

WAN/5508/2 – Mr Ronald Potter. Proposed change of use of offices to 2 residential units and 1 retail unit. 15 Market Place, Wantage, OX12 8BQ

The Proposal

1. This application seeks permission to change the use of 15 Market Place, Wantage from office/training use to a one bedroom residential unit and a shop on the ground floor and a two bedroom residential unit on the first floor. The application proposes alterations to the existing ground floor frontage to create a shop front with a central door. The existing front door would serve the proposed flats. No other external alterations are proposed.
2. The property is a modern brick building of limited architectural merit fronting onto a small pedestrian precinct adjacent to the post office. The unit is currently vacant and has been for approximately two years.
3. The site is located in the Wantage Conservation Area and in the secondary shopping frontage as defined on the local plan proposals map.
4. Extracts from the application drawings are at **Appendix 1**.
5. The application comes to committee as Wantage Town Council objects.

Planning History

6. Various external alterations in the 1980's.

Planning Policies

Vale of White Horse Local Plan 2011

7. Policy S4 relates to non-retail uses in Wantage town centre and enables other uses including residential accommodation above ground floor level.
8. Policy S3 relates to development within the secondary shopping frontage, and enables non-retail uses on the ground floor frontage specifically within classes A2, A3 and entertainment uses providing they do not cumulatively with other non-retail uses cause harm to the function, character or appearance of the frontage concerned or to the town centre as a whole.
9. Policy S6 seeks to ensure that the upper floors of commercial and retail premises are utilised to prevent them falling into disrepair. The policy encourages specific provision for the maintenance of upper floors by improving access.
10. Policies DC1 and DC5 relate to the design of new development and parking considerations.

Consultations

11. Wantage Town Council – “The council objects to the change of use as it will result in the loss of a commercial outlet in the town centre. The proposed change would also result in additional on-street parking.”
12. One letter of comment has been received from the adjacent Independent Advice Centre raising concern over the potential occupant of the shop unit and that some uses such as a takeaway, off licence or betting shop would offer the potential for people to congregate and intimidate or deter their clients. (NB most of these uses would fall within a different use class to a shop and therefore would need planning permission to occupy the premises.)

Officer Comments

13. Planning policies for town centres seek to encourage and retain retail uses in order to maintain the vitality of these areas. Whilst the site is not within the primary retail frontage where retail uses are protected on the ground floor, the policy for secondary frontages, in which this site falls, also emphasises the retail function of town centres but allows other uses providing they do not cumulatively affect the vitality of the town centre.
14. Whilst this application would result in the loss of some commercial floor space previously used as offices and training, the proposal would result in a new retail unit within the town centre which complies with policies which seek to maintain the vitality of the town centre. Your officers consider this a benefit which outweighs any loss in office space particularly as there are no policies which protect office uses in this area.
15. The proposed residential uses would ensure that the rear ground floor area and upper floor of the building are utilised and maintained in accordance with policy S6. In addition, Policy S4 encourages residential uses above ground floor premises in the town centre.
16. The proposal includes a small yard area to the rear which provides some outside amenity space for the ground floor unit. There are a number of other residential units on the upper floors of other buildings adjacent to the site.
17. Given the town centre location of these two residential units, together with the fact that the previous office and training use would have generated significantly more traffic, officers do not consider that the lack of parking provision could reasonably justify refusal.
18. A condition is recommended requiring details of bin storage which could be located within the proposed outside space.

Recommendation

that planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1 TL1 – Time Limit***
- 2 Prior to the commencement of the development hereby permitted full details of the proposed shop front including external materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved details.***
- 3 Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved full details of the proposed bin storage for the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved details.***