

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

MARKET STREET HUDDERSFIELD



C49 Architecture Ltd
www.C49Architecture.co.uk
Tel: 01535 281432
Email: Info@C49Architecture.co.uk





C49 Architecture is a fast-moving Architecture Firm who believe in creating inspirational projects. Through our designs, we strive to find the perfect balance between costs, comfort, practicality and beauty. Our goal is not only to create stunning buildings, but also ensure cost effective design.

Having experience working through out the UK we strive to bring the best cost-effective design to each project to suit the briefs given.

Working throughout the commercial and domestic sector we have experience in all projects.

Our projects are striking, effective whilst also working to the client's budget.

Introduction

This design statement has been prepared by C49 Architecture in support of a major application for change of use of an existing office building in Huddersfield town centre. The proposal seeks to form high quality accommodation for students. It also seeks to retain an area of retail space for use as a coffee shop.

The site is situated on Market Street and Threadneedle Street just outside the Huddersfield Town Centre Conservation Area and the building is formally known as Kirklees House.

The site is located close to Huddersfield bus station and train station therefore giving it good transport links locally and throughout the UK. Approx. 5-10 minute's walk across the town centre is Huddersfield University and Kirklees College making the site ideal for student accommodation.

Background

Existing Building and Context

Kirklees House (and the surrounding area) has evolved considerably due to changes in the town centre and town centre trends. This part of town was originally very different to what is currently visible.

Kirklees house was constructed in the 1960/70s originally as offices for Kirklees council.

Built with 10 storeys, plus additional plant room on the top of the roof of approx. 1.5 stories high.

The building is of concrete frame construction with large areas of glazing with brick panels between.

The building is highly visible from the ring road and is marked as one of the 1960s buildings within the town centre.

Next door to the building is the plumbers arms and a square which is used for seating.

In the area there are a number of buildings which used to house banks and shops, but now due to the Kingsgate centre and the town centre retail moving mainly to the bottom end of the town centre this part of town has become more unused and the buildings in the area reflect this.

A town centre Sainsburys is located close and this attracts a number of customers and the main attraction as well as the bus station for creating footfall in this part of town.

It is known that historically a number of old buildings have been demolished and replaced with newer brick buildings such as Sainsbury's, Storeys Amusements, Coral, Farmfoods, Grieves Solicitors and the bus station, all of which are in close proximity to the building.

This part of town was once historic and had buildings of high architectural value which have been replaced in previous decades with buildings including the application site of ones of less value.

It is known and seen that this part of the town needs reinvention and needs to find new usage of buildings especially the upper floors.



Use of Building

Current Use

The building is currently used for office accommodation. In the late 1980's the building was a profitable investment proposition with around 90% occupancy.

However with the general decline and need for large office space, Huddersfield has seen a change in trends. More recently, the new Kingsgate centre has shifted the centre of retail shopping from the top of town to the bottom of the Town Centre.

This has resulted in a lower standard of shops to the top end of town which has been catastrophic for surrounding buildings. But now Kirklees house now achieves an occupancy rate of just 40%. Clearly this is not sustainable and ultimately could affect the very survival of the building itself with miniatous and upkeep of the building not been affordable.

Despite continuous marketing over years by Hansons who are leading commercial agents, attempts to find long-term quality tenants have failed. Unviable sq ft rents have even been offered and the building still does not get occupancy.

Due to the general decline in retail and the low occupancy level, the building was put up for sale and the applicant has recently bought the building with the view to maximise the buildings potential and to bring a high-level development to the area.

Potential Uses

An assessment of the Huddersfield Town Centre accommodation sector and detailed discussions with the College and University highlighted the need for high quality accommodation. A need was

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established for low density apartments for high income students, young professionals and academic staff.

This view was further reinforced by a similar projects in the town centre and the local development plan which is promoting this type of conversion.

Brief

The main objective is to identify sustainable long term uses that generate sufficient revenue to justify the investment required to undertake the project and long-term development and life of the building.

All the feasibility studies have identified the need to change the use of the building away from the office use to a new use that can generate acceptable levels of income.

It is also considered that the building on top is not the most attractive due to plant. Adding small rooftop extension within the height limits of the existing building will mean that the top of the building will become more attractive, and the removal of this plant would be a positive approach.

Roof top gardens and space will also be created with a 1.8m total height glazing surround (the existing parapet is approx. 1.1m high).

The extra floors although minimal will also add extra income and revenue into the building which needs to be achieved for a development of this standard to be sustainable.

Through the design process it was seen that the building could take up to four new stories on top but it was seen by ourselves and the applicant that four floors on top would be too overpowering and not required.

The proposal for the two extra floors does not exceed the height of the existing plant area therefore it was considered that this approach was more sympathetic to the area.

Current Design Proposal

Student accommodation now focuses on the student's life as a whole.

Therefore on the ground floor, we suggest a welcome foyer area.

The existing building is one that could be seen as poor architectural design and one of height which is different to other buildings in Huddersfield.

The very first decision was to remove the masts and plant area for the construction of the upper extension.

The second decision was to reclad the existing frontage on the ground floor from the dilapidated blue into a modern hard wearing anthracite grey cladding.

In the basement a conversion is proposed to provide an enlarged communal area, separated into different pockets of social areas. We also provide a self-service bar, vending machines and a dedicated coffee area and an expansive gym at the very end to fulfil the student's needs on-site.

Externally it is proposed bike storage for the students and store and plant areas for the management company.

Floors 1-9 are identical meaning the plan for 11 studio apartments remains on each floor. Then the propose upper floors have 4 apartments each.

Layout

It can be seen that the arrangement is low density and utilises all the existing structure and is built around the existing stair core whilst utilising the existing fire escape.

The configuration offers studios which reflect the high quality and living standard approach the applicant would like to offer compared to others.

The retail space at the front of the building is to remain as a commercial unit ideally let as an independent student coffee shop or similar.

The proposed building will use the existing main entrance on Market Street.

The prominence of this entrance is expressed by the existing canopy feature.

Having a single main entrance serves to concentrate the footfall which then offers increased commercial activity for the local shops within the vicinity.

The apartments are configured to offer flexible, high-quality accommodation.

The apartments consist of a fully wheelchair accessible studio apartments.

Each bedroom is to have its own ensuite shower room, a larger bed, distinct study areas and hotel style mood lighting. At 21-25m² the studios are larger than average and offer the occupants a better quality of life.

Scale and Massing

It is proposed that the existing one and a half story plant area are removed from the roof and replaced with two further floors set from the external walls which will remain in the height limits of the existing building.

The external roof top space will become a rooftop garden.

Glazing up to a height from the roof level to 1.8m is also proposed to ensure the roof is used in a safe manner and to provide resistance to the weather.

This proposal has been carefully developed using intricate Engineering input to reduce the massing and ensure the overall building looks proportionally balanced.

The new floors have been detailed to have acceptable floor to ceiling heights to ensure that the overall building height is minimised and within its existing limits.

The design of the two additional floors is arranged to create a dynamic, linear form that is clearly discernible as a contemporary addition and in line with other successful developments in the area.

The two extra floors shall be constructed in lightweight construction and clad with an anthracite grey cladding. Therefore, the massing is nearly equivalent to the existing situation and should not be seen as detrimental on the surrounding area.

Viability

Any proposal that aims to redevelop this building is likely to require a very large investment simply because it will require complete renovation. In addition, a change of use will require new acoustic, thermal and fire measures to be taken.

The form of construction is also not common, and the building has asbestos within that needs to be removed by specialists.

The extra floors on top of the building make the building more viable and will ensure its long-term success.

Benefits of Proposal

- Conserves a building with a sustainable long term use otherwise would end up in disrepair
- Reinvigorates the streetscape with a dynamic contemporary design
- Increases footfall in a declining area
- Offers high quality flexible accommodation
- Provides a distinctive new high quality retail unit on the ground floor
- Supports the University's in attracting students to Huddersfield
- Represents a £4m investment in Huddersfield City Centre

Impact

The key issue of height is mitigated by the fact that the building is not part of a uniform streetscape but is surrounded by buildings of various heights.

Whilst the building can be seen from the ring road will not have any detrimental impact as there are a range of building types, heights, roof styles and materials present. By virtue of the choice of materials and colour there is very little discernible difference when seen from there.

The new roof top proposal also though will add minimal impact in terms of extra height it will lessen the impact of the current plant, masts etc which are located on the building making the rooftop more attractive.

Access

The building is located within Huddersfield Town Centre and is located between the bus and train stations. It can be seen that it is ideally located for all the city centre amenities and transport links.

Huddersfield Town centre can be accessed easily by car from the M62 or from within the town. The train and bus stations are 2-3 minutes' walk and the university and Kirklees College is a 10 minute walk.

Due to the town centre location, there is no requirement provision for specific off-street parking. However, there is 4 spaces proposed to remain.

Conclusion

The ultimate premise justifying this proposal is that to conserve and restore a town centre building, it is critical that a commercially viable and sustainable, long-term use can be achieved.

Due to changing trends beyond the owner's control, the building is at serious risk of falling into dereliction or at best, under- investment. Ultimately, this will cause a greater loss and impact in disrepair to the town centre than any perceived negative design impact of the proposal.

The extensions are minimal and will add an attractive feature to the top of this building only whilst been within the existing building height limits.

It is thought that this application under current policies should be seen as acceptable and the new use of this underused building supported.