

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

12th February 2014

Planning Application 2014/006/COU

**Change of Use of redundant former toilet block to form extension to units 1 and 2 :
Use as a reception area and community hub to existing boxing club**

**Redundant toilet block adjacent to Unit 1 Matchborough Centre, Matchborough
Way, Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 0EP,**

**Applicant: Mrs Sarah Lee, Redditch Community Amateur Boxing Club
Expiry Date: 27th February 2014
Ward: MATCHBOROUGH**

(see additional papers for Site Plan)

The author of this report is Steven Edden, Planning Officer (DM), who can be contacted on Tel: 01527 548474 Email: steve.edden@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk for more information.

Site Description

The site comprises two brick built former public conveniences. The toilet blocks have been redundant / vacant since early 2001. The total floorspace amounts to 37.5 square metres in area.

The toilet block subject to this application is attached to the northern side of Unit 1 Matchborough Centre which itself measures 250 square metres in area and is currently occupied by a boxing gymnasium (a D2 / Leisure use). The boxing gymnasium business also occupies Unit 2 Matchborough Centre (90 square metres in area) which is attached to and located to the immediate east of Unit 1 .

The toilet block, which is located centrally within the Matchborough Shopping Centre is bounded by a busway to the west and a courtyard to the east. Communal car parks for use by business owners and customers using the Matchborough Centre are situated to the north and south.

Proposal Description

Permission is sought to change the use of a former toilet block to form a reception area and community hub which would be used in connection with the existing boxing gymnasium business which occupies Units 1 and 2.

An existing internal wall separating Unit 1 from the toilet block would be removed in order to create an internal link between Unit 1 and the new extension. Due to the internal link, it is not necessary to form any new external access to the toilet block. The former external access to the toilet block, via two recessed doorways would be replaced by the insertion of two laminated glazed windows which would form an extension to the shop front to Units 1 and 2.

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The application site would be used as per hours of operation which exist within Units 1 and 2, which are as follows:

Monday to Saturday: 0930 to 2030 hrs

The use would not be in operation on Sundays / Public Holidays

Relevant Policies :

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3:

ETCR09 District Centres
S01 Designing Out Crime

Others:

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework

Relevant Planning History

None relating to the application site

Adjacent site (Units 1 and 2)

2012/309/COU	Change of use of unit 1 (restricted D2 use) and unit 2 (A1 retail) to boxing training gym and club	Approved	21.01.2013
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Consultations

Highway Network Control

No objection

Property Services Manager

No objection

Community Safety Officer

No Comments Received To Date

Development Plans

Comments summarised as follows:

This proposal would not result in the loss of retail floorspace but, as identified in the planning policy comments for planning application 2012/309/COU, there are concerns regarding whether the use is consistent with the scale and function of the district centre. No further evidence or justification has been submitted with this application therefore the proposed extension cannot be supported in planning policy terms

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Public Consultation Responses

No comments received

Assessment of Proposal

The key issues for consideration are as follows:

Principle of the proposed change of use

The relevant planning policy to consider in this case is E(TCR).9 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan since the site falls within the Matchborough District Centre.

Typically District Centres in the Borough accommodate a newsagent, a general grocery store, a sub-post office and occasionally a pharmacy, a hairdresser and other small shops of a local nature. It is important to protect and where appropriate, enhance District Centres particularly with regard to their useful retail function. Proposals that would undermine the retail and community function of the District Centre would normally be refused planning permission.

The Councils Planning Policy Team objected to application 2012/309/COU considering that the boxing club use proposed at the time would be better suited to a town centre rather than a district centre location.

Officers recommended approval taking into consideration the fact that Unit 1 already had consent for D2 use, albeit restricted at the time to the business 'Where Next'. In addition, officers considered that the considerable period of vacancy relating to Unit 2 should be afforded significant weight in the determination of the application.

Having regard to all material considerations in the determination of application 2012/309/COU, on balance, officers considered that the principle of the change of use to a boxing gym (Units 1 and 2) would be acceptable. The Planning Committee agreed and permission was granted on 21.01.2013.

Notwithstanding the planning policy teams comments with respect to the nature of the proposed use being better suited to a town centre location, it is agreed that the proposal to be considered here would not result in the loss of any existing retail floorspace and would return into use a former toilet block which has been redundant since early 2001 and as such has fallen into disrepair.

As such, Officers do not object to the principle of the development.

Security

Officers do not raise any concerns in respect of security. The very minor external alterations as described earlier in this report would be considered to enhance the visual amenities of the area rather than detract from them. By allowing the re-use of redundant buildings within the district centre, arguably crime including anti-social behaviour is likely to be reduced.

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Conclusion

Allowing this former toilet block to be occupied in the manner proposed would increase footfall to other units within the Matchborough District Centre, enhancing vitality and viability, and as a community use, the proposals would comply with the aims and objectives at set out under Policy E(TCR).9. Having regard to this Policy and to all other material considerations the application is supported.

Recommendation

That having regarded to the development plan and to all other material considerations, planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions and informatives as summarised below:

- 1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of the grant of this permission.

Reason :- In accordance with the requirements of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2) The application site shall be used as per hours of operation which exist within Units 1 and 2, which are as follows:

Monday to Saturday: 0930 to 2030 hrs

The use shall not be in operation on Sundays / Public Holidays

Reason: In the interests of amenity and in accordance with Policy B(BE).13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3

- 3) The development hereby approved shall be implemented in accordance with the following plans:

site location plan
Photograph 1
Photograph 2

Reason: To accurately define the permission for the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is satisfactory in appearance in order to safeguard the visual amenities of the area in accordance with Policy B(BE).13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3

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Informatives

- 1) The local planning authority has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner to seek solutions to problems arising in relation to dealing with this planning application through pre-application advice and discussion.

Procedural Matters

Redditch Borough Council are landowners in this case. All such applications are reported to Planning Committee for determination.