

3/09/0429/FP – Proposed conversion of offices to two self-contained flats at 9 Roydon Road, Stanstead Abbots for Mr. Guy Horlock

Date of Receipt: 24.03.09

Type: Full

Parish: STANSTEAD ABBOTTS

Ward: STANSTEAD ABBOTTS

Reason for report: Contrary to policy

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:-

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be begun within a period of three years commencing on the date of this notice.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The development hereby permitted shall only be carried out in accordance with the approved Flood Risk Assessment April 2009 and finished floor levels shall be set no lower than 300mm above the 1 in 100 year plus climate change flood level.

Reason: To reduce the risk of flooding to future occupants in accordance with policy ENV19 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

3. No development shall take place until a detailed scheme showing the proposed communal garden area to the rear of numbers 9 to 17 Roydon Road, together with details of the access to this area for occupants of the flats hereby permitted, has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Thereafter, the scheme shall be implemented in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of either of the two flats hereby permitted.

Reason: To ensure that a satisfactory standard of residential amenity is provided of the future occupiers of the residential units hereby permitted in accordance with policy ENV1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

Summary of Reasons for Decision

The proposal has been considered with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (East of England Plan May 2008, Hertfordshire County Structure Plan, Minerals Local Plan, Waste Local Plan and East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007), and in particular policies ENV1, EDE2, ENV19 and BH5. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies and the other material considerations in this case is that permission should be granted.

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract.
- 1.2 The site is a two-storey, end of terrace former dwellinghouse located at the entrance to the Maltings site in Stanstead Abbots. It was converted into office use approximately twenty years ago and has been used as five commercial units, four of which have been let to private companies, while the fifth was used as the security office for the site entrance. The garden to the unit has previously been removed, to allow the entrance to the Maltings site to be widened to improve vehicular access.
- 1.3 This application seeks permission to convert the property into two flats available for use by site staff working in the adjacent factory, which is a 24 hour operation.
- 1.4 The occupants of the exiting four business units have been offered new units within the Maltings buildings and have started to move into these. The fifth unit was the security office for the site, and the occupants are to be relocated to the purpose built office adjacent to the site, which has recently been granted planning permission.

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 The most relevant planning history in this case is as follows:-
- 2.2 3/89/1905/FP – Two storey rear extension and change of use of dwellinghouse to security office and offices in use class B1 – Refused but allowed on appeal.
- 2.3 3/92/0087/FP – Extension to office at ground and first floors – Granted March 1992.
- 2.4 3/93/0223/FO – Change of condition to allow unrestricted occupation of rooms – Granted April 1993

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2.5 3/09/0430/FP – New security cabin and other works – Approved May 2009

3.0 Consultation Responses

3.1 The County Archaeologist has no comments on the proposal.

3.2 The Environment Agency has recommended that finished floor levels at the site be set above the 1 in 100 predicted flood levels.

4.0 Parish Council Representations

4.1 Stanstead Abbots Parish Council has made no comment on this application.

5.0 Other Representations

5.1 The application has been advertised by way of site notice and direct neighbour consultation. No representations have been received as a result.

6.0 Policy

6.1 The Policies of the adopted East Herts Local Plan that are most relevant to the consideration of this application are as follows:

ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV19	Development in areas liable to flood
EDE2	Loss of Employment Sites
BH5	Extensions and Alterations to Unlisted Buildings in Conservation Areas

7.0 Considerations

7.1 The main issues to consider in this case are the loss of employment floorspace; impact on the surrounding area; and the suitability of the property for residential use.

Loss of employment use

7.2 Policy EDE2 requires applicants to fully explore the potential for reusing a site for employment purposes before an alternative use will be granted planning permission. In this case, however, officers consider that there are special circumstances to allow a departure from that policy. The terrace of properties of which this unit forms part has always been in the ownership of the company occupying the maltings, French & Jupps Ltd, since they were constructed in 1906. Whilst the majority of the terrace has been used for

residential purposes, this end of terrace property has been used more flexibly in recent years as business circumstances have changed. The office use of the property has in fact been in existence for only a small proportion of the time.

- 7.3 Four small office units would be lost as a result of this proposal, although the existing occupiers are to be relocated within the adjacent maltings buildings. This loss of floorspace should, in the view of Officers, be weighed against the other commercial needs of the business of which it forms part and which now requires an increasing number of staff to work the roasting drums and maintain the workshops and factory premises. The new accommodation would make staff jobs safer and more attractive, avoiding often long commuting distances.
- 7.4 Policy EDE 2 also indicates that a proposed re-use of an employment area will only be permitted where the proposed use does not have a significant impact on the amenity of the adjacent area or nearby occupiers. In this respect, Officers are satisfied that the proposed residential use would accord with the policy.

Impact on the surrounding area

- 7.5 The property was originally designed as a dwellinghouse and it sits comfortably with the remainder of the terrace. There would be no external alterations to the building, and the development would, in officers' view, have no detrimental impact on the character of the Conservation Area or the setting of the adjacent listed buildings. The residential use would similarly have no adverse impact on the adjoining residential properties.

Suitability for residential use

- 7.6 Officers are satisfied that the two proposed flats would provide future occupiers with a satisfactory standard of residential accommodation. Whilst they would be in close proximity to the adjacent commercial use, it is not considered that this would result in any significant adverse impact on the occupiers in terms of noise and disturbance especially as the occupiers would be staff employed at the site.
- 7.7 There is adequate off-street parking for the units to the rear of the terrace of houses and the applicants propose to convert the gardens behind the terrace of properties into a communal amenity space/garden. This will ensure that adequate amenity space is available for the new units and a condition is suggested to ensure that this provision is made.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Although contrary to Policy EDE2, the site is located adjacent to, and lies within the same ownership as, the Maltings business park. All the tenants of the property have found alternative business accommodation within the park, while the security facilities are to be relocated to a purpose built security office.
- 8.2 In this instance, in view of the ownership of the site and the intention to convert the premises into residential accommodation for the use of workers at the Maltings, it is considered that a departure from policy is justified.
- 8.3 The residential use would not be likely to cause any undue disturbance to the occupants of neighbouring occupiers and the standard of accommodation for future occupiers is acceptable. There is ample parking available, and the development does not involve any alterations to the building that would have an undue impact on the character of the Conservation Area. Therefore it is considered appropriate to grant planning permission for the proposed development subject to the conditions suggested at the head of this report.