
APPLICATION NO.	11/02719/COU
APPLICATION TYPE	Change of use
REGISTERED	21 November 2011
PARISH	Abingdon
WARD MEMBER(S)	Julie Mayhew-Archer; Tony de Vere
APPLICANT	Auger Investments Plc
SITE	Newsagent 24 High Street Abingdon OX14 5AX
PROPOSAL	Change of use of existing shop to A2 use
AMENDMENTS	None
GRID REFERENCE	449655 197048
OFFICER	James Walker

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application comes to committee as Abingdon Town Council objects.
- 1.2 The application site is three storey terraced grade II listed building located on the south side of High Street, Abingdon comprising a vacant shop unit at ground floor level and residential accommodation above. The site lies within the primary shopping frontage within the Abingdon town centre policy area, and also within the Abingdon Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 1.3 The site plan is **attached** at appendix 1.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.1 This application seeks planning permission for the change of use of the class A1 retail unit on the ground floor to a class A2 use (financial and professional services).
- 2.2 No external or internal works to the building are proposed.
- 2.3 Extracts of the application drawings are **attached** at appendix 2.

3.0 CONSULTATIONS & REPRESENTATIONS

- 3.1 Abingdon Town Council objects:
“It was noted that 24 High Street is classified as primary shopping frontage in the proposals map which is part of the Vale of White Horse District adopted Local Plan 2011. The town council objects to the loss of the primary shopping frontage and retail use at this property and the consequent change to A2 use, on the grounds that this is a contravention of policy S2 (primary shopping frontage) of the Local Plan.”

4.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 None on the application site.
- 4.2 Application no. 97/01246/COU at 22 High Street, the adjacent premises to the east: Planning permission was refused for the change of use from retail to a betting shop (class A2), but was subsequently allowed on appeal in 1998.
- 4.3 Application no. 11/00913/COU at 7 – 9 High Street, premises further to the east of the site on the opposite side of High Street:
Planning permission was refused for the change of use from retail to financial and professional services (class A2), but was subsequently allowed on appeal in November 2011.

5.0 POLICY & GUIDANCE

- 5.1 Policy S2 of the adopted Vale of White Horse Local Plan (primary shopping frontages) states that, in the primary shopping frontages of Abingdon, proposals which involve a net loss of class A1 shopping floorspace at ground floor level will not be permitted.

6.0 PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 6.1 The only relevant planning consideration is whether the principle of the proposed change of use is acceptable.
- 6.2 The proposed change of use is contrary to local plan policy S2 which requires the retention of all class A1 retail floor space at ground floor level within the primary shopping frontages of Abingdon town centre in order to underpin the shopping function of the town centre and so retain its character, vitality and viability. This site lies within the primary shopping frontage shown on the local plan proposals map.
- 6.3 However, it needs to be noted that planning permission for the change of use of the adjacent premises, 22 High Street, to a betting shop was allowed on appeal in 1998. The inspector's decision letter said that the site appeared to be on the edge of the primary shopping frontage and was not part of the main pedestrian flows in the town centre, which were instead to the east of West St Helen's Street. In addition, the change of use from retail to class A2 of nos. 7 – 9 High Street was allowed on appeal in November 2011. The inspector in that case said that the focus of town centre activity is at the east end of High Street, towards Market Square and the Abbey Shopping Centre. Given this, the site could no longer reasonably be considered as primary shopping frontage, with little prospect of this changing in the future. The current application site is some distance further west of nos. 7 – 9 High Street and, therefore, it is even further away from that part of the town centre where retail activity is now found to be mainly focused.
- 6.4 In addition, the application premises are currently vacant and have been so for approximately two years. In this time, marketing has been conducted by way of a sign board fixed to the front of the premises, details circulated to 32 commercial estate agents in Oxfordshire and 250 commercial estate agents in London, and advertising on the Retail Shops website run by Propex. The applicant has confirmed that the only interest received has been from class A2, A3 (restaurants and cafes) and A5 (hot food take-aways) enterprises. This indicates that a class A1 use in this location is not viable and that the unit is likely to remain vacant should planning permission be refused, which would be more harmful to the vitality of the town centre than permitting the proposed change of use.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed change of use to from class A1 (retail) to class A2 (financial and professional services) would not harm the character, vitality and viability of Abingdon town centre in this instance, and so is considered acceptable.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 **That planning permission is granted subject to the following condition:**

1. TL1 – Time limit

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