

MEETING:	PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE:	15 JUNE 2011
TITLE OF REPORT:	<p>DMS/110564/CD - CHANGE OF USE AND SHOP FRONT ALTERATION TO PROVIDE A COUNCIL INFORMATION CENTRE, ALONG WITH SOME INTERNAL ALTERATIONS AT FRANKLIN HOUSE, 4 COMMERCIAL ROAD, HEREFORD, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR1 2AZ.</p> <p>For: Mr Williams per Mr Philip Parker, Caburn House Brooks Road, Lewes, East Sussex, BN27 2BY.</p>

Date Received:

Ward: Central

Grid Ref: 351254,240208

Expiry Date: 12 May 2011

Local Member: Councillor MAF Hubbard

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 Franklin House is a post war commercial building (1960's), which occupies a prominent corner position between the junction of Commercial Road and Blueschool Street to the north east of Hereford City Centre. The site is within the Central Shopping and Commercial Area, the Hereford Area of Archaeological Interest and is adjacent to an ancient monument (City Wall, ramparts and ditch). The building is on the edge of the Edgar Street Grid Masterplan Area and is a key frontage within the Catherine Street Area of the Masterplan. The site was last used as a retail unit at ground floor with offices to the upper floors. The area is predominantly commercial, with the site forming a large unit within the secondary shopping frontage, as defined in the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.
- 1.2 It is proposed to change the use of the building from a retail unit (Use Class A1) to a Council Information Centre in order to relocate the services currently provided at Garrick House. The proposed use falls within Use Class A2. The proposal includes alterations to the existing shop front and internal works. Externally it is proposed to provide roller shutter doors to the existing recessed doors facing Blueschool Street and to provide a new corner door and windows, with ramped access to the main entrance into the building, on the corner of Blueschool Street and Commercial Road. Internally the alterations generally comprise removal of internal walls and re-organisation of the layout. Secure, covered cycle parking for 20 cycles is proposed to the rear of the building in an existing car park, with access gained off Blueschool Street.

2. Policies

- 2.1 National Planning Policy:

- PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development
- PPS4 - Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
- PPS5 - Planning for the Historic Environment

2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan:

- S1 - Sustainable Development
- S2 - Development Requirements
- S5 - Town Centres and Retail
- S7 - Natural and Historic Heritage
- DR1 - Design
- DR2 - Land Use and Activity
- TCR1 - Central Shopping and Commercial Areas
- TCR2 - Vitality and Viability
- TCR4 - Secondary Shopping Frontages
- TCR6 - Non-Retail Uses (Classes A2 & A3)
- HBA6 - New Development within Conservation Areas
- ARCH7 - Hereford AAI
- T11 - Parking Provision

2.3 Other Material Considerations:

Edgar Street Masterplan 2008

3. Planning History

- 3.1 CE2003/2985/F – Installation of telecommunications equipment, comprising 3 antennas, 2 transmission dishes, cabinet equipment and associated ancillary equipment – Refused 25 November 2003, Appeal withdrawn.
- 3.2 CE2004/0691/F – Installation of telecommunications, equipment comprising 1 flag pole antennae, 2 wall mounted antenna, 1 transmission dish, cabinet equipment and associated ancillary equipment – Approved 21 April, 2004.
- 3.3 CE2005/2017/F – Face mounted microcell antennae and associated equipment – Approved 10 August 2005.
- 3.4 S/101842F – Change of use from retail A1 to mixed use (retail A1 and non-residential institute D1) – Approved 31 August 2010.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 None.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Traffic Manager: No objection but recommends conditions.
- 4.3 Conservation Manager: The proposals would have a minimal impact on the exterior of the building. No objection to the roller shutters, but their design should be of a lattice style and not solid, to ensure that there are views through the building.
- 4.4 Environmental Health Manager: No issues with regards anti-social behaviour.

Further information on the subject of this report is available from C L Atkins (Mrs) on 01432 260536

4.5 Hereford Futures: The site falls within the Catherine Street Area of the Masterplan, which is envisioned to accommodate a wide variety of land uses appropriate to its city centre location. The proposed use complies with the Masterplan and will ensure the continued vitality and viability of the city centre. The application is supported.

4.6 County Archaeologist: No objection on the basis that the proposal is for a change of use which does not involve any excavation within the Hereford AAI.

5. Representations

5.1 Hereford City Council: No objections.

5.2 A letter of objection has been received from David Edwards of Confetti Bridalwear Specialist. The main points raised are:

- Blueschool Street will no longer have any shops, why would anyone venture this way?
- Have been threatened with closure, demolition for years.
- Building should be retained as a shop as it was intended and used since it was built.

5.3 A Design and Access Statement was submitted with the application. In summary this states:

- The Information Centre proposed would provide a front line service to Council clients and would be used by a cross section of Council Services
- The removal and replacement of the main corner entrance is required to provide a main access to Council services, which is accessible as required by Part M of the Building Regulations
- Tactile paving and slip resistant finishes are proposed
- Internal remodelling and change of use is required to provide a single and effective point of contact for Council services in a town centre location
- Letting of the premises for shop use has been unsuccessful
- Franklin House retail unit has been empty since 25 March 2009. It has been advertised for let through the property register, the internet and boards placed within the premises. There has been some interest for A3 uses (cafes and restaurants) however the investment required cannot be justified on a short term lease that is offered, due to the future planned demolition of the building as part of the city redevelopment

5.4 The applicant has provided data to demonstrate the number of customers that use the Council Services at Garrick House. In summary this states:

- The office is open Monday – Thursday 8.45am – 5.15pm, Friday 8.45am – 4.45pm and Saturday 9am – 1pm
- 3,757 enquiries were made in person at Garrick House in a 5.5 day week (week commencing 4 April 2011)

5.5 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Committee meeting.

6. Officer's Appraisal

6.1 The main considerations in the determination of this application are the impact of the development on the vitality and viability of the city centre, the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, the Hereford Area of Archaeological Interest and Scheduled Ancient Monument.

- 6.2 The Unitary Development Plan seeks to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of Hereford City Centre. The site is within a secondary shopping frontage, in respect of which Policy TCR4 applies. Policy TCR4 sets out the permitted ratio of retail use to non-retail in a given frontage. It states that the proposed use should not result in a continuous frontage of more than two non-retail units and would not cause the proportion of non-retail uses to exceed 50%.
- 6.3 Franklin House is a prominent corner premises with predominantly Use Class A uses in a frontage along Commercial Road, which continues from the application site to Monkmoor Street. In this frontage there are a range of A1 (retail), A2 (financial and professional services) and A5 (hot food takeaway) uses. Either side of Franklin House there are retail units and consequently the proposal would not result in a continuous frontage of more than two non-retail units. Presently the frontage has a percentage of 71% retail uses and as proposed this would reduce to 64%. This clearly satisfies the percentage ratio stipulated in the policy.
- 6.4 In support the applicant has advised that despite marketing efforts the premises have been vacant for over two years. Permission was granted in 2010 for the change of use to a mixed use (retail A1 and non-residential institutions D1). This permission remains valid, but has not been implemented. The applicant has suggested that the failure to let the premises is due to the short lengths of the leases available due to the future potential demolition of the building as part of the city centre regeneration. With regards the footfall to the unit, on the basis of the submitted figures this would be likely to exceed those that could be expected at a retail unit of this size. It is considered that the proposed use would encourage the public to Commercial Road, with the potential for them to combine this with use of the existing businesses nearby. In this sense there would be potential improvements to the vitality of businesses in the immediate vicinity.
- 6.5 Turning to the impact upon the Conservation Area, Policy HBA6 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan states that development will not be permitted unless it preserves or enhances its character and appearance. Relatively modest alterations are proposed to the building to accommodate the proposed use. The main alterations would be to provide roller shutter doors to the existing recessed doors facing Blueschool Street and to provide a new corner door and windows, with ramped access to the main entrance. In the context of this 1960's building, the alterations are considered to respect the character and appearance of the host building and preserve the established character and appearance of the area. The Conservation Manager has no objections, but recommends that further details in respect of the roller shutter doors are submitted and approved to ensure that they are appropriate to the building and would not have a harmful affect on the street scene. It is considered acceptable to control this by a condition.
- 6.6 There would be no impact upon the Hereford Area of Archaeological Interest and the adjacent Scheduled Ancient Monument.
- 6.7 Secure, covered cycle parking is proposed for the site for both employees and visiting members of public. The site is in close proximity to a bus stop, the County Bus Station and the railway station lies within walking distance to the north east. Within the area there are a number of public car parks. In light of this the site is considered to be accessible by different modes of transport and could also encourage linked trips, in line with wider sustainability objectives.
- 6.8 In conclusion, the proposal is considered to accord with planning policies and accordingly the application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1. **A01 Time limit for commencement (full permission)**
- 2. **B03 Amended plans**
- 3. **The colour of the new aluminium fenestration surrounds shall match the existing.**

Reason: To ensure that the finished colour of the fenestration is appropriate for the building and the Conservation Area and to comply with Policy HBA6 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

- 4. **Prior to the installation of the roller shutter doors manufacturer's details of their design and colour shall be submitted to and approved in writin by the local planning authority. The approved shutter doors shall be installed as approved and thereafter maintained.**

Reason: To ensure that the doors are appropriate for hte building and the Conservation Area and to comply with Policy HBA6 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

- 5. **The change of use hereby approved shall not commence until the secure, covered cycling parking provision has been installed in accordance with the approved amended plan (378140/A/101 P3) and approved manufacturer's details.**

Reason: To ensure that there is adequate provision for secure cycle accommodation within the application site, encouraging alternative modes of transport in accordance with both local and national planning policy and to conform with the requirements of Policy DR3 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

INFORMATIVES:

- 1. **N15 Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC**

Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DMS/110564/CD

SITE ADDRESS : FRANKLIN HOUSE, 4 COMMERCIAL ROAD, HEREFORD, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR1 2AZ

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