refuse and recycling stores and cycle store which form the west boundary along Coombe Lane, which, in conjunction with a timber gate and lifting barrier complete the site boundary.

The proposed site for this application and amended layout does not affect the provision of parking and amenity for the other buildings in the approved site plan.

2.3. Proposed Design

Planning submission for change of use to residential 30-10-25

Location Plan

15048 (P)500_rev D_1:500 @A3_Location plan_Building A_30-10-25

Existing Building A site plan

15048 (P)200_rev D_1:200 @A3_Existing site plan_Building A_30-10-25

Proposed Building A site plan

15048 (P)210_rev D_1:200 @A3_Proposed site plan_Building A_30-10-25

15048 (P)213_rev D_1:100 @A3_Proposed site plan_Building A_30-10-25

15048 (P)214_rev D_1:200 @A3_Proposed site plan_vehicle turns_30-10-25

Proposed Building A Residential Plans

15048 (P)211_rev Q_1:50 @A3_Ground floor plan_Residential Building A_02-10-25

15048 (P)212_rev Q_1:50 @A3_First floor plan_Residential Building A_31-10-25

Proposed Building A Residential Elevations

15048 (P)206_rev D_1:100 @A4_North East Elevation_Residential Building A_27-10-25

15048 (P)207_rev D_1:100 @A4_North West Elevation_Commercial Building A_31-10-25

15048 (P)208_rev C_1:100 @A4_South East Elevation_Commercial Building A_31-10-235

15048 (P)209_rev D_1:100 @A4_South West Elevation_Commercial Building A_31-10-25

Building A residential details

15048 (P)204_rev D_1:100 @A4_Section Elevation AA_Residential Building A_06-10-25

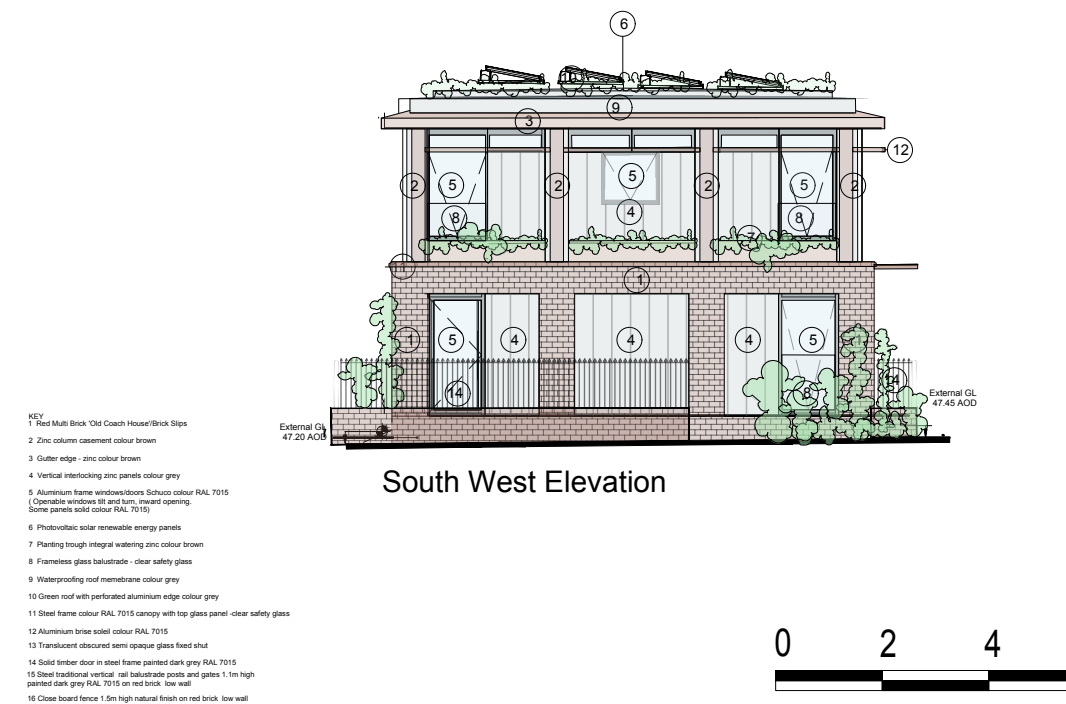
15048 (P)205_rev D_1:100 @A4_Section Elevation BB_Residential Building A_06-10-25

15048 (P)102_rev C_1:20 @A3_Plan Section Elevation refuse and cycle stores

2.3.1 Elevations

The massing scale and elevation design of the building A for proposed change of use to residential is the substantially the same design to the approved Application references PA/2023/0270 and 16/00111/AS, with the exception of doors and windows on the ground floor which are amended to provide separate access doors to each of the two residential floors and added opening windows to habitable rooms.

The building A proposed for change of use to residential is located on the south west part of the site, adjacent to the west boundary with the railway station and Coombe Lane.



The south west elevation has a proposed private terrace for the ground floor flat with steps and low brick wall and metal railings to match the site boundary. The private terrace is accessed from a door on ground floor proposed in the west corner of the elevation. The first floor flat south west elevation has opening windows with Juliet balconies towards Coombe Lane providing surveillance.

The south east elevation looks across the courtyard with glazed windows and some full height glazed doors with Juliet balconies. The ground floor has a proposed entrance door in the south corner accessed with an external sloping path and protected by low brick and metal railings 1.1m high. The access is elevated approx half a metre from the



sloping courtyard level which, along with planting, provides provide privacy to the ground floor flat.

On the north west and north east elevations the stair and bathrooms are located with limited area of windows and obscured glazing on the north east elevation. As in previous approved planning permission the obscure glass has been proposed to avoid privacy issues with the residential building to the north. The first floor flat entrance door is moved from the corner of the south east to the corner of the north east elevation, allowing some planting on the threshold of the courtyard. The north east and west elevation has a private terrace for the ground floor flat between the building and the boundary with a 1.5m high fenced perimeter.

2.3.2 Proposed Amount

The site area of the proposed building A proposed for change of use with associated parking, amenity and access comprises of approximately **450m² = 0.045ha**.

The existing building has a total gross external floor area of 212m² and total gross internal area of 183 m² on two floors. The proposed flats do not add any additional floorspace, they are an amended internal layout to suit residential with the following areas:

Ground floor flat GIA 84m² plus external private amenity of 9 m² on the south west corner

First Floor Flat GIA 84m² plus external private amenity of 9 m² on the north west corner

Internal layouts have been assessed to comply with Ashford standard areas and critical dimensions and the sheets are attached to the planning application.

2.3.3 Proposed Parking for cars and bicycles.

A Total of 4 car parking spaces for proposed residential change of use for building A are proposed in the hardstanding space. The previous approval for commercial use provided 7 car parking spaces, part of the previous hardstanding has been used for private amenity space and refuse/recycling and cycle storage.

A Total of 4 cycle parking spaces for proposed residential change of use for building A are proposed in a covered timber store near the entrance, located within the site behind the covered recycling storage. The previous approval for commercial use provided cycles storage space within the building which has been changed to use for residential storage.

2.3.4 Refuse and recycling storage.

Refuse, recycling and cycle storage is proposed to be located in timber covered storage in the south west corner of the proposed site with one store per residential flat fronting onto Coombe Lane. The proposed storage includes 7 separate stores with provision for the five flats in the approved residential building in the north of the site and the two proposed flats in this change of use application.



This storage arrangement makes the collection of refuse from one area with adequate space demonstrated on the access plan at the junction of Coombe Lane and courtyard entrance in order to enable a large HGV to turn only partially entering the site. This manoeuvre reflects how the refuse vehicles currently operate to other properties in Coombe Lane.

2.3.5 Site boundary treatment



The site entrance on Coombe Lane is a proposed timber pedestrian entrance gate to the east of the proposed timber recycling storage. A lifting barrier is proposed between the pedestrian gate and the completed approved brick and metal railings forming the southern site boundary along the sloping Church Path. A electrical equipment store is proposed to the west of the recycling storage in same timber elevations as the refuse stores with access fronting to Coombe Lane.

The west boundary to the railway station comprises the existing chestnut paling fence which is proposed retained and reinstated when necessary.

2.4 Buildings internal layout

2.4.1 Proposed flat internal layout

The proposed layouts for change of use to Residential for building A consists of two flats, one on the ground floor, one on the first floor. Each flat has two bedrooms, bathroom and a living/kitchen/dining room space.

The elevation of the proposed change of use to residential is in accordance with approved application references PA/2023/0270 and 16/00111/AS, with the exception of doors and windows on the ground floor which are amended to provide separate access doors to each of the two residential floors and added opening windows to habitable rooms.

The flat layouts comply with Ashford Borough Council Residential Space and Layout SPD: Checklist for Advocated minimum standards.

2.4.2 Proposed Amenity space

The proposed layouts for change of use to Residential for building A provides external amenity spaces. The ground floor has 9 m² external terraces on the south west

side fronting the living space. The first floor flats has 9 m² external terrace outside the building on the north west corner.

2.5 Appearance

2.5.1 Proposed Appearance and Material Amendments.

The proposed change of use to residential applies to commercial building A which has been constructed in accordance with the approved application reference: PA/2023/0270 and 16/00111/AS: red brick ground floor same type as the residential building B framing openings on the ground floor, with upper floor of zinc cladding and shading, grey colour coated aluminum full height widows and a green roof providing a high quality contemporary design.

The submitted proposed elevations of the change of use to residential of commercial building A follow the approved design with some limited amended window and door details.

2.6 Landscape

Proposed

The proposed change of use to residential of building A includes a part of the central space of the site, which is an open courtyard with buildings with entrances and car parking. The site of this application includes only part of the courtyard which is to be changed to accommodate a reduced number of car parking spaces and terraces to provide threshold and private amenity space for the proposed flats.

Materials used for the hard paving of the front courtyard will be the same brick paviors and gravel parking bays which are approved materials for the rest of the scheme.

A 1.5m high timber fence will be provided for the amenity space on the north west which will provide separation for private amenity.

A timber elevation will also be used to enclose the cycle store and refuse store for the residents.

A 1.1m high steel railing on brick low wall will be located along the south east and south west of the building to provide separation for private amenity

2.7 Sustainable drainage

Details are provided in approved conditions for the approved development by engineers for a sustainable drainage system for the disposal of the site's surface water in line with Ashford Borough Council's Sustainable Drainage SPD.

The submitted system comprises retention, or storage, of the surface water on-site, or within the immediate area, in a way which is appropriate to the site's location, topography, hydrogeology and hydrology.

3 Access

3.1 Public Transport links

There is a variety of bus service from the High street that connects to most surroundings villages and main train stations. The high street is at about 700m walking distance.

3.2 Cycle Access and Storage

An enclosed cycle storage shed at the front of the property provides 4 cycle storage spaces for the residents. Visitor cycle spaces with secure hoops are provided in open space at the front of the site.

3.3 Inclusive Access

The central yard provides access to the front entrance of the building proposed for change of use to residential with an accessible parking space.

Conclusion.

The proposed change of use from commercial to residential is justified by lack of demand for commercial and high quality of placemaking. Since the planning approval in 2016 the marketing evidence has produced no demand for the proposed commercial use in this location. A change of use to residential is proposed in order to avoid the commercial building remaining empty and detracting from the high quality residential for which there is demand.

The proposed change from commercial to residential within the same high quality and constructed building design would provide an appropriate use to enhance the development and surrounding context and should be supported.