

**PLANNING  
COMMITTEE**

13th July 2016

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**Planning Application 2015/143/FUL**

**Conversion of Ashleigh Works to 10 no. Apartments**

**Ashleigh Works , 24 Bromsgrove Road, Redditch, B97 4QY**

**Applicant: Mrs Vivienne Wilkinson**  
**Expiry Date: 14th December 2015**  
**Ward: CENTRAL**

**(Site Plan attached)**

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 a brick built four storey former needle factory dating from the early 20th century and an adjoining Villa building with a Stucco rendered finish. The buildings are vacant.

The site lies on the edge of the Town centre within a commercial area. This is a prominent corner plot with Bromsgrove Road forming the southern boundary and Britten Street forming the western boundary.

In inner courtyard area is served by means of vehicular access to the west (via Britten Street).

The site is within a five minute walk from both the main bus station, train station and Kingfisher Shopping Centre to the east.

**Proposal Description**

This is a full planning application to change the use of the former needle works to create a total of 10no. two bedroomed flats over four floors.

A bin and cycle storage facility would be located within the buildings curtilage.

The attached Villa building is not subject to this application for change of use to residential.

**Relevant Policies :**

**Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3:**

CS06 Implementation of Development  
CS07 The Sustainable Location of Development  
E(EMP)3 Development within employment areas

**PLANNING  
COMMITTEE**

13th July 2016

---

BBE11 Buildings of Local Interest  
BBE13 Qualities of Good Design

**Emerging Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4**

Policy 4: Housing Provision  
Policy 5: Effective and Efficient use of Land  
Policy 37: Historic Buildings and Structures  
Policy: 40 High Quality Design and Safer Communities

**Others:**

NPPF National Planning Policy Framework  
NPPG National Planning Practice Guidance  
SPG Encouraging Good Design  
Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy (WWCS)

Ashleigh Works together with the attached Villa building which was the original 'Masters House' when the site operated as a needle factory, are designated buildings of historical interest within the Councils 'Schedule of Buildings of Local Interest 2009'.

**Relevant Planning History**

None

**Consultations**

**North Worcestershire Economic Development And Regeneration**

Comments summarised as follows:

Whilst ideally we would seek to protect employment land from competing uses there are other factors to consider with this particular application. The building in question is an identified heritage asset and as such any proposals here need to have regard, and be sympathetic, to this designation. Having reviewed the structural survey, it is evident that the building requires significant investment to bring it back into productive use.

Given the above, we have concerns that it would not be viable to reutilise this building for office purposes. This is because it is likely that in order to restore the building, a higher land value would be required, such as that offered by residential uses. Furthermore, there is currently little or no interest from the office market for this type of development. Any potential office occupiers would probably seek some incentives and rent free periods which further strains the viability of the development. There is also a risk that the building would continue to deteriorate if a more flexible approach is not taken for the end use and this could further exacerbate the 'status quo', which is not considered to be an acceptable position.

In addition to the above, it is worthwhile noting that the adjacent employment building (to the north) has been on the market for circa 1.5 years and this still remains available. This

**PLANNING  
COMMITTEE**

**13th July 2016**

---

provides a useful steer on the attractiveness of the location for traditional B1/B2 or B8 uses.

It is also worth noting that the redevelopment of this site might act as a catalyst for the redevelopment of the Strategic Site located on Edward Street, which would have clear economic benefits as a key gateway site for the town, which is a positive element of the proposal.

**Highway Network Control**

The development proposed does not include car parking provision on site. However, the location of the development, close to the Town Centre is ideally located to allow a 'car free' development, as there are significant public transport facilities within a very short distance. There is unrestricted on street parking on Britten Street, which, although generally full during the day, has significant free spaces during the off peak periods that will provide satisfactory visitor parking arrangements.

The development site is located in proximity to Cycle Route 5 on Bromsgrove Road and the recommended route for cyclists to Redditch Town Centre. In order to promote sustainable travel into the town centre, adequate connectivity to the cycle route network should be ensured through appropriate route signage and localised improvements.

Given that this development will increase pedestrian demand, a Highway Contribution is required to contribute towards a scheme of improvements as outlined above. This sum should be secured by Section 106 obligation.

Given the above, the County Council considers that the proposal will not have a detrimental effect on the free flow of the highway or the safety of road users, therefore has no objection to the grant of permission, subject to a condition requiring that secure cycle parking be provided at the site.

**North Worcestershire Water Management**

No objections subject to the imposition of a standard drainage condition

**RBC Ecology Officer**

No objection

**Area Environmental Health Officer**

No objection

**Town Centre Co-ordinator**

No objection

**Conservation Advisor**

No objection

**PLANNING  
COMMITTEE**

13th July 2016

---

**Waste Management**

No objection

**Crime Risk Manager**

No objection

**Development Plans**

This proposal falls within a Primarily Employment Area and therefore would result in a small loss to employment land. However, it is not considered that this loss would be significant and due to the nature of the proposed use, the proposal will be in keeping with the surrounding uses and would not compromise future employment related uses

**Worcestershire Archaeological Service**

No objections subject to the inclusion of an archaeology condition

**Public Consultation Response**

No comments received

**Assessment of Proposal**

The key issues for consideration in this case are as follows:

**Principle**

The site is located within an employment area as identified on the current LP proposals map.

Whilst the proposed use is residential rather than an employment use, your officers have had regard to the fact that the building is currently vacant as are adjacent parcels of employment land within close proximity of the site.

Ashleigh Works appears on the Councils Schedule of Buildings of Local Interest as an identified heritage asset and has been deteriorating structurally and aesthetically for decades. The Council have sought independent external (valuation) advice in respect to the monies the Council have requested via a planning obligation and that independent advice concurs with the views of your officers and the Councils Economic Development team who consider that the building requires significant investment to bring it back into productive use. Your officers have had regard to the advice received from NWEDR who state that there is little or no interest from the office market for this type of development and have had regard to the fact that the building will continue to deteriorate if a more flexible approach is not taken for the end use.

Members will be aware that the Edward Street site, which lies just to the east of the application site is subject to a separate Supplementary Planning Document dating back to September 2007 and the visual appearance of this site has long been a major cause for concern. Whilst this cannot be guaranteed, a residential conversation scheme at Ashleigh Works may act as a catalyst for the redevelopment of the Edward Street

**PLANNING  
COMMITTEE**

**13th July 2016**

---

Strategic Site which would have clear economic benefits as a key gateway site for the town.

Having regard to the presumption in favour of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF and the requirement for LPA's to provide 5 yrs supply of housing, together with the fact that the application site is previously developed (brownfield) land within very close proximity of the current town centre boundary, the principle of residential development can be supported.

Design and layout

The scheme has developed following pre-application advice from your officers and detailed discussions with the Councils Conservation Advisor due to the historic nature of the building. Much of the works proposed are internal although external works are also proposed which include the replacement of the existing windows with new metal framed windows which would be in sympathy with the existing historic building.

Your officers are satisfied that the proposed works would closely reflect and respect the industrial nature and character of this former factory building.

Highways, access and parking

County Highways have raised no objections to the proposed development having regard to the highly sustainable location of the site.

The applicant has agreed to the requirement of the planning obligation, which is currently in draft form, and requires a sum be paid to the County Council for the provision of localised improvements including signage, to Cycle Route 5 which is located on Bromsgrove Road, in order to promote sustainable travel into the town centre due to this increased demand.

Cycle parking would be provided on site and secured by a recommended planning condition.

It is worth noting that the building could be brought back to use as offices without the requirement to provide any in-curtilage car parking spaces.

Members attention is also drawn to the close proximity of public car parks and particularly Car Park 1 multi-storey where parking is permitted on a 24 hr a day basis. It is understood that future residents would be able to park here via permits available from the KSC.

No objections have been received from nearby residents in this respect.

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. Your officers are seeking contributions towards the provision of:

**PLANNING  
COMMITTEE**

**13th July 2016**

---

- localised improvements including signage to Cycle Route 5 in accordance with the requirements of the County Councils Infrastructure Delivery Plan; and
- refuse and re-cycling bins for the new development in accordance with Policy WCS.17 of the adopted Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy

At the time of writing, the planning obligation is in draft form.

**Conclusion**

Whilst there are conflicts with the fact that the site lies within an area designated for employment purposes it is considered that, in this instance, there are mitigating factors to consider a residential use favourably. The loss of this particular building for employment purposes is mitigated by the fact that a long vacant, rapidly deteriorating local heritage asset would be restored for productive use. Furthermore, the application would assist with the Councils requirement to provide a 5 year housing supply by introducing further residential properties into a sustainable town centre location, which would help to support surrounding shops and businesses. The conversion would not materially impact upon Redditch's employment land supply and may act as a catalyst for the redevelopment of the Edward Street Strategic Site to the east, which would have clear economic benefits as a key gateway site for the town.

Subject to the completion of the planning obligation and compliance with conditions as listed below, a favourable recommendation can be made.

**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:-**

**a) The satisfactory completion of a S106 planning obligation ensuring that:**

- Contributions are paid to the County Council in respect to localised improvements to Cycle Route 5
- A financial contribution is paid to the Borough Council towards the provision of wheelie bins for the new development

**and**

**b) Conditions and informatives as listed below:**

**Conditions:**

- 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.

**PLANNING  
COMMITTEE**

**13th July 2016**

---

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) Prior to their first installation, details of the form, colour and finish of the materials to be used externally on the walls and roofs shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall then be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

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.

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

appropriate references to be inserted here

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

- 4) Prior to the development hereby approved commencing, full details of a scheme for foul and surface water drainage shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The details thus approved shall be fully implemented prior to first use or occupation of the development.

Reason: To allow proper consideration of the proposed foul and surface water drainage systems and to ensure that the development is provided with a satisfactory means of drainage and in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework.

- 5) A) No development shall take place until a programme of Archaeological Work, including a Written Scheme of Investigation has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of significance and research questions; and:
1. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording.
  2. The programme for post investigation assessment.
  3. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording.
  4. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation
  5. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation

**PLANNING  
COMMITTEE**

**13th July 2016**

---

6. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Written Scheme of Investigation.

- B) The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (A) and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been secured.

Reason: In the interests of archaeological investigation in accordance with Paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework

- 6) Prior to the first occupation of this development a scheme of secured cycle parking shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. The facilities agreed shall be completed prior to the first occupation of the development and shall thereafter be retained for the parking of cycles only.

Reason: To comply with the Council's parking standards and to provide a sustainable form of development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework

**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 negotiation and amendment.
- 2) The applicant should be aware that this permission also includes a legal agreement under S106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and that the requirements of that and the conditions listed above must be complied with at all times.

**Procedural matters**

This application is being reported to the Planning Committee because the recommendation is that permission be granted subject to a planning obligation. In addition, the application is for major development (10 or more new dwellings) and as such the application falls outside the scheme of delegation.