

Dear Mr Markwell

Many thanks again for contacting us about the amended plans. We have the following comments in relation to the amendments.

1. The mansard roof with a ridge line slightly below the ridge line of the Neo Georgian building is a welcome improvement on the previous plans.
2. We were pleased to see further details regarding bin collection and an assurance that bins will not be left out on the pavement.
3. Given the traffic noise and pollution we support the use of mechanical ventilation.
4. We remain concerned about arrangements for delivery of materials, removal of waste and parking for contractors. On this extremely busy junction which can result in long traffic delays, we believe that a CMS should form part of the main application and not left to condition. The applicant may wish to request an agreement with the Council for temporary use of the adjacent green space, based on refurbishment of the green space on completion and protection of trees throughout. The CMS should also consider how to protect the adjacent businesses from undue noise disturbance.
5. Similarly, the vent from the neighbouring restaurant could present fundamental difficulties and should form part of the main application and not left to condition.

We hope that these issues can be satisfactorily resolved and this Building of Townscape Merit brought back into use.

kind regards

Helen Lambert

Caversham and District Residents Association

www.cadra.org.uk

<https://www.facebook.com/cavershamresidents>

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Comments from the Caversham and District Residents Association (CADRA)

240068

2-4 Church Road Caversham Reading RG4 7AE

Change of use and works of conversion from former bank (Class E) to 2 ground floor commercial units (Class E (a-f only)) and 3 upper floor dwellings (Class C3), including a part second floor extension and separate rear dormer roof extension, shopfront alterations and associated works.



St Peters Conservation Area Appraisal

The three banks formed part of the changes associated with the construction of Caversham Bridge. Planning for the bridge started after the boundary change in 1911. Work was delayed by the outbreak of war. Construction of the new Caversham Bridge was delayed allowing completion of the new Reading Bridge in 1923.

At the start of the 20thC, Thames-side Caversham was a thriving commercial centre of 105 shops, with its own library and police station, and a population of over 9000. The three banks were at the heart of this busy commercial centre.

The following excerpts are from the appraisal adopted in 2018.

SS3 Issues and vulnerabilities

- Situated around the junction of Church Road, Church Street, and Bridge Street are three well-detailed banks. One has already closed as a bank and evolving banking practice may continue to threaten their future. Care will be needed with design details, with ground floors being especially vulnerable to changes of use.

5.1 Key positive characteristics

There are several unlisted buildings of townscape merit within the extended boundary area. These include the three Edwardian and late Victorian bank buildings at the junction of Church Road, Church Street and Bridge Street which almost form a group in their own right. The former Lloyds Bank building already makes a contribution to the original Conservation Area because it stops the vista down Church Road.

5.4.2 Buildings of townscape merit

- Former Lloyds Bank, 15 Bridge Street, 1928, grey and red brick, stone dressings to ground floor, two storeys plus a second storey set in a mansard slate roof, original sash windows to upper floors. The building is set on axis with Church Road and together with large tree in the garden behind makes a positive townscape contribution.
- Barclays Bank, 2 Church Road, circa 1928, 2 storey, red and rubbed red brick with stone dressings, central dressed stone pediment and balustrading at roof level, symmetrical facade.
- NatWest Bank, 7 Bridge Street, possibly 1890 and renovated during early C20, red brick with stone dressings, gabled facade with projecting stone dressings, part 3 storey, strong frontage to ground floor.

See P23 Photographs

The application

The three bank buildings are all currently vacant. Viable commercial purposes will be important to secure this important group of buildings. We welcome the re-use of this key building and strongly support residential use of upper floors in this Conservation Area.

We welcome the care which has been taken to safeguard the Neo Georgian building but have a number of concerns to raise.

1. Second floor extension

The weak point in its impact on the CA is the extension of the second floor, which sits atop a building which is already of no merit. The proposed second floor windows, sitting higher than the parapet of the original building, dominate the street scene, detracting from the Neo Georgian building.

We suggest it would be improved by a horizontal feature between first and second floors to echo the heavy cornice on the bank building: the applicants have rightly attempted something similar between ground and first, so a similar approach could apply.

Secondly, while not generally in favour of 'artificial' mansard roofs, this could be an exception: given that the newer building is set back, a slated mansard could be roughly co-terminus with the ridge of the bank building and tie the two together much better. It would need some adjustment to the internal layout, but this doesn't seem insurmountable.

2. Bin storage

We note the proposed internal bin storage space with shared bins for 3 flats. Further information is required to ensure that, when out for collection, these large bins do not block the pavement or obscure the new shop front.

3. Living conditions

The application acknowledges the noise of this busy junction and the impact on living conditions when opening the windows for ventilation and cooling. It also raises the issue of the extraction fan from the neighbouring restaurant which may cause noise and noxious smells for residents.

4. Construction Method

Situated on a busy junction with no vehicle parking, there will be considerable difficulties for deliveries and for construction vehicles. Given the significance of the junction for traffic flow, we submit that no application should be approved without a satisfactory CMS.

Conclusion

While supporting the main premise of the application, we object on the basis of the four issues above.

18 February 2024