

04 MAY 2016,  
**SUPPORT SERVICES**



## **DESIGN and ACCESS STATEMENT for Proposed Extension to THE SMILE CENTRE, 35 HIGH STREET, RAYLEIGH**

### **PREAMBLE**

The Smile Centre dental practice has been in existence since the late 1960's, started by Denis Keane at 35 High Street, above a retail unit. The practice is now run by Declan and Stephen Keane, following on from their father. There are currently five dental treatment rooms, plus a hygienist's room, which has to be shared by two hygienists. The dental practice has approximately 15,000 patients. It caters for both NHS and private patients.

The premises are fully utilised with no space for expansion internally. The treatment rooms take priority with the administrative staff, other medical staff and ancillary medical equipment are squeezed into the remaining space. A small garden shed located on the rear flat roof contains some ancillary equipment due to a lack of space inside the building. The practice has identified the need to expand and wish to provide two new dental treatment rooms, more office space, better toilets, a new waiting room, improved staff facilities and the release existing space for essential medical use. The anticipated increase in provision for new patients is reinforced by the number of dwellings being built, and given planning consent, in the area served by Rayleigh town centre.

Planning consent was granted in 2011 for a small office extension located for new patients' facilities, accessed via an internal staircase, on the rear flat roof and in a loft conversion. It was impractical to build as the structure below would need to be strengthened, requiring the retail unit to close for several months whilst works are carried out. The implications for the commercial lease, and compensation for closure, far outweigh the benefits and were in any event found to be impossible. The proposed 2011 extension would nowhere near address the 2016+ needs of the practice or its patients.

The practice wish to stay in the centre of Rayleigh, in the High Street, as it is an ideal and convenient location for both patients and staff. Patients arriving by car have a choice of town centre car parking sites. The staff car park, although marked for 12 car spaces, routinely accommodates up to 16 cars, by careful management. Any overflow utilises Websters Way public car park.

A new feasibility study was commissioned to explore what options may be available to enable the premises to be extended, to avoid eventual closure and consequential relocation to an out-of-town location. The practice wishes to remain in the centre of Rayleigh, as it has done for the last 60 years or so. There are a number of important constraints that need to be noted.

- At the rear of the building is a lightweight flat roof, not designed for floor loads, currently used as access from the staff car park and for the location of small plant and a garden shed.
- There is no reasonable possibility of strengthening the steelwork supporting the roof or introducing new steelwork in the Peacocks' store below.
- The only available loadbearing walls are the side - and rear brick parapet walls, surrounding the flat roof.
- Expansion into the existing pitched roofspace is impractical for patient use.



View from the south with existing brick parapet walls in foreground

## USE

The ground floor and rear yard immediately adjacent the rear of the building is primarily for the retail use. The upper floor and remainder of the rear yard is occupied by the dental practice. No change of use is proposed.

## SCOPE, SCALE and LAYOUT of DEVELOPMENT

The form, appearance and scale of the proposed extension is driven by the very particular structural constraints imposed building, the requirement for expansion to provide better and increased patient services.

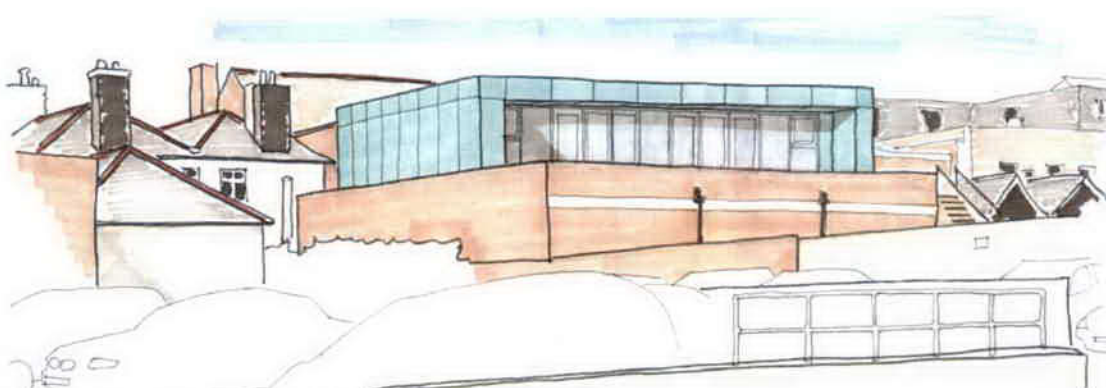
The structural solution identified in the feasibility study uses large steel beams spanning between side walls, at close centres to spread the load evenly. The floor will be timber, with steel studwork walls, lightweight aluminium rainscreen cladding and a lightweight flat roof. The building envelope needs to be designed to minimise overall loads on the existing brick walls, otherwise the proposal is not structurally viable. The use of heavier materials such as brickwork, brick slips and even timber cladding has been ruled out in favour of 1.2mm thick aluminium. Tiles or slates on the roof would raise the overall roof level and add too much loading to the existing structure.

**APPEARANCE**

The proposed extension is clad in lightweight, polyester powder coated aluminium rainscreen panels. The colour shown on elevations and CGI's is duck egg blue. It has a reasonably high reflectance and should not cause glare.

A 1m deep overhang, forming a covered area is proposed to help provide passive solar shading (due to the south-easterly orientation) and an area for external circulation at floor level and a services zone.

The materials used on surrounding buildings, visible from Webster's Way and beyond include, brown brick, red brick, yellow stocks, slate, metal cladding, metal louvres, tiles, render; PVC-u windows, timber and aluminium windows and many others. There is no coherent style or theme. The proposed extension does not, and structurally cannot, seek to match the masonry and tile/slate roofs of the majority of buildings. The form is driven by the particular structural constraints.



Sketch view of extension from Websters Way

**CONTEXT**

The building sits within the Rayleigh Conservation Area, the extension will be visible from Websters Way

(Websters Way) "This is a thoroughfare of unveiled utilitarian aspect, flanked by car parking and service areas for the rear of the High Street shops". (9.6 in Rayleigh Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, May 2007).

"Despite recent improvements, the road has failed to acquire any streetscape that could be considered attractive..." (10.72 in Rayleigh Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan, May 2007).

Nothing much has changed in the intervening years since the report was published.



Prezzo

The Smile Centre

To one side of the site is the "Prezzo" restaurant in the converted and extended, listed, former public house. Immediately adjacent The Smile Centre boundary wall is a refuse area, service access and fire exit route. Set further away from the timber fenced service access is an external seating area at the rear of the restaurant. Ancillary accommodation serving the restaurant is at first floor level. To the other side is the rear of the photographic shop, ancillary rooms, access to the rear car parking, vehicle access and storage units for the butcher's shop. At first floor level is a one bedroom flat. The window immediately adjacent is to the kitchen, with smaller windows to a bathroom and then the bedroom. The flat's living room is in the centre of the building, served by a rooflight for daylighting.





The Smile Centre far right



Rear of Prezzo with The Smile Centre on the right



The Smile Centre on the left with access to the rear of 31 and lower numbers on right

## ACCESS

Access for patients is via a steep staircase from the High Street. An additional handrail was introduced to improve safety and accessibility some years ago. Staff access is via an external timber staircase from the car park at the rear off Websters Way and across a flat roof to a secondary entrance/fire exit, to the reception area.

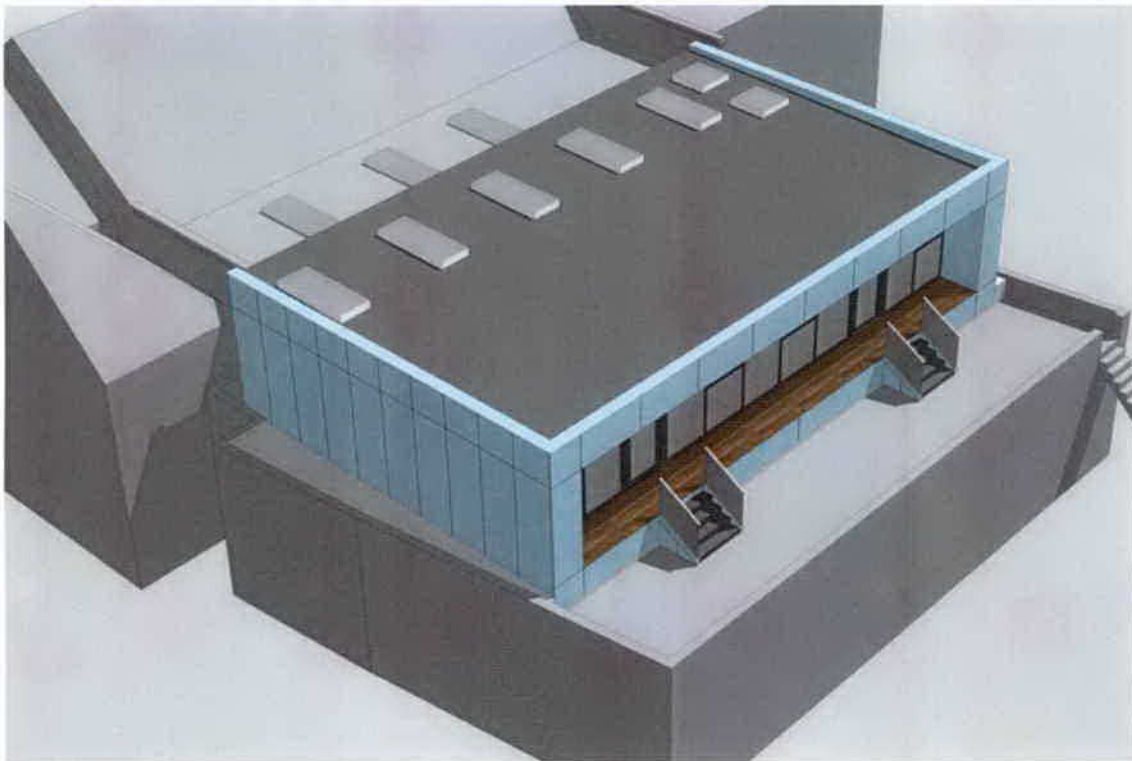
The internal floor level will be raised above the existing floor to accommodate the primary steel structure supporting the extension. Two short, ambulant disabled-standard, staircases link the existing premises with the extension.

Structural changes to the main entrance staircase are impossible unless the (commercial) opportunity arises to take space in the retail unit below to introduce a half landing, increase the length of each tread and reduce the pitch of the stair flight. The practicality of removing the sole entrance staircase, building a fire resistant enclosure and installing a new staircase, without disrupting the use of either the retail unit or the operation of the dental practice is extremely doubtful. The possibility of introducing a passenger or even a wheelchair platform lift at the main entrance is even less likely.

Access from the rear is currently available for staff, via the car park, through the service yard to the retail unit and up an external timber staircase. It is in theory possible to introduce a designated hardstanding to accommodate a car parking space adjacent to an external platform lift, within the service yard to the retail unit, to gain access to the flat roof level and thus into the rear of the building. However, this relies on a commercial settlement with the retail unit occupier, policing of commercial vehicle movements to avoid possible accidents and strict control of the access route to prevent non-disabled persons using it.

## LANDSCAPING

There are no changes proposed to the existing car park. A planted margin is proposed against the road boundary to soften the appearance of the site. Shrub planting will be necessarily kept to below 1m in height for highways visibility safety. A replacement linear drain and general repairs are proposed.



Aerial CGI of proposed extension