

**Statement in Support of Planning application 19/01590 & 19/01591 9-13 Church St Coggeshall**

On behalf of the Virtual Planning Committee on the 4<sup>th</sup> of August 2020

We as a practice been involved in the refurbishment project, for numbers 9 -13 Church Street Coggeshall, since 2016. This involves three Listed buildings which form a small terrace onto Church Street. The buildings were last used as a Convenience Store, with accommodation above and to the rear and a service space. The buildings are fine examples of timber framed buildings with a rare Crinkle Crackle wall in the rear garden.

A series of reports have been produced regarding the Historic Fabric of the buildings and therefore I do not wish to go through the historic attributes in this communication, save to say that the developers T Rippon. Have shown their commitment to preserving and enhancing the Historic Fabric of the buildings and have worked closely with a number of Conservation officers during this process, to ensure the integrity of the Listed and Historic buildings and to ensure their integrity is maintained.

From the comments made by the statutory consultees it appears that the commitment to the repairing and enhancing of the historic fabric is agreed and welcomed.

The Planning Period for this project, has had a long history with an earlier application being rejected and we have, in consultation with the Planning Officers carried out a number of amendments and revisions in order to reach the point of compromise that we are at today.

As we understand it, the main issue with this proposed development is that the Planning Authority and particularly the Parish Council would like to retain the Commercial Space within the centre of Coggeshall, whilst understanding this argument, there are some overriding issues that have made this ideal, very difficult to achieve.

The layout of the buildings are difficult for modern usage, the units were small and the spaces difficult to use for a modern retail units, The long ground floor plan of number 9 with the structure and chimney breast, would be difficult for the flow required in a retail unit other than a hobby type shop, of which there are a number in Coggeshall which appear to regularly open and close.

Number 11, was really only the shopfront with the rear area being used as residential accommodation. The ground floor of number 13 had been split, with half of the space being used as a rear access way.

The space is very poor space in terms of retail space and there are added concerns regarding the routing of the modern services through a timber framed building where routes are blocked by large oak timbers and historic structure. It is difficult for modern business to function with these constraints and it is for that reason that the Co-Op relocated from a 1960's building in Coggeshall's centre to a purpose built building on the Eastern edge of the village.

**Please see the Existing Plans, Plan of existing Commercial and residential space**

Within the proposed plan the commercial space has been rationalised in order to provide a more logical and easily serviced space with access to storage or back shop areas, which appears much more attractive to a small or start-up retail business.

**Please see the Proposed Plans, Plan of Commercial and residential space**

The Parade itself is a secondary parade and exists within a time of unprecedented decline in the retail sector which has been accelerated by the Covid 19 crisis, driving the growth of digital commerce. These buildings have been marketed for three years now and have not attracted suitable

tenants. Therefore, we feel that the proposed works would provide a higher quality retail unit which would have more chance of providing a viable commercial unit.

The survival of so many Historic Buildings has been due to the ability of the community to find new uses for them, buildings that were designed for a specific purpose will naturally, when that purpose passes becoming redundant and without a new use fall into disrepair and decay. This process is seen in most Historic Buildings and applies to 9-13 Church St Coggeshall, which will have had, many different purposes over the last half century.

The comments from the Parish Council also refer to the front elevation and the comment, “that there is an uninterrupted row of commercial units and this row of shops ‘reads’ as a continuous block”, In our opinion number 13, did not read as a shop as it just had a ground floor door and a window to the side of that door. In our proposal the shopfronts are maintained and there is very little change to the front elevation of the building.

**Please see the Existing Plans, Plan of existing Elevations**

**Please see the Proposed Plans, Proposed Elevations**

The commercial area in the existing buildings is 119.5 sqm and the proposed is 98 sqm which is a minor loss of 21.5 sqm and the proposed space will be newly refurbished and be more usable space.

Therefore in summary we would request that you support the scheme as put forward, as this scheme will repair and reuse the Historic and listed Buildings, in a way which is sympathetic to the existing historic fabric and will ensure its preservation. The scheme will also maintain and enhance the Street Scene of Coggeshall. It will provide more viable Commercial Space with only a minor loss of square meterage, even though we understand that maximising commercial meterage is not the objective. In all the scheme, in our opinion, provides a sympathetic scheme which respects the Historic and Listed buildings, while providing an improved terrace and enhancing the wider area of central Coggeshall.

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