

**4/01288/15/FUL - EXTENSION TO EXISTING BUILDING AT SOUTH WESTERN BOUNDARY TO FORM 2 NO 1 BED FLATS AT FIRST AND SECOND FLOOR LEVELS, AND ALTERATIONS TO ELEVATIONS.
263-265, HIGH STREET, BERKHAMSTED, HP4 1AB.
APPLICANT: Mr Freeth.**

[Case Officer - Emily Whittredge]

Summary

The application is recommended for approval.

Site Description

The application site is currently occupied by a 4-storey modern office building at the junction of Berkhamsted High Street and Park View Road, within the Berkhamsted Conservation Area. The building fronts onto the High Street and has a car park to the rear accessed from Park View Road. The car park boundary is heavily landscaped with hedges and mature trees.

The building is spread over four floors set into the slope of Park View Road; however, the lower ground floor is limited to the High Street aspect and the third floor is set within the pitched roof space and is served by roof lights.

Proposal

The application seeks to construct a two storey extension to the south west elevation of the building, to provide two 1-bed flats. The extension would be two stories high, measuring 8.3 m wide and 9 m deep and would match the office building in appearance and detailing. A single storey bicycle store would adjoin the rear elevation, measuring 5.7m by 5.2m.

The application seeks to make alterations to the existing fenestration and exterior appearance of the building, including the replacement of the existing windows and doors with aluminium units, the replacement of roof lights, the addition of a small flat roofed dormer and the renewal of the existing roof with matching autoclaved slates.

Referral to Committee

The application is referred to the Development Control Committee due to the contrary views of Berkhamsted Town Council.

Planning History

4/01363/15/FU CHANGES TO EXISTING FENESTRATION AND NEW DORMER
L WINDOW
Granted
06/08/2015

4/01298/15/TC WORKS TO TREES
A

Raise no objection
27/05/2015

4/03712/14/OP CHANGE OF USE FROM B1A (OFFICE) TO C3 (RESIDENTIAL)
A

Prior approval not required
16/02/2015

4/02313/03/TC WORKS TO TREES
A

Raise no objection
19/11/2003

Constraints

Conservation Area
Area of Archaeological Importance
Town Centre
Residential Area
Former Land Use

Policies

National Policy Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
Planning Practice Guidance

Adopted Core Strategy

NP1 - Supporting Development
CS1 - Distribution of Development
CS4 - The Towns and Large Villages
CS8 - Sustainable Transport
CS11 - Quality of Neighbourhood Design
CS12 - Quality of Site Design
CS17 - New Housing
CS26 - Green Infrastructure
CS27 - Quality of the Historic Environment
CS28 - Renewable Energy
CS29 - Sustainable Design and Construction
CS31 - Water Management
CS32 - Air, Water and Soil Quality

Saved Policies of the Dacorum Borough Local Plan

57 – Provision and management of parking
58 – Private parking provision
120 - Development within conservation areas

Appendices 3 & 5

Supplementary Planning Guidance / Documents

Environmental Guidelines (May 2004)

Water Conservation & Sustainable Drainage (June 2005)

Energy Efficiency & Conservation (June 2006)

Accessibility Zones for the Application of Car Parking Standards (July 2002)

Advice Notes and Appraisals

Sustainable Development Advice Note (March 2011)

Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Berkhamsted

Summary of Representations

Trees and Woodlands:

I have no objection to the proposed extension of Salter House and the conversation of its use.

The construction of the rear extension and alterations to the car park will necessitate the removal of five trees but these are of low quality; removal has been recommended through application 4/1298/15/TCA.

There is limited scope to increase the level of landscaping within the plot.

Berkhamsted Town Council:

Object

The original objection remains. Contrary to Core Strategy Policies CS 11 because congestion is added to the local area and density will be increased and the extension and cycle store displaces car park space. The removal of shrubs and trees is contrary to Core Strategy Policy CS12

[Original objection: The proposal for the additional units is an over-development of the site which is accentuated by the removal of car provision, loss of amenity space and trees, all of which will have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area. Contrary to Core Strategy Policies CS 12 and CS 27 and Saved Local Plan Policy 120.]

Design and Conservation:

The property is located on the corner of High Street and Park View Road, within the Berkhamsted Conservation Area. It is a large c1980's office building of dark red brick construction with slate roof (and flat crown roof area) and brown stained timber windows. The Conservation Area appraisal refers to 263 – 265 High Street as being a 'negative' feature. The appraisal notes that 'the corner to Park View Road has particularly suffered from inappropriate modern development'.

This application proposes an extension to the existing building, to its southern end – on part of an area of land which is currently used as car park. The south west end of the

building and car parking is currently well screened by trees and shrubs, providing some landscaping and screening / softening to the building and contributing to the character of the conservation area.

The proposed extension is set back very slightly from the existing front and rear elevations but is still a large extension on to what is already a large building – and one that is considered detrimental to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The fenestration pattern does not follow through from the existing property.

However, if the [fenestration] enhancements were undertaken then I would likely consider the overall impact upon the Conservation Area of the extended building to be broadly neutral – the overall enhancements countering the impact of the extended Salter House.

Hertfordshire Highways:

Notice is given under article 18 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 that the Hertfordshire County Council as Highway Authority does not wish to restrict the grant of permission.

Contaminated Land:

In relation to the current application for an extension, I recommend that the developer be advised to keep a watching brief during ground works on the site for any potentially contaminated material. Should any such material be encountered, then the Council must be informed without delay, advised of the situation and an appropriate course of action agreed.

Response to Neighbour Notification / Site Notice / Newspaper Advertisement

None received.

Considerations

Principle of Development

The site is located in Berkhamsted Town Centre wherein a mix of uses is acceptable in principle. Policy BTC2 of the Berkhamsted Town Centre Strategy state that residential uses will be encouraged in the town centre through the encouragement of new residential uses and the encouragement of mixed uses, both in existing buildings and in new developments, as a contribution to the variety and character of the town centre.

New housing delivery in the Borough is set out in Policy CS17 of the Core Strategy, which aims to provide 430 net additional dwellings each year up to 2031. The proposed development would not result in a loss of employment or office space. The principle of development therefore accords with the development plan.

Impact on the Street Scene and the Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area

The existing building is defined in the Berkhamsted Conservation Area Appraisal as

having a negative impact on the conservation area. The external alterations proposed would improve the appearance of the exterior of the building through the replacement of windows, roof lights and doors with more modern units, the addition of French windows and balustrades to the fenestration, the addition of coloured render to sections of the facade and new metal railings to the street scene elevations. These additions will both soften the appearance of the building and enhance its impact on the conservation area. Details of materials, including colours, are to be required by condition to ensure a sympathetic finished appearance.

The proposed extension would include these same elements of detailing. The extension would increase the length of the building and its frontage on Park View Road, by a relatively modest 8 metres at the lowest height of the building. In the context of the existing building, which does not follow the historic fine grain of development, the proposed limited increase in size is not considered to warrant a refusal of the application under Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy. Although the extension of the building alone could not be said to result in an enhancement to the area, on balance, the development will improve the appearance of the existing building, thereby conserving and enhancing the character and appearance of the conservation area.

The NPPF states that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Policy CS27 states that:

development will positively conserve and enhance the appearance and character of conservation areas. Negative features and problems identified in conservation area appraisals will be ameliorated or removed.

On balance the proposed development would not be detrimental to the conservation area, having a beneficial impact on its appearance and character. Policy CS17, which is also a material consideration, sets out the requirement for housing targets to be met and this proposal contributes to the housing supply.

Impact on Trees and Landscaping

An application for the removal of five trees within the car park behind the building was granted in May 2015 on the grounds that the tree officer did not consider any of the trees to be of sufficient quality to merit a TPO.

The current application does not propose the removal of any additional trees beyond these five. There is no proposal to remove any trees adjoining the highway or the remaining 3 trees in the middle of the car park.

The existing amenity land is already fully landscaped with hedges and there is very little opportunity to provide additional landscaping within the site.

Impact on Highway Safety

The Highway Authority raises no objection to the proposed development on highway safety grounds. No changes are proposed to the existing access.

Car Parking

Appendix 5 of the Local Plan sets out the requirements for residential and non-residential car parking requirements within the borough.

The application site is within Zone 2 of the four “Accessibility Zones” defined in the Council’s parking SPG. New office developments in Zone 2 are required to provide 25-50% of the maximum demand-based standard. The maximum standard for B1(a) offices is 1 car parking space per 35 m² gfa. The existing offices have a floor area of approximately 1,518 m², which requires approximately 50.6 parking spaces. 25 to 50% of this requirement equates to 13 to 25 parking spaces, which is within the range being provided in the current application.

Dacorum's car parking standards normally require 1 parking space per 1-bed dwelling, although saved Local Plan Policy 58 states that car-free residential development may be considered in high accessibility locations. The proposed extension would result in a reduction of 10 parking spaces on the site, leaving 22 spaces plus 1 dedicated disabled parking space. Two spaces would be dedicated to the new development, leaving 20 spaces plus 1 disabled space for the office users. As outlined above, the minimum requirement is 13 spaces, which this proposal exceeds. A condition will be added to ensure that parking allocation/management is submitted and approved prior to occupation of the development.

In addition to car parking provision, the development would provide 22 cycle spaces within a cycle store adjacent to the proposed extension.

Impact on Neighbours and Residential Amenity

The nearest residential addresses are at Park View Court, and these would be separated from the development by the site's car park and a distance of 17 metres. The development would not cause a loss of privacy, overlooking or visual intrusion to any neighbour. The development therefore complies with Policy CS12 in this respect.

No private outdoor amenity space has been provided for the flats, which is reasonable for 1-bedroom flats in a town centre location. The canal and recreation ground are located within walking distance of the site, providing adequate amenity for future occupiers.

Sustainability

A sustainability checklist was submitted with the application demonstrating that the principles of Policy CS29 have been considered and will be incorporated in the development. The requirements of Policy CS29 have therefore been met.

Contaminated Land

Although no contamination report was submitted with the current application, a report was undertaken on the site by the same applicant earlier this year. The findings indicated no potential sources of contamination present on the site. The contaminated land officer has recommended that the applicant keep a watching brief on the site.

CIL

Policy CS35 requires all developments to make appropriate contributions towards infrastructure required to support the development. These contributions will normally extend only to the payment of CIL where applicable. The Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) was adopted in February 2015 and came into force on the 1st July 2015. This application is CIL Liable.

The Charging Schedule clarifies that the site is in Zone 1 within which a charge of £250 per square metre is applicable to this development. The CIL is calculated on the basis of the net increase in internal floor area. CIL relief is available for affordable housing, charities and Self Builders and may be claimed using the appropriate forms.

Conclusions

The proposed extension and improvements to the external appearance of the building would, on balance, positively conserve the conservation area while providing two new residential units to the borough in an accessible, town centre location.

RECOMMENDATION – That the application be **DELEGATED** to the Group Manager, Development Management and Planning with a view to approval subject to the consultation response of Herts County Council and the addition of any archaeological conditions they may recommend.

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.**

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 (1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 Notwithstanding the details shown on the plans hereby approved, no development shall take place until details of the colour of the window cills, doors and window frames to be used in the development hereby permitted shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the Conservation Area in accordance with Policy CS27 of the Dacorum Core Strategy and Policy 120 of the Local Plan.

INFORMATIVE: For the avoidance of doubt, this approval does not extend to the proposed colour (white) of the window cills, doors and window frames.

- 3 No development shall take place until details of the roof lights to be used in the development hereby permitted shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the Conservation Area in accordance with Policy CS27 of the Core Strategy and Policy 120 of the Local Plan.

- 4 **The roof slates and face brickwork to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the extension hereby permitted shall match in size, colour and texture those used on the existing building.**

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development in accordance with Policy CS12 and CS27 of the Core Strategy and Policy 120 of the Local Plan.

- 5 **The development hereby permitted shall not be occupied until the arrangements for vehicle parking for the new dwellings shall have been provided in accordance with plans submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, and they shall not be used thereafter otherwise than for the purposes approved.**

Reason: To ensure the adequate and satisfactory provision of off-street vehicle parking facilities in accordance with Policy 58 of the Local Plan.

- 6 **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:**

Site Location Plan
10 B, 11 B, 12 B, 13 B, 14 A, 15 A
14870 CV 10, 11, 12, 14, UG 01
Block Plan

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

CONTAMINATED LAND INFORMATIVES:

The developer is advised to keep a watching brief during ground works on the site for any potentially contaminated material. Should any such material be encountered, then the Council must be informed without delay, advised of the situation and an appropriate course of action agreed.