

## **Council December 2021 Phoenix House Options Paper**

***Council is asked to consider the 4 options for works to be undertaken at Phoenix House and agree their preferred approach in order to allow further quotes to be obtained.***

### **Background**

- WPC purchased the building that comprises a commercial space for Groombridge Post Office/shop and a residence (known as Phoenix House) in June 2021 to save the post office
- A Public Works loan of £490,000 was obtained with repayments of £16,779 p.a. over a 50 year term
- Monthly residential rent required to cover PWLB repayments is £1,400
- Initial rental of the residential part was at £1,450pcm.
- Withyham Parish Community Interest Company, which runs the Post Office and Shop, rents the commercial space at £1pa
- The commercial space comprises a room for the post office and shop, a cupboard for the safes, tea making area and storage. Toilet facilities with access to water/washing up is accessed externally to the commercial space in the residence
- The residence comprises a kitchen, conservatory and reception room on the ground floor, a bathroom and 3 rooms which can be used flexibly as bedrooms or reception rooms on the first floor, an attic room with bathroom, and externally a garden and parking space
- The commercial space has no gas supply but the residence does have gas
- The commercial and residence are currently served by the same electricity meter, with a spur meter so that electricity usage by the 2 properties can be identified and billed separately. There is currently 1 fuse board for the whole property which is in the commercial space, this will need to be altered with a separate fuse board installed in the property before it is re-rented so that if a fuse trips for the residence out of shop opening hours the tenants can get their supply working again. By making that change all wiring will need attention in order to meet electrical installation requirements
- The commercial property has no separate water supply or waste water arrangement. Currently water usage is apportioned between the commercial and residence spaces on an agreed basis

**Councillors are advised to bear in mind the following key points when making their decision:**

- 1. The Post Office was the driving force behind the purchase of Phoenix House and its continued success should therefore be a priority**
- 2. The current space given over to the Post Office/shop is insufficient, particularly for daily storage of mails and stock storage**
- 3. The minimum monthly residential income required is £1,400 to cover repayments of the Public Works Loan**
- 4. Costs of any works need to be balanced against the above points in making a sound business decision**

## Works required in residence regardless of any decorative or structural changes

- Installation of separate fuse board and rewiring (budget £10k)
- Damp works (identified in survey) to chimney breast and understairs cupboard (c£5k). Works taking place week commencing 20 December 2021.

## Options

*Sketch drawings are also given as appendices.*

### Option A status quo, layout of residence left as current layout

- No additional space for the post office/shop
- Likely residential rental income £1,800 pcm
- Likely costs including electrical (£10K) and damp works (£5K) = £65,000

#### OPTION A - No Layout Changes

Groombridge Post Office

Gross Internal Area : 218.8 sq.m (2,355 sq.ft.)

2 4 6 8 10 Feet  
Metres  
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#### Works required:

- Carpets/flooring throughout
- Redecoration throughout
- Replacement kitchen
- New shower

Quotes for these items have been obtained and total around £50,000

- This option would make the property ready for re-rental in the shortest time
- It would require no planning permissions or building regs
- It retains the status quo, but does not address any of the storage or access issues experienced by the post office/shop

## **Options B – C – all these options apportion additional space to the Post Office/Shop in differing amounts**

The reasons for giving more space to the post office and shop are:

- Health and safety – behind counter area gets congested with post bags and parcels (fire risk and trip hazard) and makes working conditions difficult behind the counter (*photo1 shows where behind the counter has got full and area of shop is being used for post*)
- Lack of space for shop stock – The meeting room at the parish office is currently exclusively being used for shop storage (*photo 2*)
- Lack of space - the cupboard currently houses the safes, fridge, tea making facilities and shelving in a very small space (*Photo 3*)
- There is no direct access to running water for drinks or washing up, or WC. Access is out of the shop and into the residence's downstairs WC
- 



*Photo 1 – mails waiting to be collected by postman*



*Photo 2 – small meeting room at parish office being used for post office/shop storage*



*Photo 3 - Cupboard in Post office/shop for safes, tea making and storage*

### Option B – Some of the residential hallway apportioned to the commercial space for storage

- Some additional storage space for the Post office facilitated by some internal works (listed below) - unlikely to be sufficient space to relieve usage of parish office small meeting room for storage
- Likely residential rental income £1,800 pcm
- Likely costs in addition to electrical and damp works £tbc



- Gives additional storage for mails waiting to go out and shop stock within the new stud walls (in red)
- Residential tenant would continue to access the premises in the same way and through a new internal door into the dining room
- WC remains shared use with residence and shop, accessed by all by the black external door
- As there would be no direct access from the residential stairs to an external door it would require a sprinkler system (auto-mist fire suppression system)
- Removal of wall between kitchen and living room could make the residence more attractive to families

### Expenditure in addition to items shown in option A:

- Stud walls in hall
- New internal doorway from residential hall to dining room
- Auto-mist fire suppression system
- Building Regs required (means of fire escape)
- Removal of wall between kitchen and Dining Room

**Option C – Most the residential hallway apportioned to the commercial space including WC and access into the property through the existing front door**

- Some additional storage space and exclusive use of WC for the Post office facilitated by some internal works (listed below). May still need to use parish office for some storage
- Likely residential rental income £1,800 pcm
- Likely costs in addition to electrical and damp works £tbc

*OPTION C - Hallway partitioned for Post/Shop which also has sole use of Downstairs too. Access for residence via New Porch in place of conservatory.*

Groombridge Post Office

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- Gives additional storage for mails waiting to go out and shop stock within the new stud wall (in red)
- Access for post office/shop only through black external door and access to WC becomes sole use of post office/shop
- Residential access would be where the Garden room currently is, via a new porch so that it is clear that it is the residence's main access
- Boiler would be relocated out of downstairs WC into residence for access
- As there would be no direct access from the residential stairs to an external door it would require a sprinkler system (auto-mist fire suppression system)
- Removal of wall between kitchen and living room could make the residence more attractive to families

**Expenditure in addition to items shown in option A:**

- Stud walls in hall
- Auto-mist fire suppression system
- Building Regs required (means of fire escape)
- Relocation of boiler to residential part
- Removal of Garden Room and replacement with porch
- Query Planning permission needed for new access porch, or would it be under Permitted Development?
- Removal of wall between kitchen and Dining Room

### Option D – majority of ground floor apportioned to the commercial space

- Ground floor utilised for post office/shop storage space and kitchen, facilitated by some internal works (listed below). Shared WC
- Residence over first and second floors
- Likely residential rental income £1,600 pcm
- Likely costs in addition to electrical and damp works **£tbc**

*OPTION D - Ground floor partitioned for Po/shop, new stairways configuration. Largest first floor room becomes Kitchen / Diner and Lounge*

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- Gives additional storage for mails waiting to go out and shop stock/office space for the post office and shop manager by utilising the dining room
- WC remains shared with access still from outside
- Sole use of existing kitchen by post office/shop allows better tea making and washing up facilities
- Residential access would be through existing black external door but stairs reconfigured to give access to first floor only
- Largest room on first floor would become a kitchen/diner/living room, leaving 2 good sized bedrooms on the first floor and the attic room
- The residence would still have sole use of the garden

### Expenditure in addition to items shown in option A:

- Stud wall
- Reconfigure stairs
- Query building regs required?

### Costs not required compared to other options:

- Existing kitchen remains as it is (new kitchen on ground floor instead)
- Only stairs, first and second floors need decorating and carpeting - redecorating and recarpeting of ground floor not necessary
- No auto-mist fire suppression system, relocation of boiler (WC remains shared) or porch works required

# OPTION A - No Layout Changes

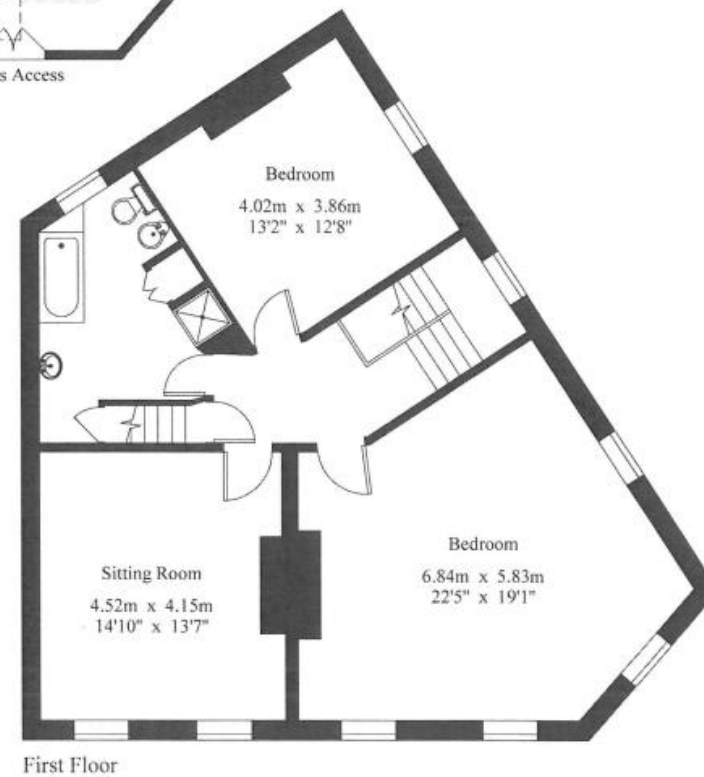
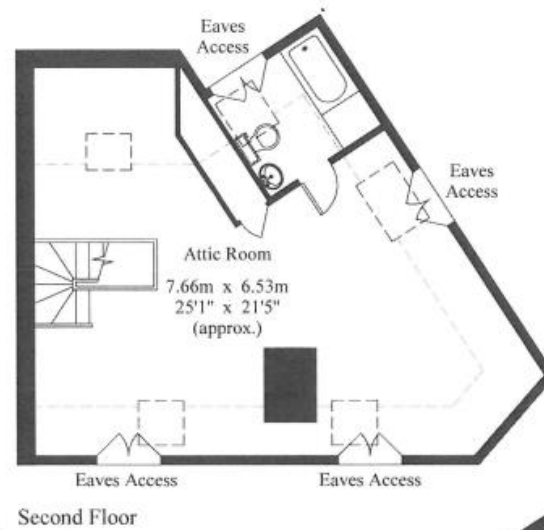
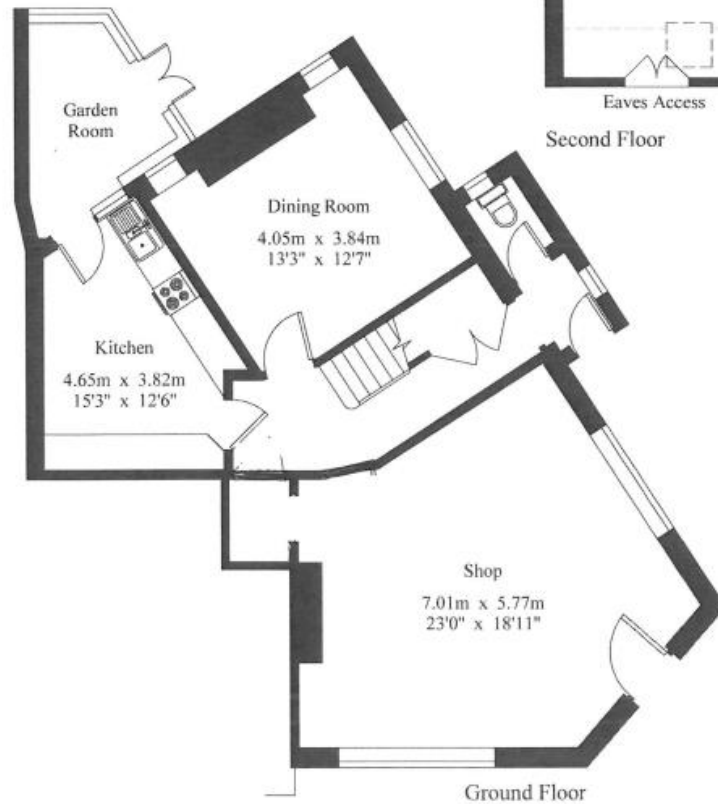
## Groombridge Post Office

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Restricted Height



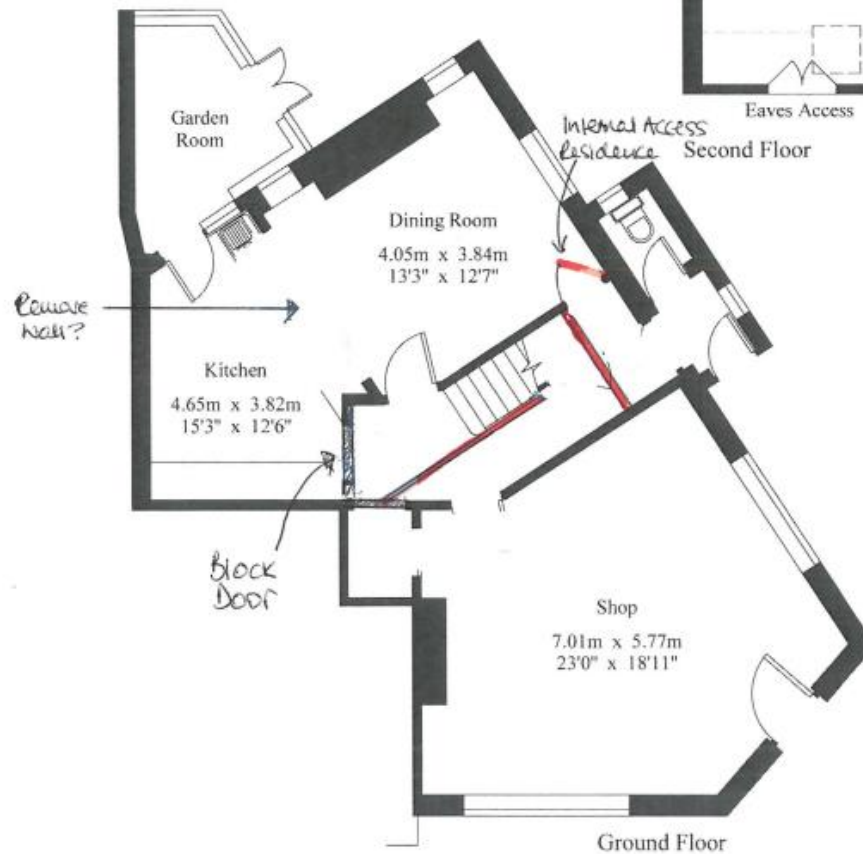
OPTION B Some hallway partitioned for P.O./Shop, New internal access for Residence, Wc remains shared  
Groombridge Post Office

Gross Internal Area : 218.8 sq.m (2,355 sq.ft.)

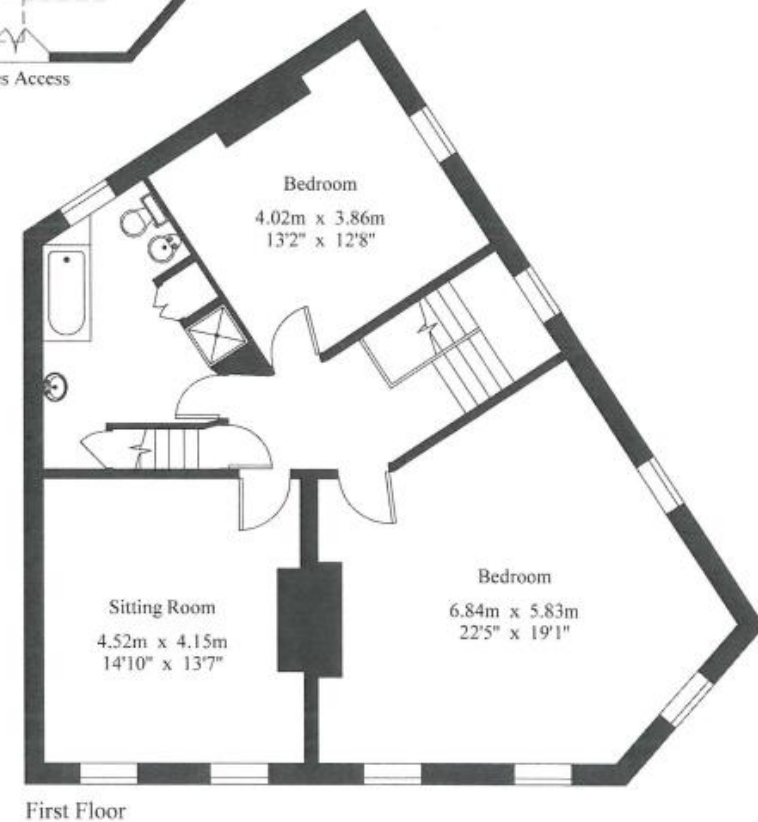


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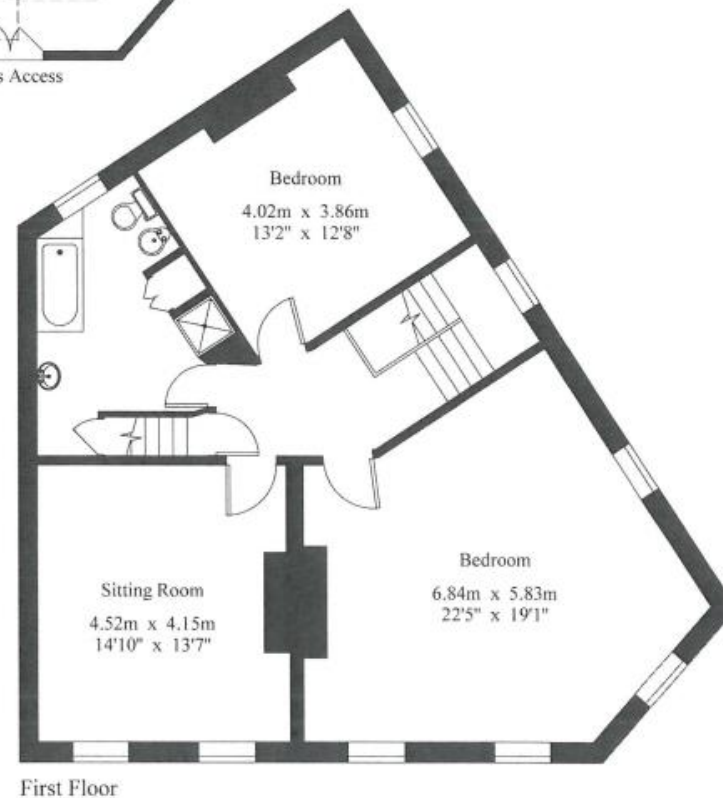
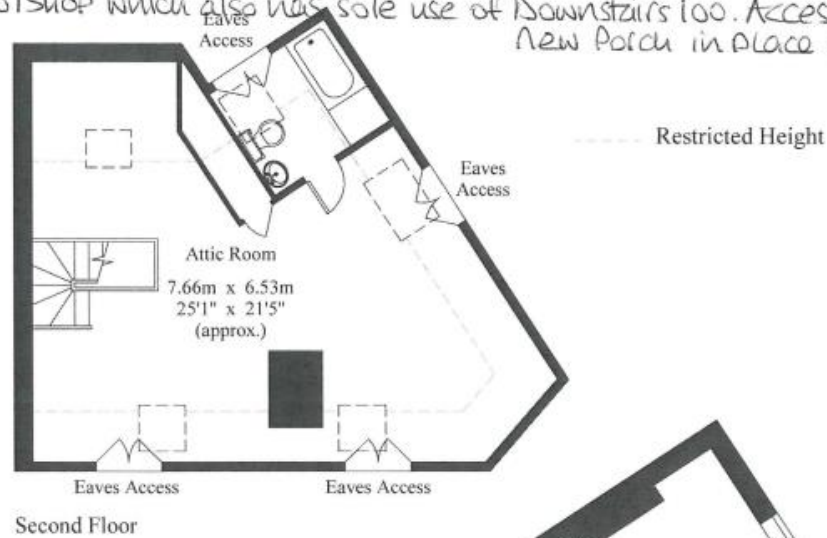
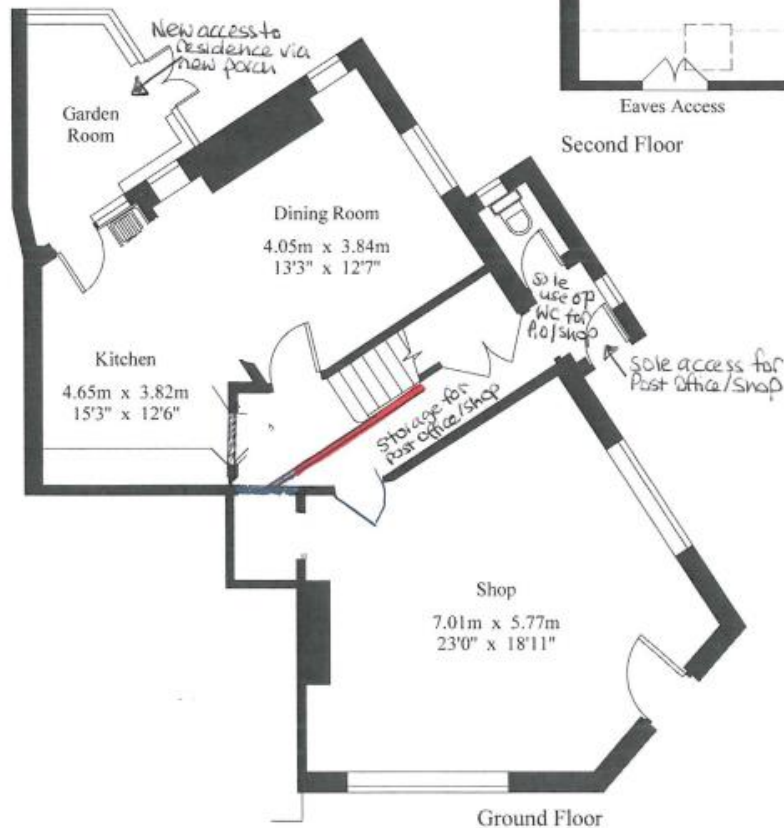
OPTION C - Hallway partitioned for PO/shop which also has sole use of Downstairs loo. Access for residence via Groombridge Post Office

Gross Internal Area : 218.8 sq.m (2,355 sq.ft.)



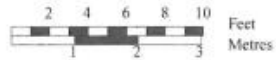
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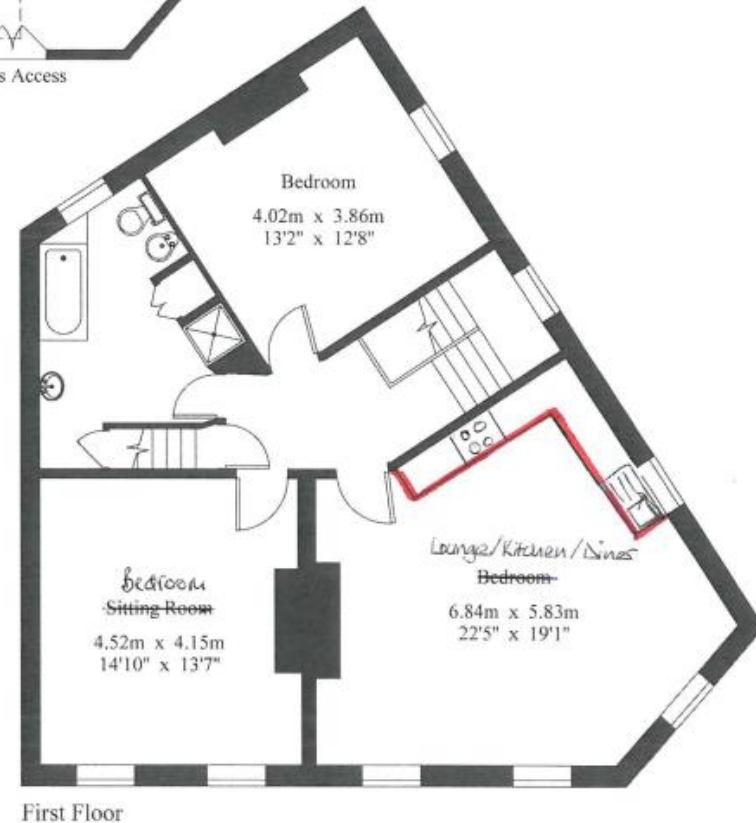
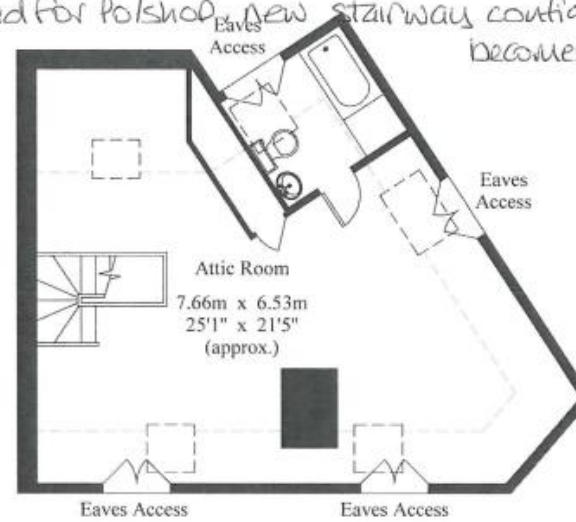
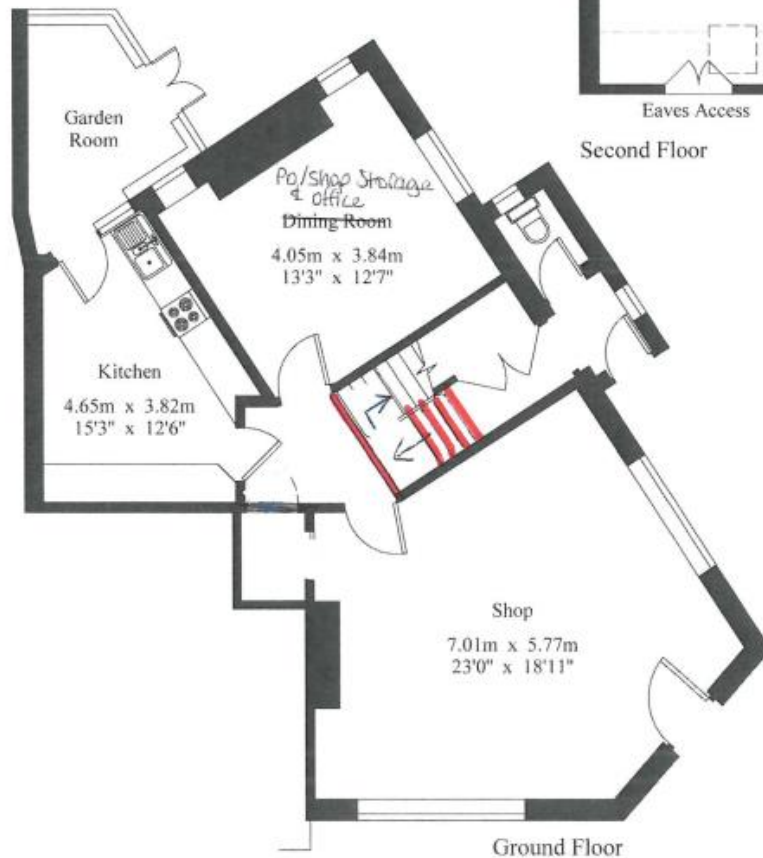


OPTION D - Ground floor partitioned for Po/shop, new stairway configuration. Largest first floor room becomes kitchen / diner and lounge

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Restricted Height

