

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

12th February 2014

Planning Application 2013/327/FUL

Conversion of office building to 9 No.apartments

Oak House, Herbert Street, Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 8BL

District: Abbey
Applicant: Paul Marson / Martyn Harfield
Expiry Date: 3rd December 2013
Ward: ABBEY

(see additional papers for Site Plan)

The author of this report is Nina Chana, Planning Officer (DM), who can be contacted on Tel: 01527 548241 Email: nina.chana@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk for more information.

Site Description

The site is located on the eastern side of Church Green East, to the rear of the historic buildings. It is accessed off and lies at the end of Herbert Street and the building looks out onto the NEW College campus and car park. The three storey building was built in the 1970's as offices and was occupied for this use up until two years ago.

Proposal Description

The application proposes part conversion and part alteration of the building into 9 No. one bedroom flats. The ground floor area which is proposed to house three flats is currently an undercroft car parking area. This will be enclosed to match the existing building. The remainder of the building will predominantly remain as the original with the exception of the enclosing of the ground floor which will incorporate new doors and windows and the existing windows will be replaced with double glazed windows. There is an existing link on the first floor which connects the Oak House to the rear of the Church Green East buildings. This link is going to be enclosed and be incorporated into a flat on the first floor. There is a communal bin area which is provided on the ground floor. In total nine flats would be created.

Relevant Policies :

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3:
ETCR01 Vitality and Viability of the Town Centre
BBE09 Streetscapes in Conservation Areas
CS07 The Sustainable Location of Development

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

12th February 2014

Emerging Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4

Policy 2: Settlement Hierarchy

Policy 4: Housing Provision

Policy 5: Effective and Efficient use of Land

Policy 30: Town Centre and Retail Hierarchy

Policy 31: Regeneration for Town Centre

Others:

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework

Relevant Planning History

None

Consultations

Conservation Adviser

The building has no architectural merit and I consider the proposed changes will have no adverse effect on the conservation area - in fact I think greater residential occupation of town centres should be encouraged so I have no objection.

Development Plans

No Objections

Waste Management

No Comments Received To Date

Public Consultation Response

None

Assessment of Proposal

The National Planning Policy Framework encourages the following:

- sustainable development
- where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals
- recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of town centres
- in areas where the need for additional housing has been identified, local authorities should normally approve applications for change to residential use from B Use Class buildings

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

12th February 2014

This is an existing building which lies within the Town Centre and also falls within the Town Centre Conservation Area, as indicated on the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No 3. This indicates that any proposals should be in keeping with the surrounding land uses.

The site is within a very short walking distance of the bus station, train station and the shopping centre, hence a sustainable location for a residential development.

This site currently has a B1 (Office) Use Class designation and has been marketed unsuccessfully for office use for the past two years. If this scheme had not been in the Conservation Area with three additional flats to be created in the existing undercroft at the ground floor level, the majority of the work could have been undertaken under the Permitted Development Rights Prior Approval procedure which was introduced in May 2013.

The Borough of Redditch has a housing requirement to meet up to 2030 and places some reliance on windfall sites such as this site. This proposal reuses a vacant office building and brownfield development is supported in policy terms.

The conversion of this building into flats would bring a vacant building back into use and improve the viability of the Town Centre which would be supported by Policy E(TCR).1 of Local Plan No 3.

Policies in the Emerging Borough of Redditch Local Plan No 4 would also give support to such developments.

The Highways Officer has raised no objections to the scheme with regard to car parking as the site falls within the Town Centre. Whilst there is no parking provision associated with this development, there is no requirement for dedicated spaces within the town centre.

With regard to the lack of amenity space, this is a town centre site and the lack of amenity space does not outweigh the justification that it is an existing vacant building within the town centre which is being enhanced and put to use which is supported by policy.

With regard to the loss of privacy and overlooking issues, there are car parking areas to the north and south of the building and the east elevation overlooks the college buildings and car park. There are no additional windows proposed on the first and second floor. There will be new windows introduced in the ground floor as this will involve the enclosing of the undercroft parking to create three flats. Therefore on balance, the development does not raise any such issues.

The site lies within the Conservation Area. The proposal is considered to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area by the reuse of a vacant building which has been unoccupied for two years. The external fabric of the building is not going to be altered to a degree which would cause harm to the character of the area. The Conservation Officer has raised no objections to the scheme.

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

12th February 2014

Planning Obligation required

The size of the proposed development is above the policy threshold for requiring contributions which should be sought via a planning obligation which in this case would cover:

- a contribution towards playing pitches and open space in the area, due to increased demand/requirement from future residents, is required in compliance with the SPD.
- a contribution to provide refuse and re-cycling bins for the new development in accordance with Policy WCS.17 of the adopted Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy
- a contribution towards education provision would also normally be sought in accordance with the SPG, however this development consists of one bedroom flats therefore there is no justifiable need for a contribution in this case

Conclusion

The proposal is considered to accord with national and local policy criteria. Having regard to all other material considerations this application is considered to be acceptable. Approval of this application would meet some of the demonstrated housing need in the Borough which is considered to outweigh the need to retain a vacant building. The proposal is therefore considered to be compliant with the relevant policy framework and of benefit to the local housing need and viability of the Town Centre and as such is considered to be favourable. No other issues have been identified to outweigh this. Subject to the satisfactory completion of the planning obligation, this application can be recommended for approval

RECOMMENDATION:

That having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, authority be delegated to the head of Planning and Regeneration to GRANT planning permission subject to:-

- 1) **The satisfactory completion of a S106 planning obligation ensuring that:**
 - a) **Contributions are paid to the Borough Council in respect to off-site open space and playing pitches in accordance with the Councils adopted SPD; and**
 - b) **A financial contribution is paid to the Borough Council towards the provision of wheelie bins for the new development;**
- and**

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

12th February 2014

2) Conditions and informatives as summarised below:

- 1) The proposal must be started within 3 years from the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with National Legislation.

- 2) The materials you use on the walls of your development should match those of the existing building. If matching materials cannot be found then you must give details of, or send a sample of the type, colour and finish of the materials that you are going to use to the Council. The Council will agree these details with you in writing and you must use these materials when you build the development.

Reason: To make sure that the development relates to the area in which it is being built and protects how that area looks, in order to comply with (Policy B (BE).13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan Number 3.

- 3) The proposal shall be carried out as shown on the plans, schedules and other documents listed below;

Drawing Number - 2632-001

Drawing Number - 2632-002 Rev A

Reason: To make sure the development is carried out exactly as shown on the plans, to ensure that it relates to the area in which it is being built and protects how that area looks, in order to comply with Policy B (BE).13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan Number 3.

Procedural matters

This application is being reported to the Planning Committee because the application requires a S106 Agreement. As such the application falls outside the scheme of delegation to Officers.