

**PLANNING
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29th April 2015

2015/099/COUPRO

Prior approval for change of use from offices (Class B1(a)) to residential (Class C3) to create 37 dwellings. (Not including the former Barclays GF or the Post Office elements of the building.)

Expiry Date: 24th May 2015

2015/100/FUL

Full planning permission for the change of use of the former Barclays (Class A2) to residential (Class C3) to create 5 dwellings; Infill rooftop development to create 4 residential units; External alterations to the whole building to facilitate residential conversion. (Not including the Post Office elements of the building.)

Expiry Date: 26th May 2015

Threadneedle House, Alcester Street, Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 8AJ

**Applicant: Casper Developments Ltd
Ward: ABBEY**

(see additional papers for Site Plan)

The author of this report is Ailith Rutt, Planning Officer (DM), who can be contacted on Tel: 01527 534064 Email: ailith.rutt@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk for more information.

Site Description

The site comprises a four storey commercial building erected in the early 1980s of red brick and brown mansard roof for use as offices, retail and other similar town centre uses. It is located within the pedestrianised part of the town opposite the town hall buildings. It is accessed at the rear by vehicles using Silver Street. To the northern end of the building is the Post Office, which would remain unchanged as part of these proposals. To the southern end of the premises at ground floor level was the old Barclays Bank unit, which vacated the building in 2010.

The property fronts onto Alcester Street where there are a mix of shopping and other leisure use units and also onto Walter Stranz Square adjacent to Fountain Passage and the link to the Kingfisher Centre.

Proposal Description

The applicants propose the redevelopment of the entire building except the element occupied by the Post Office, which it is envisaged will remain in use as such.

The proposal in its entirety is for the change of use of the premises and an extension on the rooftop between the existing service plant protrusions, to form 46 apartments (the

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whole building except for the element at the northern end at ground and first floor currently occupied by the Post Office). As shown below, some elements fall to be determined under the prior approval application and the remainder in the full application.

<i>Prior approval</i>			
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed
Ground floor	1	5	
First floor	3	10	1
Second floor	3	11	
Third floor		1	2
<i>Planning application</i>			
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed
Ground floor		5	
First floor			
Second floor			
Third floor	1	2	1
Totals	8	34	4

As shown above, 37 of these units relate to the application for prior approval and 9 of these units fall to be considered for full planning permission, as will be explained later in the report.

The figures in the table above are on the basis of the supporting information in the planning application and the detail on the floor plans. However, it is noted that some units include a study; whilst this room would not necessarily be marketed or used as such, the potential for it to be an extra bedroom exists, and would thus raise the situation to that shown in the table below:

<i>Prior approval (adjusted to include studies as bedrooms)</i>			
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed
Ground floor	1	4	1
First floor	2	9	3
Second floor	3	11	
Third floor		1	2
<i>Planning application (adjusted to include studies as bedrooms)</i>			
	1 bed	2 bed	3 bed
Ground floor		4	1
First floor			
Second floor			
Third floor	1	2	1
Totals	7	31	8

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Relevant Policies :

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3:

CS07 The Sustainable Location of Development
BBE13 Qualities of Good Design
BBE28 Waste Management
ETCR01 Vitality and Viability of the Town Centre
ETCR02 Town Centre Enhancement
ETCR05 Protection of the Retail Core
CT12 Parking Standards

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 19: Sustainable travel and Accessibility
Policy 20: Transport Requirements for New Development
Policy 30: Town Centre and Retail Hierarchy
Policy 33: Use of Upper Floors
Policy: 39 Built environment
Policy: 40 High Quality Design and Safer Communities

Others:

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG National Planning Practice Guidance
SPG Encouraging Good Design
SPD Designing for Community Safety

Relevant Planning History

2015/009/S73	Removal of conditions to remove restriction on uses in Threadneedle House only: Condition 3 of 79/588 and conditions 2 and 4 of 80/272	Approved	12.02.2015
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Consultations

Community Safety Officer

No Comments Received To Date

Development Plans

It is expected that residential units situated within a town centre location would reduce the need to travel and generate fewer trips by private car than if they were located outside of the town centre zone, given the proximity of shops and services and the convenience of sustainable transport options, such as the bus network and the train station, within a short walking distance.

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By introducing a further residential use this will contribute to a mixed use area whilst re-using existing floorspace. Furthermore, the provision of residential use in this area would increase the footfall to support leisure and entertainment uses and an evening economy, contributing to a thriving town centre.

In conclusion, the proposal would constitute an acceptable and needed use in the town centre location which would contribute to the vitality and viability of the area and the aims and visions of the Town Centre Strategy, the Town Centre policies of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3 and No.4 and the NPPF.

Worcestershire Regulatory Services (Noise & Contaminated Land)

No objection in relation to contaminated land

Noise discussions are on-going with the consultee and the agent and further information will be provided on the update

Highway Network Control

No objection due to sustainable and accessible location, subject to conditions regarding travel plan and cycle parking/storage

Crime Risk Manager

No Comments Received To Date

Public Rights Of Way

No Comments Received To Date

Severn Trent Water Ltd

No Comments Received To Date

Town Centre Co-ordinator

I have no objection to the above application from a Town Centre Strategy perspective. Concerning marketing of the ground floor units and vacant units on Alcester Street, I have read the covering letter and note the following:

Pg. 7 refers to the property being marketed and lack of interest, it would be useful to have some clearer evidence as to how the property has been marketed i.e. through what means, for which uses and the option of the property being sub divided similar to what we have asked for on other sites in the past. In addition the information provided is incorrect; the only other vacant unit on Alcester Street at present is the Poundstretcher retail unit.

Ultimately though there is only one small reference in the strategy which is a recommendation to 'ensure that A3 uses are encouraged at ground floor level in new developments' therefore I think it would be difficult to refuse residential on these grounds.

Waste Management

No Comments Received To Date

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Public Consultation Response

No responses received

Background/explanation

At the time that the applications were submitted, the elements of Threadneedle House that were previously used as Class B1(a) offices, which are those in the central portion of the ground floor and all of the existing upper floors, benefitted from the recently introduced permitted development rights to convert to residential. As such, a prior approval application has to be made to ascertain whether certain matters need to be dealt with fully, however the principle of the development is accepted in the legislation and thus established. The prior approval application reported here is such an application. Any external changes that are required in connection with such a change of use require full planning permission.

However, the change of use of the Barclays element fell outside of this provision as this was last a class A2 use. In the recently introduced legislation (15th April 2105) there is now a provision whereby A2 uses can change to residential (C3) through a prior approval application rather than needing an application for full planning permission, but only where the floorspace is less than 150m²; in this case though, the floorspace is 387m² and so full planning permission is still required for this element of this development.

The extension on the roof to create 4 residential units requires full planning permission.

Therefore, the 9 units created on the roof and in the former Barclays Bank require full planning permission, along with the physical alterations to the external appearance of the building required in connection with the change of use considered under the prior approval application.

Assessment of Proposal

Prior Approval Application assessment:

The legislation indicates that the change of use proposed here should be considered to be acceptable in principle, but requires that the following matters are taken into account. Officers can confirm that the pre-requisites for applying this legislation are met in this case.

Transport and highway impacts of the development

The proposal is in a town centre location where there are many sustainable transport alternatives and where there are many facilities and services in close proximity to the site. The existing parking and access arrangements would be maintained and as such these are considered to be acceptable. Therefore it is not considered necessary to seek any further information or control over these matters.

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Contamination risks on the site

The proposal is to reuse an existing building and there are no proposals to make any ground surface changes. As such, it is not considered that the proposal would be likely to result in any increased risk of contamination and as such it is considered to be acceptable in this regard.

Flooding risks on the site

The proposed change of use and associated works covered by the planning application do not result in any additional areas of hard surface and as such it is not considered that the proposal would result in any change to the existing method of dealing with rainwater and thus it is not considered that any flood mitigation measures would be required in this case. Further, it is also not considered that the proposal would increase any potential risk of flooding for the same reasons. Therefore, it is not considered that any further information is required to be dealt with in this case.

It is therefore considered that the prior approval of further details is not required in this case.

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PRIOR APPROVAL RECOMMENDATION:

The prior approval of further details is NOT REQUIRED.

Planning Application assessment:

Within the town centre, policies seek to promote a range of uses that contribute to a vibrant economy and that do not result in poor relationships between differing uses. Thus it is often encouraged to have residential accommodation above shop units.

The principle of residential accommodation in this location is considered to be acceptable on this basis; it would be unlikely to result in un-neighbourly impacts caused by the residential units and any future occupiers would be aware of the surrounding town centre uses and the benefits that having such services and facilities in such close proximity can provide. Other residential units above shops exist in this area of the town centre without harm to amenity and it would be no different in this case.

Whilst the town centre strategy document that is being compiled (ready for future adoption) demonstrates a preference for A class (retail/café/pub/takeaway) uses at ground floor level, the applicants have submitted supporting information demonstrating that it has not been possible to secure such uses at ground floor level and it is therefore considered that its use for residential purposes would be preferable to its remaining vacant and can be supported in principle in policy terms. Further, the recent change in permitted development noted above could be used for part of this change of use anyway and as such there is an element of fallback position to be considered.

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The site lies within the town centre and outside any other designated areas. It is close to the Conservation Area and at approximately 5 minutes' walk from the bus and train stations and less to the major town centre and peripheral zone retail offer; it is considered to be very well serviced and thus very sustainable as all these facilities can be accessed without the need for private transport.

Parking and highways

The applicant proposes that 20 of the units would benefit from a designated parking space to the rear of the building, with the remaining units being given a discounted rate on parking at the Kingfisher Centre car park 2; again, a short walk from the site. The parking and access arrangements for the premises are already in existence and it is anticipated that vehicular demand would reduce as a result of this proposal relative to the previous office and professional services uses. It is also noted that across the town as a whole, car ownership amongst those living in flats is quite low and therefore it is anticipated that such a trend would continue in this location such that this would be sufficient. It is therefore considered that in such a sustainable location and given the local evidence, it would not be necessary to provide the full required quotient of parking in this instance. The applicant proposes to provide secure cycle storage in the basement of the building, but this is not shown on the plans and so it is considered appropriate to require such provision through the imposition of a condition as the location of this site lends itself to a higher use of bicycles relative to more remote locations. It is considered appropriate, however, to require the provision of secure cycle storage in this location and to publicise the locally available cycling routes to the new occupiers, and conditions are recommended accordingly.

Design and appearance

The application proposes the smartening of the exterior of the premises through the use of render infill panels which would accentuate the existing design features of the building and make it more attractive in the streetscene. The additional built form at roof level is considered to be sympathetic to the existing design and materials of the building as well as subordinate as it has been kept below the overall height of the existing premises. As such, the roofscape of the town centre maintains uninterrupted views across towards the Conservation Area and to St Stephen's Church.

At ground floor level, the current semi-covered walkway that is open to the public would be enclosed to allow for security and for privacy. No public thoroughfares would be blocked as there are alternative pedestrian routes in all cases. The enclosure would be of toughened glass in order that no further light was blocked from the ground floor apartment windows on the eastern side. The existing entrance would be made more of a feature of the premises, with railings and steps leading to the main entrance area, which would be entry-controlled for safety reasons.

Whilst the flats to the east of the building would look out towards the bars, shops and clubs opposite it is not considered that this of itself would prejudice any privacy for residents due to the distance and levels involved.

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There is no external space available around the premises for private recreation or amenity, however many of the flats would benefit from external balconies that are quite substantial in size and thus would have the opportunity of drying washing and sitting outside. However, in order to preserve the visual amenity of the area and protect privacy, it is recommended that some rights to erect larger structures be removed. Communal waste management facilities would be provided rather than external separate bin storage areas, within the communal elements of the building. This is considered to be acceptable and not an uncommon situation for blocks of flats.

Noise

The application is accompanied by a noise survey which seeks to demonstrate both that the existing noise creators around the site would not cause significant disturbance to residents on this site and that the residential use of Threadneedle House would not result in inconvenience or disturbance to other surrounding occupiers or curtail their current lawful activities. Further details in relation to noise will be provided on the update paper.

Other matters

Community safety measures have been put in place to ensure the safety and security of future residents to the satisfaction of the relevant officer.

Due to the size of the proposed development being considered under the planning application, it falls below the thresholds for seeking affordable housing or contributions towards wider infrastructure for the town.

Conclusion

It is considered to be an appropriate location for this use and a design that is well suited to the site and its surroundings such that it can be supported. It complies with the relevant policy framework and there is not considered to be any harm likely to be caused as a result of the development.

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PLANNING APPLICATION RECOMMENDATION:

That having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions and informatives:

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

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R1016-000 R1 Existing ground floor plan
R1016-001 R1 Existing first floor plan
R1016-002 R1 Existing second floor plan
R1016-003 R1 Existing third floor plan
R1016-010 R1 Existing third floor plan
R1016-011 R1 Existing elevations
R1016-090 R1 Existing site plan
R1016-091 R1 Proposed site plan
R1016-140 R1 Proposed ground floor plan
R1016-141 R1 Proposed first floor plan
R1016-142 R1 Proposed second floor plan
R1016-143 R1 Proposed third floor plan
R1016-200 R1 Proposed NE elevations
R1016-201 R1 Proposed SE elevations
R1016-202 R1 Proposed SW elevations
R1016-203 R1 Proposed NW elevations

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

- 3) All new external walls and roofs shall be finished in materials to match in colour, form and texture those on the existing building, or if a near match cannot be found, the written approval of the Local Planning Authority should be obtained for materials prior to their installation. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved details. The additional render infill patterns shall be of a colour agreed with the Local Planning Authority and thereafter retained as such for the lifetime of the development.

Reason:- To ensure that the development is satisfactory in appearance, to safeguard the visual amenities of the area and in accordance with Policy B(BE).13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3.

- 4) Prior to the occupation of the development hereby approved a sustainable travel plan shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the agreed details, which can be reviewed and varied if agreed by both parties as necessary from time to time. The details shall include how the units are to be marketed and details of any information to be provided prior to their occupation.

Reason: In the interests of sustainable travel and in accordance with Policies 19 and 20 of the emerging Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 and the NPPF.

- 5) Prior to the first occupation of any unit of residential accommodation hereby approved, details of secure cycle parking provision for that unit shall be submitted

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to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with these details and the provision for each flat shall be available to its occupier(s) prior to first occupation and thereafter maintained for the lifetime of the development. The provision will include a minimum of 2 spaces per unit, policies wherever possible and if not, a justification shall be included with the submitted details for the proposed reduction.

Reason: In the interests of sustainable travel and in accordance with Policies 19 and 20 of the emerging Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 and the NPPF.

- 6) Prior to the occupation of the units hereby approved, the glazed screening and a secure entry method shall be installed on site in order to maintain the security of any residents of the building and make a clear physical separation between external public and private space as shown on *plan (reference to be inserted here)*.

Reason: In the interests of safety and security and in accordance with Policies S1 and B(BE)13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3, Policies 39 and 40 of the emerging Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 and the NPPF.

- 7) Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (or any Order revoking and re-enacting that Order) no development included within Schedule 2, Part 2, Classes A, C and F, Part 14 Classes A-I and Part 16 Classes A and C shall be carried out without first making an application for planning permission and gaining consent. Any development shall thus be implemented in accordance with the consent given.

Reason:-To maintain the open layout and visual characteristics of the street scene by preventing visual clutter in external spaces and in accordance with Policy B(BE).13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3, Policies 33 and 39 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 and the NPPF.

Informatives

- 1) The applicants and the LPA have worked together to reach an acceptable scheme in this case in order to ensure that

Procedural matters

This application is being reported to the Planning Committee because the land owner is Redditch Borough Council. As such the application falls outside the scheme of delegation to Officers.