

<b>APPLICATION NO.</b>	P07/E0450
<b>APPLICATION TYPE</b>	FULL
<b>REGISTERED PARISH</b>	30 MARCH 2007 HENLEY
<b>WARD MEMBER(S)</b>	Terry Bucket and Roswitha Myer
<b>APPLICANT SITE PROPOSAL</b>	Berkeley Homes Limited Hallmark House, Station Road, Henley Conversion of existing office space to residential use to provide 7 flats and provision of new glazed entrance lobby extension and side access security gate.
<b>AMENDMENTS</b>	One – extra space for recycling
<b>GRID REFERENCE</b>	476354/182303
<b>OFFICER</b>	Paul Lucas

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application is reported to the Planning Committee as a result of a conflict between the Planning Manager's recommendation and the views of Henley-on-Thames Town Council.
- 1.2 The application site is shown on the OS extract attached as **Appendix 1**. The application site consists of a 1980's brick built pitched roof three storey office building traditionally known as Hallmark House. It has been recently refurbished into 5 office suites and is currently being marketed as The Hub. The suites provide a total of 2065 square metres of office floorspace and have a shared covered parking area with 15 car parking spaces along with cycle parking. Hallmark House is situated at the junction of Station Road and the station approach road in the centre of Henley. The surrounding area is mixed in character, containing the railway station and other employment and residential uses. There are apartment developments at Hewgate Court, Imperial Court and a residential development is nearing completion on the northern side of the station.

## 2.0 THE PROPOSAL

The application seeks full planning permission for the conversion of one of the

- 2.1 office suites (450 square metres of internal office space) into seven self-contained flats. The proposal concerns the south-eastern wing of the building, which is closest to the station. This office suite is not accessed via the main refurbished entrance to the building for office purposes, unlike the four other suites. There would be four flats on the first floor of the building and three flats on the second floor. There would be four 1-bedroom apartments and three 2-bedroom apartments. There would be no physical changes to these floors and the flats would make use of the existing openings. The ground floor would be modified via an extension to provide a secure entrance to the existing staircase and to house refuse and recycling storage. Six of the existing parking spaces would be for the occupiers of the flats, there would be an area to store up to 14 bicycles and a lift would be provided. The flats would be accessed via an existing right of way that passes between Hallmark House and the railway station building.

- The applicant's supporting letter is attached as **Appendix 2**. The amended plans
- 2.2 of the proposed development are attached as **Appendix 3**.

### 3.0 **CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS**

- 3.1 **Henley Town Council** – The application should be refused due to inadequate parking in an already congested area and application is an addition to the original application for development of Hallmark Cards site and should be considered as combined development, which has a lack of affordable housing. Comments apply to both original and amended scheme.
- 3.2 **OCC Highways** – No objections subject to legal agreement providing financial contributions to the Henley ITS and towards public transport infrastructure and imposition of standard parking condition.
- 3.3 **OCC Developer Contributions** – No objection subject to legal agreement providing financial contributions towards Libraries, Waste Management, County Museum Resource Centre, Social & Health Care and Fire & Rescue.
- 3.4 **Environment Agency** – Flood risk assessment requested and submitted. No objection subject to imposition of standard flooding condition.
- 3.5 **Public Amenities** – Satisfied with refuse and recycling arrangements.
- 3.6 **Environmental Health (Contamination)** – No objection subject to imposition of standard contamination condition.

- 3.7 **Environmental Health (Noise)** – Noise survey requested and submitted. No objection subject to the imposition of conditions.
- 3.8 **Monson** – Environment Agency should comment as site within Flood Zone 2.
- 3.9 **Henley Society** – More appropriate location for offices than residential, parking is inadequate. Applies to both original and amended scheme.
- 3.10 **Neighbours** – Two letters expressing concerns about increased traffic.

#### 4.0 **RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY**

- 4.1 P06/E1024 – Planning permission for alterations to the existing building to create new entrance & glazed screen was granted in December 2006.
- 4.2 P05/E1256 – Planning permission for alterations to existing building to provide new canopy, additional access, cycle and car parking, and landscaping (including internal alterations to the existing building to provide smaller office suites). Retention of building without compliance to condition 8 of planning permission P82/S0678 to vary the car parking to serve the development was granted in February 2006.
- 4.3 Site to the north-east of the station: P05/E1270 – Planning permission for redevelopment of existing car park to provide 7 flats, 6 semi-detached houses and one detached house, 14 car parking spaces, cycle parking store, bin store, landscaping and access was granted in June 2006.

#### 5.0 **POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

##### 5.1 Adopted Structure Plan 2016 Policies:

- G1 – General Policies for Development
- G2 – Improving the Quality and Design of Development
- G3 – Infrastructure and Service Provision
- T8 – Development Proposals
- EN9 – Flood Risk and Surface Water Drainage
- E1 – Provision for Employment Development
- H1 – The Amount and Distribution of Housing
- H3 – Design, Quality and Density of Housing Development

##### 5.2 Adopted South Oxfordshire Local Plan 2011 Policies:

- G2 – Protection of the Environment
- G5 – Making the Best Use of Land
- G6 – Promoting Good Design

- D2 – Vehicle and Bicycle Parking
- D3 – Plot Coverage and Garden Areas
- D4 – Privacy and Daylight
- D6 – Design against Crime
- D8 – Energy, Water and Materials Efficient Design
- D10 – Waste Management
- D11 – Infrastructure and Service Requirements Policy
- H4 – Towns and Larger Villages Outside the Green Belt
- H7 – Housing Mix
- H8 – Dwelling Densities
- H9 – Affordable Housing
- E6 – Retention of Employment Sites
- T1 – Transport Requirements for New Developments

### 5.3 Supplementary Planning Guidance:

- South Oxfordshire Design Guide – Sections 4.2, 4.3, 4.4 and 4.5.

### 5.4 Government Guidance: PPS1, PPS3 and PPG13.

## 6.0 PLANNING ISSUES

### 6.1 The planning issues that are relevant to this application are whether:

- The principle of the development would be acceptable;
- The size and appearance of the proposal would be in keeping with the character and appearance of the surrounding area;
- The living conditions of neighbouring residential occupiers would be compromised and the development would provide suitable living conditions for future occupiers;
- The development would not result in an unacceptable deficiency of off-street parking spaces for the resultant dwellings or other conditions prejudicial to highway safety;
- Affordable housing should be provided;
- The development would have an appropriate mix of housing types;
- The proposal would incorporate sufficient sustainability measures; and
- Adequate contributions towards local infrastructure would be made.

### 6.2 Principle of Development

Criterion (i) of Policy E6 seeks to protect employment uses by only permitting conversions to non-employment uses for buildings under 500 square metres floorspace. The office area of the building to be converted would be less than 450 square metres and this would comply with the above criterion. The loss of employment space would be acceptable, however the applicant has been advised that any further conversion proposals would be assessed cumulatively in relation to the above criterion. The proposed residential use would be located within the

built-up area of Henley and consequently the proposal falls to be assessed against the criteria of Policy H4.

6.3

#### Character and Appearance

Criteria (ii) and (iii) of Policy H4 of the adopted Local Plan requires that the design, height, scale and materials of the proposed development to be in keeping with its surroundings and the character of the area is not adversely affected. The main physical changes to the building would be at the ground floor level. The building is well set back from the road and although a public footpath runs alongside the development, the extension and alterations would be discreet. There are several other similar types of apartment developments in the surrounding area. In light of this context the proposal would comply with the

6.4 above criteria.

#### Living Conditions

Criterion (iv) of Policy H4 of the adopted Local Plan requires that there are no overriding amenity objections. The nearest adjoining residential occupiers live in Hewgate Court, to the north of the site with the closest existing window to window distances being in the region of 22 metres. These distances are slightly less than the Council's normal standard of 25 metres, however, this relationship already exists and Officers consider that the change of use of the building from office to residential would lead to no appreciable increase in the perception of overlooking between the two properties. In fact, privacy may be improved as future residents are likely to introduce curtains and blinds to these windows, which is less likely if they remain in office use. The extension would be at single storey level and would be obscured from view from Hewgate Court by the lock-up garages adjacent to the boundary, so there would be no loss of light or outlook. The proposed flats would not benefit from any outdoor private amenity space, however this location is within easy walking distance of Mill Meadows and in these circumstances the lack of private gardens is considered to be acceptable. The flats would be located very close to the railway station. Following the submission of an acoustic report, the Council's Environmental Health Officer is satisfied that the living conditions of the future occupiers would not be compromised by the location as a result of noise nuisance, provided acoustic windows and passive or forced draught ventilation are conditioned. The internal room sizes for the resultant flats would be acceptable and they would be well served by external openings. On the basis of this assessment, the above criterion would be met.

6.5

## Highways and Parking

- Criterion (iv) of Policy H4 of the adopted Local Plan also requires that there are no overriding highway objections. The proposal would retain the existing access arrangements and would transfer six of the existing parking spaces from the remaining offices to the future residents and would provide an area of cycle parking. Although there would be a shortfall of one parking space relative to the maximum parking standards, this is a town centre location with good public transport links and the Highways Authority consider such a shortfall to be acceptable in this particular instance. Moreover the applicant has provided a financial contribution, via a Section 106 agreement, to the Henley ITS and public transport. Hence the above criterion would be met.

## Affordable Housing

- Policy H9 of the adopted Local Plan requires affordable housing to be sought on housing sites which are greater than 0.5ha or would accommodate 15 dwellings or more in Henley. In such situations 40% affordable housing will be sought. The development would provide 7 dwellings and would therefore not exceed the threshold. Henley Town Council has stated that this proposal should be considered in conjunction with the development to the north-east of the station, where 14 dwellings are under construction (see Paragraph 4.3 above). Whilst Berkeley Homes was also the applicant for P05/E1270, Officers are of the opinion that it would be unreasonable to consider the two sites together. Firstly, although the sites are close together and there was a historical connection in their use, they are physically distinct to the extent that either development could be implemented without reliance on the other. Secondly, P05/E1270 was purely a new build development, whereas the current application proposes solely a conversion. Thirdly, the houses and flats behind the station were largely completed at the time this application was submitted, which would make it difficult to spread the affordable units between the two developments. Notwithstanding these points, the applicant has been advised that, in the event of any future proposals for the conversion of any of the remaining office suites, the flats now proposed would be taken into account for the purposes of assessing affordable housing provision.

6.8

## Housing Mix

Policy H7 of the adopted Local Plan requires a suitable mix of housing to be

provided and the sub-text indicates that the Council will seek to ensure that developments of a net gain of two or more dwellings would contain 45% 2-bedroom dwellings. The proposal would provide three 2-bedroom dwellings, which would equate to 43%. Although the development would only contain smaller units, this is considered to be acceptable as the lack of private garden areas would make the accommodation less suitable for family accommodation.

## 6.9

### Sustainability Measures

Policy D8 of the adopted Local Plan requires proposals to incorporate sustainability measures in terms of energy, water and materials efficient design. The proposal involves an existing building and therefore the scope of energy efficient design is limited to improvements to the existing building fabric. Nonetheless, the development would be made more efficient by virtue of compliance with current building regulations and these measures would include energy efficient lighting, water efficient taps and showers and specified A-rated appliances in each apartment. Recycling facilities are also proposed in accordance with Policy D10, thus contributing to the objectives of Policy D8.

### Developer Contributions

The applicant has provided index-linked financial contributions towards Libraries, Waste Management, County Museum Resource Centre, Social & Health Care and Fire & Rescue via a Section 106 agreement, as requested by Oxfordshire County Council. This was completed on 18 July 2007.

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

7.1 The application proposal would comply with the relevant Development Plan policies, Supplementary Planning Guidance and Government Guidance and it is considered that, subject to the attached conditions, the proposed development would not materially harm the living conditions of nearby residents or the character and appearance of the area or result in conditions prejudicial to highway safety.

## 8.0 RECOMMENDATION

8.1 **That, planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:**

1. **Standard 3 year time limit**
2. **Samples of materials**
3. **Allocation of parking to flats prior to occupation and retention thereafter**

4. **Contamination to be investigated and mitigation measures if necessary**
5. **No spoil or materials stored on land liable to flood**
6. **Provision of acoustic windows and passive or forced draught ventilation**
7. **Cycle provision prior to occupation**
8. **Refuse and recycling facilities to be installed prior to occupation**

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