

Item No.15

DESCRIPTION: **LB: SUBDIVISION OF BUILDING INTO THREE OFFICE UNITS.**

LOCATION: **THE LIMES, 12 DUNSTABLE STREET, AMPHILL, BEDFORD, MK45 2JU**

GRID REFERENCE: PP-00538017

APPLICATION NUMBER: 08/01805/LB

PARISH: Ampthill

APPLICANT Storey Property Developments Ltd

CASE OFFICER: Pru Khimasia

DATE REGISTERED: 23 September 2008

EXPIRY DATE 18 November 2008

RECOMMENDED DECISION **LISTED BUILDING CONSENT**

REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE **CLLR SUMMERFIELD CALL IN AT THE REQUEST OF AMPHILL TOWN COUNCIL DUE TO CONCERNS OF INSUFFICIENT LEVELS OF CAR PARKING.**

Site Location:

The application site comprises 1.04ha of land, the bulk of which lies within the Ampthill Conservation Area. The existing buildings on the site comprise the former Mid Beds District Council offices and the Acorn Centre to the rear. The original town hall structure (the former Council Office) is Grade II listed and was designed by Sir Albert Richardson, while there are more modern structures and a large car park area to the rear of the site. Importantly, the listing includes the more modern 1990's extension of the original frontage building.

The site slopes down steeply to the west towards an open brook and is bounded by residential development in Station Road and Dunstable Street to the south, and by the Clevedon Nursery and Russell House (now vacant) to the north.

The main part of the site is now vacant.

The Application:

The application seeks Listed Building Consent for internal demolition and alterations to divide the existing 1964 Sir Albert E. Richardson building into three office units.

A previous application 07/01876/LB for the redevelopment of The Limes proposed the conversion of the Sir Albert E. Richardson building into one office, without any subdivision. This application has been approved subject to the applicants entering into a legal obligation in connection with the parallel application for full planning permission, and these decision notices have yet to be issued pending completion of the 106.

PPS:

PPS1 Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS3 Housing
PPG15 Planning and Historic Environment

Policy + SPG: (Structure Plan + Mid Beds Local Plan)

Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan First Review 2005: CHE11.

Planning History

Many and various planning applications over time relating to former use of the site as council offices.

- | | |
|---------------|--|
| 06/01657/FULL | Internal and external alterations to office building including demolition of link to rear extension; alterations and change of use of rear extension to form 27 flats; erection of 39 flats in 3 blocks following demolition of the Acorn Centre, together with parking, landscaping and ancillary works.
Withdrawn 03.01.07 |
| 06/01658/LB | Internal and external alterations to front office building, including demolition of link to rear extension and restoration of rear elevation to its original design. Alterations and change of use of rear extension to form 27 flats.
Withdrawn 03.01.07 |
| 07/00223/FULL | Restoration and alteration of the listed former Town Hall, demolition of the link to the 1990's extension, re-use of the listed Town Hall as offices, refurbishment and extension of the 1990's extension for residential use (26 flats), construction of a new residential scheme comprising 34 units, and associated parking and external works.
Refused 10.07.07. Excessive height and bulk, loss of amenity, inappropriate design, inadequate car parking, increased traffic in Station Road. |
| 07/00228/LB | Restoration and alteration of the listed former Town Hall, demolition of the link to the 1990's extension, re-use of the listed Town Hall as offices, refurbishment and extension of the 1990's extension for residential use. Refused 10.07.07 as being premature in advance of a planning permission for the site. |
| 07/01869/FULL | Full: Restoration and alteration of the listed former town hall, the demolition of the link to the 1990s extension, the re-use of the listed former town hall as offices, the refurbishment and extension of the 1990s extension for residential use, the construction of a new residential development comprising 34 |

no. units and associated parking and external works.
Approval pending S106 Agreement.

07/01876/LB

Listed Building Consent: Restoration and alteration of the listed former town hall, the demolition of the link to the 1990s extension, the reuse of the listed former town hall as offices, the refurbishment and extension of the 1990s extension for residential use, the construction of a new residential development comprising 34 no. units and associated parking and external works.

Approval pending S106 Agreement.

Representations: (Parish & Neighbours)

Ampthill Town Council Object to the scheme:

- The fire escape facilities and disabled access are inadequate.
- Understand the application is a listed building application, however the car park is insufficient for the increased numbers of staff, as a consequence of the change from one to three office suites

Adjacent Occupiers One letter of Support Received:

- Support splitting of building to increases chances of building being let.

Application advertised 10 October 2008

Consultations

Ampthill & District Preservation Society Object to the scheme:

- The car park is insufficient for the increased numbers of staff, as a consequence of the change from one to three office suites.
- The fire escape facilities and disabled access are inadequate.

Access Officer Object to the scheme:

- no Disabled Access details have been submitted.
- The application is in breach of the DDA

Contract Services No Comment

Determining Issues

The main considerations of the application are;

- 1. Principle of Development**
- 2. Impact on the character and setting of the Listed Building**
- 3. Works to the listed building**

4. Other Issues

Considerations

1. The Principle of Development

The site is located within the settlement envelope of Ampthill which is defined by policy LPS1 of the Mid Beds Local Plan First Review (Adopted 2005) as a Selected Settlement. The Listed Building is located within the Conservation Area, and therefore subject to policy CHE11. The site is currently lying vacant and has scope to be better utilised, while the continuing vacancy of the buildings is a matter for some concern.

The principle of redevelopment of this site has been established by the previous resolution to approve permission. This approval allowed the retention of the Sir Albert E. Richardson building into one office, without any subdivision.

The building has proved not to be marketable as a single unit. The applicant has submitted evidence showing the lack of demand for the offices as a whole. Details submitted show that the building was marketed from 1 September 2006 until 25 August 2008. Some viewings were made but none led to the successful occupation of the building. Some companies were looking for a partial lease only.

The Employment Land Review, undertaken as part of the evidence base for the emerging Local Development Framework shows that demand for small units in the District is great. The subdivision of the building offers the owners an opportunity to create smaller office units which they believe will be easier to market.

2. Impact on the character and setting of the Listed Building

The proposals submitted indicate that the listed building would be restored to its original format and refurbished. The listing of the former Town Hall building includes both the original 1965 frontage building and the 1900s extension to the rear, although the formal listing description very briefly dismisses the extension as being "not of architectural interest".

The detail of the scheme provides an opportunity for existing unsympathetic alterations to the historic part of the listed building to be removed, including balustrading, doors and windows. The former Council Chamber, currently filled with a mezzanine floor would be restored to its original open form. The connection to the 1990s office block would be demolished to reveal the original rear elevations of the listed building.

In terms of the context of the listed building and its setting, the scheme to separate the original building from the modern extension at the rear was considered to benefit the overall relationship of the Richardson building with the wider site, giving a separation that does not exist at present. This was considered during the determination of the full planning application

The detail of the works to the listed building will need to be tied by condition, for example it is considered appropriate to attach conditions to any approval requiring full details of the reinstatement of the rear elevation to be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority.

Overall, it is considered that the proposal would considerably enhance the character and appearance of the listed building and its wider setting and is in accordance with local and national planning policies.

3. Works to the Listed Building

PPG 15 advises that internal and external alteration or addition to a listed building should only be permitted where there would be no adverse effect on its architectural or historic interest.

This scheme provides three similarly sized offices divided on a continuous vertical split with no flying freehold. Each office is spread over three floors, with the exception of the central office, which retains access to an existing basement also.

The division of each office is summarised below. All these changes have been agreed to the satisfaction of the Design and Conservation team.

Office 1

- Office 1 is located on the north side of the building.
- Access to this office would be provided on the northern elevation, at the side of the building.
- Some internal partition walls would be removed to create open plan offices on all floor levels.
- The door accessing the front hallway which links the side of the building to the original main entrance and chamber would be blocked.
- The existing side staircase would enable access to the first and second floors of this Office.
- Toilets would be proposed on all levels, in the rear of the original building (in the far end of the wings), in an area that was used as a corridor linking the original building with the modern extension.

Office 2

- Office 2 is located in the centre of the building and would utilise the chamber as the main office space.
- Access to this office would be provided from the front elevation, using the original main entrance.
- Some internal partition walls would be removed to create open plan offices on the second floor.
- The former Council Chamber, currently filled with a mezzanine floor would be restored to its original open form with balcony, providing office space on the

- ground and first floor.
- The two original symmetrical staircases linking the ground floor with the first floor would be retained. Additional staircases of steel and glass would be added to first floor central corridor to access the second floor. To enable this new openings would be made to the flank walls leading to the chamber but these would be simple, uncomplicated apertures so not to detract from the route to the chamber.
 - An existing staircase would provide access to the basement.
 - Toilets would be proposed in an area accessed from the flank walls leading to the chamber but again these new openings would be simple, uncomplicated apertures so not to detract from the route to the chamber, with the exception of the second floor, where toilets would be proposed in existing cupboards.
 - The existing glass and wooden panels at the top of the staircase on the first floor would be removed, to enable the opening up of the first floor, in keeping with the original design.

Office 3

- Office 1 is located on the south side of the building.
- Access to this office would be provided on the southern elevation, at the side of the building.
- Some internal partition walls would be removed to create open plan offices on all floor levels.
- The door accessing the front hallway which links the side of the building to the original main entrance and chamber would be blocked.
- The existing side staircase would enable access to the first and second floors of this Office.
- Toilets would be proposed on all levels, in the rear of the original building (in the far end of the wings), in an area that was used as a corridor linking the original building with the modern extension.

The application proposes the replacement of UPVC windows with timber, single glazed sliding sash windows to match the original. In addition, the skirting, mouldings, balustrading and doors would be replaced or added where necessary to match the original features. The application does propose the removal of some original structures, it also proposes the replacement of original structures that were removed. There will be some closure of secondary openings to facilitate the subdivision.

Overall it is considered that the proposals are reasonably required to encourage and enable the continued active use of this listed building and will serve to promote and restore its integrity and character. Such works accord with paragraph 3.8 of PPG15 which states " Generally the best way of securing the upkeep of historic buildings and areas is to keep them in active use. For the great majority this must mean economically viable uses if they are to survive and new, and even continuing, uses will often necessitate some degree of adaptation. The range and acceptability of possible uses must therefore usually be a major consideration when the future of listed buildings or buildings in conservation areas is in question."

4. Other Issues

Parking

Although a matter that has raised local concern, the provision of parking is not a consideration for a Listed Building application. The applicant has submitted a plan showing a revised car parking arrangement to that subject to the resolution to approve under 07/01869/FULL. This shows allocation of car parking spaces for each of the three offices. The car parking provision calculation is based on the net lettable area for each office. This method of calculating car parking provision was agreed previously and consented for the previous applications, 07/01869/FULL and 07/01876/LB. It is considered that the proposals for parking are in principle reasonable.

Disabled Access

The applicant acknowledges in the Design and Access Statement that provision of lifts, fire doors, data, power and ventilation provision will need to be reviewed at a later stage. These details will have to be agreed to meet statutory and modern day requirements, including satisfying the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act.

The submitted car parking plan indicates the provision of ramped access to all three offices but no detailed information is supplied at present. The ground floor to each office therefore potentially has disabled access. No other disabled access details have been submitted with this application, and it is fair to record that there have been concerns raised over the impact on the fabric of the building of the potential inclusion of lift facilities to meet Disability Discrimination Act requirements.

The provision of ramps will constitute an engineering operation requiring planning permission, but not listed building consent, and an advisory note to the applicant can remind of this requirement. The absence of lift access in this current proposal is not a matter for which it would be appropriate to refuse listed building consent. The liabilities (or indeed any exceptions) under the DDA will need to be separately investigated by the developer. Any further internal works required to meet these requirements will necessitate the submission of a further application for listed building consent.

Though the Council's Access Officer has strong objection to the proposal as it stands, the provision of access arrangements is not a matter that would justify the refusal of an application for listed building consent.

Conclusion

The subdivision Sir Albert E. Richardson building into three office units does represent minimal intervention and would allow the applicant to revert to a single building should it ever be required. The use of the building as offices remains unchanged and so no application for full planning permission is required.

The proposed internal works will not adversely effect the architectural or historic interest of this Grade II listed building, consequently the development is in accordance with the advice in PPG15 on the Historic Environment. It is therefore recommended that Listed Building Consent is granted, subject to the appropriate conditions.

Reasons for Granting

The proposal is in conformity with PPG15 Planning and the Historic Environment.

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE Listed Building Consent for the application set out above subject to the following condition(s):

- 1 DG02 The works hereby consented shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, to ensure that this consent does not continue in existence indefinitely if the development to which it relates is not carried out.
- 2 LB01 All internal and external works hereby permitted shall be carried out in materials to match as closely as possible in colour, type and texture, those of the existing building.

Reason: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily listed building.
- 3 LB08 **Prior to the commencement of works a method statement indicating the sequence of demolition and reconstruction together with measures for temporary structural support during works, and a detailed specification for repairs and reinstatement, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and thereafter adhered to during construction works.**

Reason: To ensure that the structural stability of the adjacent building is maintained.
- 4 LB13 **The new works shall be executed in bricks, mortar, tiles, skirting boards, architraves, cornices, door and windows frames and sills to match the existing building, details all of which shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development.**

Reason: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily listed building.

- 5 EM02 **Before the commencement of development a sample panel of bricks shall be constructed for the consideration and approval of the Local Planning Authority.**
- Reason: To safeguard the appearance of the completed development by ensuring that the development hereby permitted is finished externally with materials to match/complement the existing building(s) and the visual amenities of the locality.**
- 6 LB26 Detailed drawings at a scale of 1:2 of the glazed bars to be used shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of development. The works shall be carried out and completed strictly in accordance with the previously approved details.
- Reason: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily listed building.
- 7 LB27 Notwithstanding the approved plans, all rainwater goods shall be of cast iron or aluminium and painted black unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
- Reasons: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily listed building.
- 8 U No works shall be undertaken on any of the following matters without full details including elevations first having been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority:
- i) modifications to the existing lantern to the Council Chamber to provide passive ventilation;
 - ii) the provision of any means of escape;
 - iii) the installation of any plant, equipment or air conditioning facilities;
 - iv) the installation of the new balcony in the former Council Chamber;
 - v) the proposed lift doors;
 - vi) the installation of any secondary windows;
 - vii) the provision of any external lighting;
 - viii) the provision of fire escape facilities;
 - ix) external surface treatments;
 - x) boundary treatments including the walls and railings to the front of the site.
- Reason: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily listed building
- 9 U **Prior to the commencement of development, full details and specifications of all reinstatement works to the rear upper**

levels of the listed building shall be submitted to, and approved in writing by, the local planning authority. The development shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of this statutorily listed building

Notes to Applicant

- 1 The applicant is reminded of their liability under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 as amended to consider the needs of less able people in accessing the building. Any works to construct external ramps or the like will require full planning permission. Any internal adjustments to the building, such as the provision of lifts, will require listed building consent. Early discussion with planning officers is recommended.