



Planning Committee

Abbey Ward

30th March 2010

2010/040/COU CHANGE OF USE FROM CLASS B1 TO D1 TO ENABLE EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO TAKE PLACE ON THE FIRST AND SECOND FLOORS

OSPREY HOUSE, ALBERT STREET, REDDITCH**APPLICANT: NEW COLLEGE****EXPIRY DATE: 26TH APRIL 2010**

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Site Description

(See additional papers for Site Plan)

Office building exists on site with off street car parking provision. Building occupied by two companies on the upper floors and NEW College on the ground floor. Access to the car park is via a barrier off Albert Street. Site is close to other established office / commercial buildings. Adequate disabled car parking facilities also exist within the site.

Proposal Description

Permission is sought to change the use of the first and second floor of this building from Class B1 use (offices) to Class D1 (non-residential education and training centre). 1800m² of floorspace would be changed to this use, and it is proposed to operate the use 6 days a week (term time) Monday – Friday 06:00 – 22:00, Saturday 06:00 – 13:00.

The application is supported by a Design & Access Statement, which states that the growth in student numbers has created a problem with general teaching space, and addressing the shortfall is identified as a priority within NEW College's strategic property requirement. The College have recently moved into the premises on the ground floor in September 2009 and now have the opportunity to purchase the whole building. This would enable the College to further develop its higher and general teaching provision, and meet local demand for education and training.

Relevant Key Policies

All planning applications must be considered in terms of the planning policy framework and all other relevant material considerations (as set out in the legislative framework). The planning policies noted below can be found on the following websites:

www.communities.gov.uk

www.wmra.gov.uk

www.worcestershire.gov.uk

www.redditchbc.gov.uk

National Planning Policy

PPS1	(& accompanying documents) Delivering sustainable development
PPS4	Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PPG13	Transport

Regional Spatial Strategy

UR4	Social Infrastructure
PA1	Prosperity for All
PA4	Development related to Higher / Further Education and Research Establishments and incubator units
T3	Walking and cycling
T4	Promoting travel awareness

Worcestershire County Structure Plan

D.25	Use of Employment Land for Specific Uses within Class B
D.26	Office Development (Class A2 and Class B1)
T.4	Car Parking
T.10	Cycling and Walking

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 3

E(EMP).3	Primarily Employment Areas
E(EMP)3a	Development Affecting Primarily Employment Areas
C(T).12	Parking Standards
BI	Other relevant corporate plans and strategies
Redditch Economic Development Strategy	

Relevant Site Planning History

Appn. no	Proposal	Decision	Date
2009/113	Change of use from Class B1 to D1 to enable education and training to take place in the ground floor premises only	Approval	10th July 2009

Public Consultation Responses

No comments submitted at the time of drafting report.

Consultee Responses

County Highway Network Control

No objection to proposal.

Environmental Health

Comments awaited.

Crime Risk Manager

Comments awaited.

Severn Trent Water

Comments awaited.

Development Plans

Proposal does not strictly comply with the Development Plan with reference to Local Plan No.3 E(EMP).3.

Limited information has been provided as to the marketing of the site and how PPS4 criteria have been met.

The end use for the purposes of education and skills is promoted in the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (January 2008) and should the justification and information be provided to the Economic Development Units satisfaction then the criteria of Policy E(EMP).3 and PPS4 can be met.

Economic Development

Redditch Economic Development Strategy identifies the need to provide higher education opportunities in Redditch. The proposal would enable the opportunity to improve the educational attainment of the residents and provide necessary skills to meet needs of local businesses.

Assessment of Proposal

The key issues for consideration in this case are as set out below.

Principle

The site is within an area designated for Primarily Employment Purposes in the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3. Policy E(EMP).3 would apply which states that development falling within Class B1, B2, and B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order will be permitted. Non employment uses within this area would **only** be considered where:-

- i. It can be demonstrated that the site cannot be used for an employment use.
- ii. The loss of the site would not have an unacceptable impact on the supply of employment land.

- iii. The use of the site for employment purposes raises unacceptable environmental or traffic issues that could be alleviated by an alternative use.
- iv. The proposed use is compatible with the surrounding land use.

The proposed use is Class D1 use, higher education facilities for NEW College. Therefore, the proposed use would not be an employment use that would fully comply with Policy E(EMP).3. Therefore, its acceptability would need to be assessed under the criteria set out above.

The building is acceptable for employment uses but mainly Class B1 use due to the internal layout of the building. Therefore, its scope for providing employment uses within this area is limited to Class B1 use. With regards to the loss of the site for a non employment use in respect to the employment land supply, comments from Officers in Economic Development have clarified that in the last 12 months there have been four enquiries for office accommodation of this floorarea, and five properties of that size have been available. Therefore, should this site be lost to Class D.1 use there is still availability of such sites in the Borough. As the site has recently been built, and built mainly for Class B1 purposes, it is considered that the use does not raise any environmental or traffic issues that could be alleviated by a non employment use. However, it is considered that the proposed use would be compatible with the surrounding employment uses as it would enable the opportunity to improve the educational attainment of the residents and provide necessary skills to meet needs of local businesses.

In addition, the proposal would also comply with Policy PA.4 of the Regional Spatial Strategy which encourages higher / further education facilities to grow and expand in order to facilitate the development of businesses in the area to enable employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups and communities. This would also comply with the aspirations of the Council's Economic Development Strategy, and the needs identified in the emerging Core Strategy particularly Policy ES3).

Comments from Officers in Development Plans have raised concerns that the proposal does not comply with Policy E(EMP).3 of Local plan No.3, and also refer to Policies EC10 and EC11 of PPS.4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth.

Policy EC10 requires proposals to be assessed against impact considerations such as accessibility of the site to a choice of public transport and local traffic congestion, and impact on economic and physical regeneration in the area including the impact of deprived areas and social inclusion objectives. Officers consider that the proposal would fulfil the criteria of this policy, and the applicant has been requested to provide further information on this matter.

Policy EC11 advised that consideration should be given to weigh market and other economic information alongside environmental and social information. Economic Development have already clarified that there is availability of other properties should this site be lost to Class D1 use. The Economic Development Unit is making the point that the need for the D.1 use is in its view compelling.

The ground floor is currently being used for higher education, and the first and second floors are currently being used for employment uses. It is intended that the whole of the building would be used for higher education. Whilst the use would not be an employment use, it would provide training / qualification facilities for employees/employers and businesses in the local area. It is worth noting that other training centre facilities exist in other employment area's and that they do provide an important function for those areas.

Design and layout

The internal layout of the building which comprises of a number of rooms would remain generally unchanged for the proposal and no external alterations are proposed. Therefore, should the building revert to a Class B.1 use again at a later date this could be done with minimal alteration and impact on the locality.

Highways, access and sustainability

Given that the site would be used by one occupier of the building, the existing off street car parking facilities would be dedicated to the one occupier and would not cause conflict with any other users of the site. However, the site is within walking distance of the Redditch NEW College campus and it is envisaged that students could easily walk to this building. The College provides a campus bus service which stops at the building in order to reduce the number of vehicles parking at the site. This results in better use of shared transport as opposed to individuals using their own cars, and ultimately has a better impact on the environment. County Highway Network Control has no objection to the proposal.

Conclusion

The use is currently taking place on the ground floor of this building with minimal impact on the employment land supply in the area. Although the proposal conflicts with policy E(EMP).3 of Local Plan No.3, the proposal would reflect the aspirations of Policies in the Regional Spatial Strategy, and potentially the emerging Core Strategy. However, additional information is required by the applicant to address policy EC.10 under PPS.4. So long as the proposal can address these issues, it is considered that whilst the use may reduce the level of employment land in the area, the whole of the building being used for this proposed use would provide an important supporting facility for the employers / employees / businesses in the locality, enabling local businesses to grow and expand.

Recommendation

Subject to receiving additional information in respect to policy in PPS.4, it is recommended that having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, authority be delegated to the Head of Planning and Building Control to GRANT planning permission subject to conditions as summarised below:-

1. Development to commence within 3 years.
2. Use of building to be restricted to Class D1 Non residential education and training facilities only and any facilities should be ancillary in nature.