

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

21st February 2024

Planning Application 23/01115/FUL

Addition of patios and balconies to apartments including retaining walls and fencing. Acoustic fencing to Northern boundary. Decorative fencing and gates to entrance. Cladding, re-roofing and re-painting of existing building.

Highfield House, Headless Cross Drive, Redditch, Worcestershire, B97 5EQ,

**Applicant: Mr George Doupnik
Ward: Headless Cross And Oakenshaw Ward**

(see additional papers for site plan)

The case officer of this application is Sarah Hazlewood, Planning Officer (DM), who can be contacted on Tel: 01527881720 Email: sarah.hazlewood@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk for more information.

Site Description

The site comprises three adjoining buildings, which were formerly in office use but are in the process of being converted to residential use as per the planning history listed below.

The buildings are three storey in height with one of the three blocks being set at a higher level due to the prevailing topography. The buildings are set in the southern portion of the site, with the northern portion of the site predominantly laid to hardstanding forming vehicular parking.

To the north beyond the application site is the water tower and reservoir. The site is bound by Headless Cross Drive to the west, Coldfield Drive to the south and the Bromsgrove Highway A448 to the east.

Proposal Description

The application proposed a series of works associated with the conversion of the building to residential use. These comprise:

- The addition of balconies to each residential unit, including associated ground excavation/build up at ground floor level to account for the topography of the site.
- The cladding of the external walls with buff brick slips and off white render, the like of like replacement of roof tiles and painting of external paintwork in light grey
- Installation of 2.5 metre high acoustic fencing to the Bromsgrove Highway boundary and at the ground floor of the southern patios
- Brick retaining walls with decorative metal fencing over to ground floor patios on northern elevation and;
- 1.8 metre decorative bow top railings to part of Headless Cross Drive boundary with associated 1.8-2 metres high wall, railings and gates to the vehicular access.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Relevant Policies:

Policy 39 Built Environment
Policy 40 High Quality Design and Safer Communities

High Quality Design SPD

Relevant Planning History

21/00521/CUPRIO	Change of use from office (use class B1) to form 69 apartments (use class C3)	Prior Approval Required and Granted	26.05.2021
23/00992/CUPRIO	Conversion of part of an office block into residential flats. 17 x 1 bed and 7 x 2 bed (previous app 21/00521/CUPRIO)	Prior Approval Required and Granted	26.10.2023
23/01236/CUPRIO	Prior approval application (Class MA) for Conversion of part of an office block into 21 residential flats comprising 9 x 1 bed and 12 x 2 bed (previous app 21/00521/CUPRIO)	Prior Approval Required and Granted	19.12.2023

Consultations

Worcestershire Highways

No objection - The current application does not impact/ affect the highway with the exception to the proposed erection of gates at the site access from Headless Cross Drive.

The Highway Authority has reviewed the location and positioning of the proposed gates and are satisfied that they are sufficiently set back from the public highway so not to cause a risk to highway safety nor any unnecessary disruption to the free flow of users.

Public Consultation Response

A site notice was displayed on 19.12.23 which expired 12.01.24

A notice in the Redditch Standard was published on 22.12.23 which expired 08.01.24

No public comments have been received.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Assessment of Proposal

Addition of balconies and patios

The proposal seeks the introduction of balconies to first and second floor flats and patio areas to the ground floor flats. Due to the topography of the site, some land is required to be excavated to the northern side of the building to form a level area. With land to the south of the building requiring some areas of land to be built up to form a level area.

The building has no near neighbours, whether in residential use or any other use therefore the introduction of the balconies will not cause any overlooking to adjacent land/buildings.

Overlooking between balconies will not be possible as the plans are annotated as including 1.8 metre high obscure glass screens where the balcony structures straddle two residential units. Whilst it is likely that some overlooking may occur from the proposed balconies to the proposed patios at lower levels, it is considered that this will be limited due to the field of vision possible from a balcony being limited to longer range views and the extreme ends of the amenity areas rather than directly down/beneath the balcony.

As such it is considered that the balconies and patios proposed are considered acceptable.

Cladding of external walls with brick slips and render

The existing building is finished in dark brown brick with red feature metalwork and dark brown window frames. The proposal seeks to over clad high level brick work with buff brick slips and render the bottom portion of the dwelling in off white render. The metalwork would be painted light grey. The roof would be replaced like for like and this element in itself would not require planning permission.

With respect to the change in external finish of the building, the materials proposed would represent a significant departure from the existing finish of the building. The building sits alone in its own grounds with no nearby direct neighbours, the closest structure being the water tower which is finished in pale/grey concrete. Whilst there are more traditional red brick and slate tile roofed dwellings at Highfield Avenue and Highfield Road to the west, the building in its current state neither replicates this style or is read alongside it. Views of the existing building are limited to glimpses from Coldfield Drive through gaps in an otherwise substantial tree screen. Similar significant screening exists on the Headless Cross Drive boundary such that view of the building are not possible. Having regard to all of these factors it is considered that the proposed building material finishes are acceptable in this instance.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

Installation of 2.5 metre high acoustic fencing

The 2.5 metre high fencing is proposed in two locations. Firstly, alongside existing car parking forming the eastern boundary of the site. Heavy tree screening exists beyond this forming the embankment down to the A448 Bromsgrove Highway. The fencing will not be prominent in public views from any vantage point except when within the site when it will be seen in the context of the tree screening beyond.

Further 2.5 metre high fencing is proposed to form the boundaries to the patios being formed on the southern side of the building. It is considered that this will benefit the proposed occupiers of these residential units by forming a barrier to any noise that may emanate from the nearby road network. Again, this fencing will only largely be viewed from within the site with glimpsed views possible from Coldfield Drive with wider views obscured by the dense tree screening present in the highway verge along Coldfield Drive.

Following substantial completion of the conversion of the building to a residential use it would benefit from permitted development rights under Part 2, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 as amended to install walls, gates, fencing and other means of enclosure up to 2 metres in height. It is considered that the additional 0.5 metres proposed for the acoustic fencing would not be materially harmful to the character of the area in view of this fall back position. Visually there are also considered to be benefits to a coherent fencing scheme being installed at the site rather than leaving individual flat owners to install boundary treatment in an ad hoc manner.

In view of the above, it is considered that the installation of the 2.5 metre high close boarded acoustic fencing is acceptable.

Brick retaining walls with decorative metal fencing over to ground floor patios on northern elevation

Due to the topography of the site, it is proposed to excavate some ground to the ground floor, northern elevation of the building to form level areas for patios to these residential units.

The ground forming the car parking area is approximately between 3 and 4 metres higher than the ground level adjacent to the building, with a landscaped slope between the two. Retaining walls will support the land in order to form the patio areas. Given that the land continues to slope upwards towards the car park beyond the patio extent these retaining walls will not be visible within the site. 1.1 metre high decorative railings are proposed above the retaining walls. Where views of these railings are visible, which is limited by the topography of the site, they will be seen in the context of the existing three storey building so will visually not appear prominent or intrusive. As such this element of the proposal is acceptable.

PLANNING COMMITTEE

1.8 metre decorative bow top railings to part of Headless Cross Drive boundary with associated 1.8-2 metres high wall, railings and gates to the vehicular access.

Black bow top railing at 1.8 metres in height are proposed between the vehicular access to the site and a pedestrian access on Headless Cross Drive set just inside the site boundary. There is currently no boundary treatment in this location, although at the pedestrian entrance there is a metal gate. The railings will be set back from the highway beyond landscaping and the pedestrian underpass under Headless Cross Drive which is at a lower level. Given that the railings will not provide a solid boundary and the landscaping which they will be seen against they are considered visually acceptable.

These railings will adjoin a 1.8 metre wall with brick pillars and railing configuration which are proposed to start at the point where the railings alone will terminate close to where the vehicular access adjoins Headless Cross Drive. The wall and railings are proposed to continue along the southern side of the vehicular access, where they will then form gates of a maximum 2 metres in height with an adjacent pedestrian gate. There is proposed a small return in the wall/railings but they are not proposed to continue fully along the northern side of the vehicular access. With the exception of the brick pier at the start and end of the wall/railings, the wall will form 0.6 metres height of brickwork with the remainder of the being formed by railings. As such the boundary treatment will appear largely open, with the existing vegetation still visible through the railings. The gate/wall/railings part of the proposal is set well in the site access such that it will not appear prominent in wide public views. Whilst the wall/railings are sited directly at the back of the vehicular access drive and will be visible in public view, given the design as outlined above it is considered that they will not be unduly prominent in public view and as such are acceptable.

Other matters

The plans are also annotated with a number of works to the roof of the building. As noted above the replacement of the roof tiles in a like for like manner is not considered to require planning permission.

The installation of solar panels is shown on the plans, however this is considered to constitute permitted development by reason of Part 14, Class A of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended).

The installation of smoke shafts and vents are indicated at various positions on the roof slope. The vents will lie almost flush with the existing roof slope with the smoke shafts protruding 0.5 metres from the plane of the roof slope. Given the limited number proposed in the context of the size of the buildings subject to the works it is considered that these elements do not materially affect the external appearance of the building and therefore do not constitute development requiring planning permission.

RECOMMENDATION:

That having regard to the development plan and to all other material

PLANNING COMMITTEE

considerations, planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

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.

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 carried out in accordance with the following plans and drawings:

Proposed Site Plan 23/51 P4-D
Proposed Site Sections 23/51 P6
Proposed Elevations 23/51 P3-D
Proposed Floor Plans 23/51 P2-B
Proposed Floor Plans 23/51 P1B
Location Plan 23/51 P5

Reason: To provide certainty to the extent of the development hereby approved in the interests of proper planning.

3. Prior to their first installation, details of the form, colour and finish of the materials to be used externally on the walls 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

Procedural matters

This application is reported to Planning Committee for determination because the application is for major development and as such the application falls outside the scheme of delegation to Officers.