

UTT/1629/11/FUL – (SAFFRON WALDEN)

(Referred to Committee by Cllr Doug Perry. Reason: Impact on the community and street scene)

PROPOSAL: Change of use from A2 to dwelling

LOCATION: 53 High Street, Saffron Walden

APPLICANT: Mr and Mrs Walker

AGENT: Hibbs and Walsh Associates

GRID REFERENCE: TL537383

EXPIRY DATE: 17 October 2011

CASE OFFICER: Nicholas Ford

1.0 NOTATION

1.1 Within Development Limits. Grade II* Listed Building. Conservation Area. Air Quality Management Zone. Flood Risk Zone. Groundwater Protection Zone.

2.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

2.1 53 High Street is a Grade II* listed building of early 19th Century construction. It was formerly a dwellinghouse, doctor's surgery, solicitor's office (A2) and office. It is substantially of stuccoed brickwork with some red and gault brick and slate roofs. There is a three storey main block with cellars and a two storey ancillary range. Glazing features sash windows of varying styles.

2.2 There is undercroft access from the High Street to a rear yard which is used for open parking and this is surrounded by an historic high brick wall.

3.0 PROPOSAL

3.1 The application proposes change of use of the rear portion of the building from office to dwelling. The front of the building would remain as office accommodation approved through recent planning permission and listed building consent.

3.2 The rear yard would be arranged to provide a private rear garden for the dwelling bounded by new 1.8 metre and 1 metre close boarded fencing.

4.0 APPLICANTS CASE

4.1 See Design and Access Statement.

5.0 RELEVANT SITE HISTORY

5.1 UTT/2165/10/FUL approved 2 February 2011 - External steps, new rear entrance door with porch and new window.

5.2 UTT/2119/10/LB approved 2 February 2001 - Internal and external alterations.

5.3 UTT/0723/11/FUL approved 23 June 2011 - Change of use from A2 office to C3 flat.

6.0 POLICIES

6.1 **National Policies**

- PPS4 (Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth)
- Policy PPS5 (Planning for the Historic Environment)
- Policy PPS25 (Development and Flood Risk)

6.4 Uttlesford District Local Plan 2005

- Policy S1 (Development Limits for the Main Urban Areas)
- Policy SW1 (Town Centre)
- Policy GEN2 (Design)
- Policy GEN4 (Good Neighbourliness)
- Policy GEN8 (Vehicle Parking Standards)
- Policy ENV1 Design of Development within Conservation Areas
- Policy ENV2 (Development affecting Listed Buildings)

7.0 TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS

- 7.1 Object. Commercial use in the town centre should be retained for the future. Lack of parking. Intrusive.

8.0 CONSULTATIONS

Access Officer

- 8.1 There is limited scope for conversion to meet Lifetime Homes. Access to the ground floor w.c. should be retained as a condition to ensure provision for future residents.

Drainage Engineer

- 8.2 The proposal is located in Flood Risk Zone 3 and is for a change of use from less vulnerable to more vulnerable development as defined by PPS25. The Environment Agency should be consulted.

Veolia Water

- 8.3 Provides advice for the developer in relation to construction and the groundwater protection zone.

Environmental Health

- 8.4 No comments.

Building Control

- 8.5 No comments.

Environment Agency

- 8.6 To be reported.

Conservation Officer

- 8.7 The proposal subject of this application is to return part of this structure to its former residential use. This project has been carefully considered at pre-application stage with input from English Heritage and Conservation Specialists. The final proposal appears to incorporate views expressed.

The proposed change of use would result in some very sensitive internal alterations mostly relating to the formation of a suitable party wall carrier between the new residential use and the

office use at the front of the building. Most significant would be the re-aliment of the rear staircase. As the historical origin of the existing arrangement is open to debate, I find the proposed remodelling on balance acceptable as a vehicle in providing a new and long lasting use for the building in economically secure environment. The other alteration involves introduction of minor partitions, blocking of doorways or formation of an occasional new door, all of which would not be critical to the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building. I have some concern over the poor quality of the boundary definition within the newly created rear garden. Close boarded fencing is usually unattractive and is likely to be damaging to the setting of the listed building. Within Saffron Walden there are numerous examples of traditional treatment to garden boundaries in a form of good quality garden brick walls or railings on dwarf walls. I suggest a condition which would require submission of details relating this issue and no historic fabric to be cut or removed without inspection and consent.

English Heritage

8.8 Sub-division of land to the rear of the house may be necessary, given the nature of the proposal. This could be effected, however, in a manner more sympathetic to the character of the house than is proposed. Hedging, for example, might be preferable to close boarded fencing.

Planning Policy

8.9 The recently-published Employment Land Review (ELR) essentially deals with employment uses which do not include offices that it is appropriate to locate in a shopping area (i.e. those which are readily available to members of the public). Hence, the ELR is not relevant in this respect.

9.0 REPRESENTATIONS

9.1 One. Notice period expired 17 October 2011.

9.2 53A High Street - Little Marketing information submitted, there is a prospective tenant interested in leasing. PPS4 encourages economic provision in town centres. Not in accordance with Employment Land Review which identifies a need for new office floor space in Saffron Walden and retention of existing floor space. The amenity space would be messy and the dwelling overlooked. Close boarded boundary fencing would harm setting of the building and obscure the bay window. There would be loss of light and outlook to 53A due to the proximity of the fence.

10.0 APPRAISAL

10.1 The issues to consider in the determination of the application are:

- Whether the use is acceptable in this town centre location (ULP Policies S1, SW1, GEN4 and the Employment Land Review).
- Whether the development would preserve the setting of the listed building and the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, and provide for adequate parking (PPS5 and ULP Policies ENV1, ENV2, GEN1, GEN2 and GEN8).
- Whether the development would preserve the amenity of adjacent properties (ULP Policy GEN2)

10.2 The proposal would provide for domestic accommodation (three bedrooms) over three floors plus basement for the rear portion of the property. Representation is noted concerning the loss of office space. There is no policy that is specifically relevant for loss of office space in town centres and it is relevant that the principle of change of use to residential for part of this building has been accepted. Planning Policy team has advised that the Employment Land Review is not relevant to offices in town centres and there is no requirement for prior marketing as a demonstration of no demand. As such there is considered to be no objection to the principle of residential use here.

10.3 The garden provide for the dwelling would be in excess of 100 sqm and would as such provide adequate amenity space for occupiers.

10.4 A submitted drawing indicates 21 existing parking spaces in the rear yard although these are not formally laid out. The proposed layout drawing indicates this reduced to 13 spaces. The extant permission for change of use from A2 to a two bedroom flat above the carriageway has a condition requiring parking of two spaces for occupants. These were not allocated in the application and the location was to be agreed by condition.

10.5 The remaining office floor space would comprise about 270 sqm thus requiring parking provision of 9 spaces (maximum standard). The submitted layout indicates 6 usable parking spaces for office use, with a further three allocated for use by 53A under existing user agreement and two for use by the new dwelling. This is considered an acceptable number for office use by virtue of the central location of the building in the town centre with publicly available parking.

10.6 With regard amenity and the representation raised in this regard it is considered that the fencing surrounding the meeting room of 53A would not be so oppressive given the separation and it is noted that this is not habitable space and so there would not be significant impact through overbearing or shadowing.

7.0 CONCLUSION

The following is a summary of the main reasons for the recommendation:

7.1 Subject to conditions the change of use of part of the building to dwelling would accord with planning policies.

RECOMMENDATION – CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this decision.

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

2. Subject to the requirements of condition 4 of this permission, the development hereby permitted shall be implemented in all respects strictly in accordance with the approved plans as set out in the Schedule.

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt as to the nature of the development hereby permitted, to ensure development is carried out in accordance with the approved application details, to ensure that the development is carried out with the minimum harm to the local environment, in accordance with Policies S1, SW1, ENV1, ENV2, GEN1, GEN2 and GEN8 of the Uttlesford Local Plan (adopted 2005).

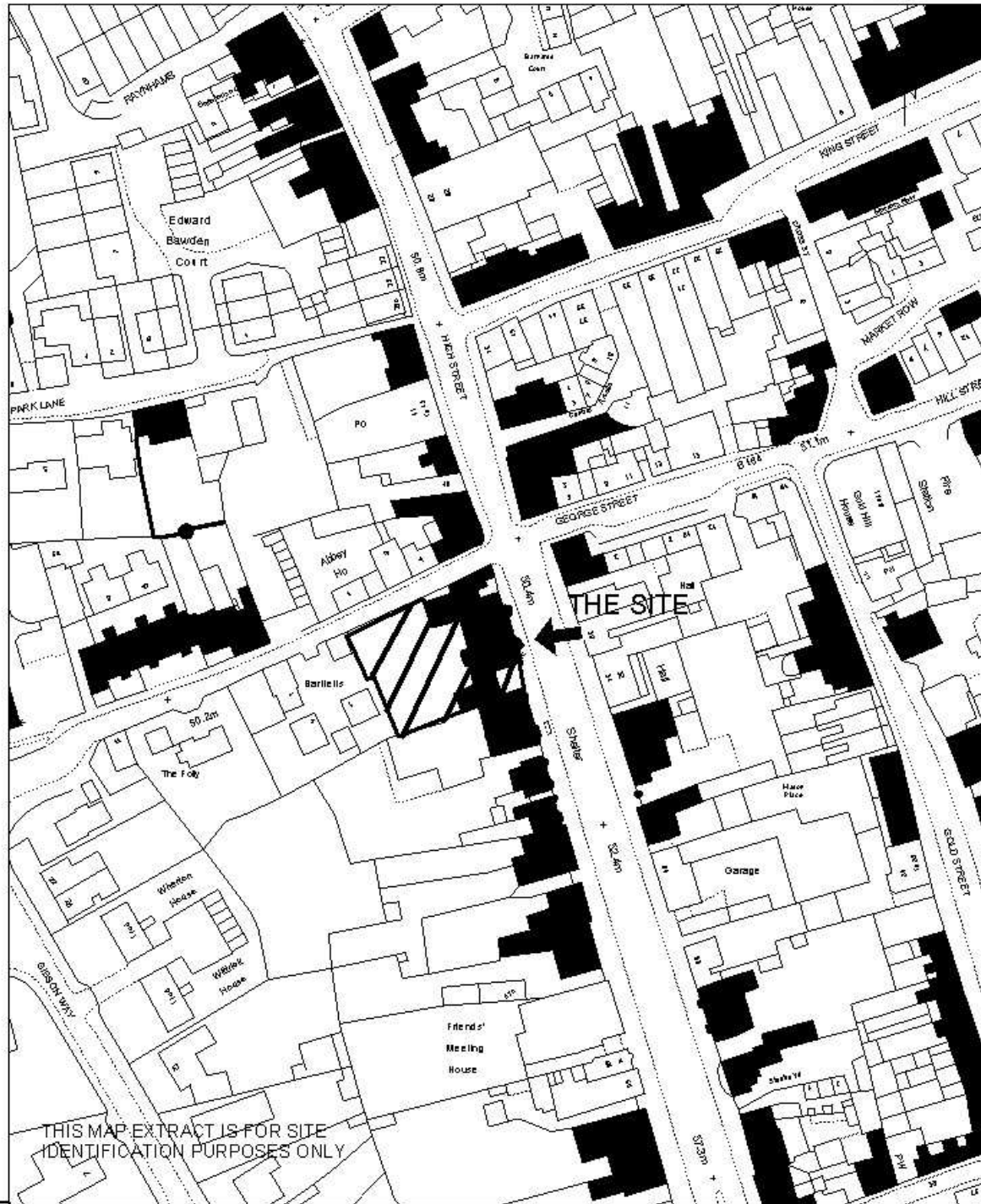
3. The ground floor w.c. shall be retained for use by occupiers of the dwelling hereby permitted.

REASON: In order to ensure compliance with Lifetime Homes standards.

4. Before development commences a revised plan shall be submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing showing the following amendments which shall be incorporated into the design for the development hereby permitted and the permission shall be implemented in accordance with the amendments listed below:

Submission of a scheme of boundary treatment to the proposed rear garden.

REASON: Close boarded fencing is unsympathetic to the character of the building and traditional treatment is required in order to preserve the setting of the listed building in accordance with Policy ENV2 of the Uttlesford Local Plan adopted 2005 and PPS5.



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