

Item No. 10

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/12/01152/FULL
LOCATION	Shefford Post Office, 6 Southbridge Street, Shefford, SG17 5DB
PROPOSAL	Change of use on first floor from office to provide 3 one bedroom flats & ancillary commercial floor space & two storey rear extensions.
PARISH	Shefford
WARD	Shefford
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllrs Birt & Brown
CASE OFFICER	Nikolas Smith
DATE REGISTERED	16 May 2012
EXPIRY DATE	11 July 2012
APPLICANT	Basra Enterprises Ltd
AGENT	Roscoe Milne Partnership
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE RECOMMENDED DECISION	A family member of an objector is employed by the Council Full Application - Granted

Site Location:

A two-storey, terraced building on the south side of Southbridge Street within the Conservation Area and the town centre. The ground floor is used as a Post Office and the first floor is used as storage connected with that use.

The building has been extended to the rear at two-storey and then at single storey beyond that.

The neighbour to the west (No 4) is has a commercial use at ground floor with a flat above. To the east of the site is a vehicular entrance to a car park at the rear of the terrace that is owned by the Cornerstone Public house but over which occupiers at No 6 has right of way.

The Application:

The existing single storey rear extensions at the site would be demolished and there would be two-storey rear extensions built in their place. The use of the first floor would be changed to create three 1-bedroom flats. There would be no changes to the front of the building.

Relevant Policies:

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

2. Ensuring the vitality of town centres
4. Promoting sustainable transport
12. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Core Strategy and Development Management Policies (2009)

DM3 High Quality Development
DM7 Development in Town Centres
DM13 Heritage in Development

Design in Central Bedfordshire (a Guide for Development) (2010)

DS5 The Historic Environment
DS7 Movement, Streets and Places

Relevant Planning History:

MB/09/00095/FULL Demolition of outbuildings and change of use of first floor to two residential units

Refused: 17 March 2009

Reasons: No Unilateral Undertaking or acoustic assessment submitted

Representations:

Town Council	No objection but made the following comments: The car parking assessment carried out by the applicant is misleading. There are existing problems with sewage in the area. The security of the Post Office could be compromised.
Neighbours	Two letters objecting to the development were received, commenting as follows: The intensified use of the site would be dangerous because of access from the rear of the site and traffic entering and leaving the car park. No parking would be provided and public parking would not be available. There have been disputes in the past relating to the management of the car park. The development would overlook a courtyard at No 4.

Consultee responses:

Highways	Objection on the grounds that no parking would be provided for future occupiers.
Waste Services	No objection subject to condition
Public Protection	No comments received

Determining Issues:

The considerations in the determination of this application are:

1. The principle of the development
2. Appearance
3. Neighbours
4. Living conditions
5. Traffic and parking
6. Local infrastructure

Considerations:

1. Principle

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012) acknowledges the role that residential uses play in successful town centres. Such uses are normally appropriate at first floor level, where retail uses would be less successful.

Subject to compliance with other relevant policies and guidelines and to overcoming the reasons for refusal of a comparable application in 2009, the development would be acceptable in principle.

2. Appearance

The site is sensitive in that it makes an important contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area when viewed from the front. The rear of the site is less significant and previous extensions to the building have not been sympathetic. The development would result in the demolition of recent single storey rear additions that cause harm to the appearance of the building and their replacement with more rational extensions with pitched roofs. The extensions would be set down from the ridge of the main building so as to appear subordinate and a condition would ensure that appropriate materials would be used. Views from the street would be very limited and the impact of the development on the appearance of the building and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area would be acceptable.

3. Neighbours

The nearest neighbour to the development would be the first floor flat at No 4. The extensions would be set in from the boundary with that flat and its nearest window to the development would also be set away from the shared boundary. The extensions would not bring the building any nearer to that window and whilst the depth of rear additions to No 6 would increase and would be visible from rear facing windows at the flat, the distance between it and the extensions would ensure that no harm would be caused to living conditions at that flat.

There is a small courtyard at No 4 that contains bathrooms facilities that are used by staff and customers of the ground floor use. It is understood that on weekends the occupier of the first floor flat uses it for hanging out washing. New first floor windows would be inserted that overlooked that space but given its predominately commercial character and small size, this would not cause harm to occupier at first floor to such an extent that would warrant the refusal of this planning application. To limit the level of overlooking of that space, a condition

would require that two of the site facing windows (serving a staff room) would be obscurely glazed.

Neighbours to the east would be separated from the site by a distance large enough to ensure that there would be no impact on living conditions there.

4. Living conditions

Rooms within all three of the flats would be of a good size and layout. A window serving a bedroom in the flat nearest to the boundary with No 4 would have a poorer outlook than might be preferred because of the depth of the proposed extensions that would be near to it. Outlook from this window would be further reduced if planning permission is granted for a proposed first floor extension at No 4, that is currently under consideration. However, the living/dining room at this flat would be large and would receive extremely good light and outlook. As a result, on balance, living conditions at this flat would be acceptable.

A previous application for two flats at the site was refused and one of the reasons was that no acoustic report had been submitted to demonstrate that the relationship between the ground floor use (and other near by uses) would be acceptable. As a result, a condition requiring the submission of a report prior to commencement is recommended.

5. Traffic and parking

No parking would be provided for occupiers of the flats but within this sustainable, town centre location and in the context of the size of the flats the level of demand for additional parking would be small. The applicant has identified what he feels would be over 200 available public parking spaces but this figure has been challenged by the owner of the neighbouring unit. Occupiers would not be able to park in the pub car park.

In location like town centres where there is public transport, public parking and parking restrictions to prevent inappropriate or illegal parking, it is less important that parking is provided for future occupiers, especially where flats would be small.

The Council's Design Guidance acknowledges that sites with good access to facilities and public transport may not require parking in line with the Council's normal standards and that over provision of car parking is less likely to encourage the use of alternative modes of transport.

The Council's Highways Officer has objected to the development on the grounds that no parking would be provided for future occupiers. This objection is acknowledged but on balance, the benefits of providing three good quality homes in a town centre location would outweigh the implications of no parking being provided. This is particularly so in the absence of any specific highway safety concerns being identified. It should be noted that a previous application for two flats at the site was not refused because of a lack of parking provision.

6. Local Infrastructure

A Unilateral Undertaking has been submitted that would seek to mitigate the

impacts of the development on existing local infrastructure. The contributions meet those set out in the Council's Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document and would be acceptable. The lack of such a submission was a reason for refusal in 2009 and that would be overcome here.

Recommendation:

That Planning Permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1 The development shall begin not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 All 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 and the approved rooflights shall be of a 'Conservation' style.

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.

- 3 **No development shall commence before details of waste and recycling storage and collection for the approved residential units at the site has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out as approved.**

Reason: To ensure that waste storage and collection arrangements are satisfactory.

- 4 **No development shall commence before an acoustic assessment has been submitted to and approved by the Council that sets out what measures would be introduced to prevent harm being caused to living conditions for future residents by the ground floor use of the building and uses at neighbouring sites. The development shall be carried out as approved.**

Reason: To safeguard living conditions for future occupiers.

- 5 The windows serving the first floor staff rest room shall be obscurely glazed and non-openable below a height of 1.7m from finished floor level and shall be permanently retained as such.

Reason: To protect living conditions at neighbouring properties.

- 6 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers P01 and P02.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

DECISION

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