REF. NO. F/12/70529

PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

DESCRIPTION/ ADDRESS	-	Change of use from first floor offices to 4no. one bedroom flats with addition of roof lights to west elevation Post Office Chamber St Johns Centre St Johns Road Hedge End Southampton SO30 4QU

SITE VISIT DATE – 23/3/12

ARE PLANS ACCURATE? - Yes

HAVE ALL NECESSARY NEIGHBOURS BEEN CONSULTED? - Yes

THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

DESCRIPTION OF APPLICATION	As above.
SITE AREA	Approx 203m2
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT DENSITY (NET)	197 dwellings per hectare
TOPOGRAPHY	Flat
TREES	None
BOUNDARY TREATMENT	Open
SITE CHARACTERISTICS	Proposal is on the first floor of a two storey commercial building with a post office on the ground floor.
CHARACTER OF LOCALITY	The site is located within Hedge End Town Centre containing a mixture of commercial uses, some with residential and office accommodation above. There is a communal car park to the rear of the site, which is for the use of shoppers and town centre workers

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

REFERENCE	DESCRIPTION	DECISION
Z/26776/003	Erection of shops, offices and associated parking *(original planning permission)*	Permit - 5/5/1985
Z/31006/1	Conversion of roof space to form a flat above shop with front and rear dormers *(Unit 11 St John's Centre)*	Permit – 11/2/94
Z/29379/002	Construction of studio flat within existing roof void and addition of rear dormer *(Unit 5 St John's Centre)*	Permit – 13/5/96
F/07/60398	Additional windows and alterations in association with the conversion of the first floor to a 1 bed flat *(Unit 1 St John's Centre)*	Permit – 28/8/07

REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

SOURCE	SUMMARY OF CONTENT
None	

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

CONSULTEE	SUMMARY OF RESPONSE
Planning Policy	**Objection** - is raised on the basis that the flats do not meet the proposed minimum size criteria for new residential development. The property lies within the primary shopping area of Hedge End Centre. The proposal is to convert the upper floor offices to 4 one-bed flats. From the adopted local plan, the relevant policies are: 141.TC - this enables conversion of upper floors subject to criteria relating to the amenities of the upper floor user and the disposal of waste; and 120.E - this enables conversion of employment premises to residential provided that the residential use is appropriate to its surroundings, it does not involve the loss of a site particularly well-suited to employment use, and it does not markedly reduce the local employment base. In the emerging local plan, draft policies DM44 and DM35 contain similar criteria, again seeking to ensure residential amenities, and to ensure no adverse impact on the local economy. Where the proposals involve loss of employment, a marketing exercise is required. Draft policy DM1 proposes minimum space standards for new residential development. It appears that work has been done to ensure that residential amenities are acceptable, and that arrangements can be made for residential parking and disposal of domestic refuse. The applicants demonstrate that the premises have been marketed unsuccessfully for office and other non-residential use over the past 3 years. However, the floor areas proposed (between 39.9 and 40.5 sq.m.) are below those suggested in the draft local plan for 1-bed flats (51 sq.m.), although higher than required for studio flats (32 sq.m.).
Transportation & Engineering	**Holding objection** The development proposals would require a minimum of 4 vehicle parking spaces (unallocated), and it is not clear from the application pack that these exist. Whilst it is outlined that 5 will be provided in the shared use car park, further information regarding the issue is required. The sign to the front of the parking states 2hour waiting max, with clamping for overstay. Proof that the residential properties will be exempt from this will is required, detailing further information such as residential permits which would exempt the owners from the clamping enforcement. Without some kind of proof that there are spaces attributed to the office use specifically, I have concerns that residential parking would over utilise the otherwise short stay parking available, causing capacity

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

CONSULTEE	SUMMARY OF RESPONSE
	issues (in a cumulative basis) in the car parking are, which would appear to have been set to encourage short stay / high turnover options. In regard to Transport DC's, as a change of use these will be required in line with the HCC Transport Contributions Policy. These would be allocated to schemes in the local vicinity which are either of benefit to the residents of the proposed development, or go to mitigate against issues caused by the development. A figure of would £476 (+ indexation) would be requested in regard to this application, calculated as below. Details of identified transport schemes can be provided if requested at the formal application stage. With these flats proposed, there appears to be no direct access from the rear car park to the flats, with all entry off Upper Northam Road. The other flats in St Johns centre have rear access doors off the car park. The design and access statement refers to use of existing waste facilities, but which bins would be used, domestic use is likely to be greater than an office use. It would be undesirable for the flats which would need to be addressed as Upper Northam Road if served from the that north side, to end up having waste bins on the paved area outside the access doors. So if bins are at rear, they need to be accommodated and not obstruct access or parking area and therefore clear details for provision needs, to be made, no doubt Colin Ellis will comment on this aspect.
Environmental Health	**No objection** However, during pre-app discussions we requested that secondary glazing be added to bedrooms 1 and 4 due to external noise sources. We note in the application that this has been completed, however there is no evidence of this with the application, therefore we request a prior to condition be added to supply the evidence.
Parish Council	**Objection** The Committee would comment that this is a good concept but express concerns with regard to the lack of car parking facility and object on the grounds of overdevelopment particularly in density.
Direct Services	**No Objection** We are happy that the 8 wheeled bins, necessary to contain the waste/recycling, can be stored along the wall at the rear of the building beneath the air conditioning units and will be collected using our 7.5 tonne R.C.V. which already collects for other flats at this centre.

POLICY CONTEXT

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DESIGNATION APPLICABLE TO SITE
Within Built-up Area Boundary Within Shopping Area

DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review (2001-2011) 59.BE, 100.T, 141.TC & 191.IN
Supplementary Planning Document: Quality Places
Supplementary Planning Document: Residential Parking Standards

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE

National Planning Policy Framework

POLICY COMMENTARY

The above policies combine to form the criteria against which this application will be assessed.

COMMENT ON CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Noted

COMMENT ON REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

N/A

PLANNING OBLIGATION/CONSIDERATIONS

Planning contributions are required for the new housing development, in accordance with the Saved Policy 191.IN of the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review (2001-2011), the adopted SPD on Planning Obligations and Circular 05/05. The planning contributions are as followed towards projects in the local area:

- £ 3,600.00 - Community Infrastructure
- £ 650.52 - Public Open Space – Local Green Space
- £ 1,976.40 - Public Open Space - Play Provision
- £ 476.00 - Sustainable Integrated Transport

Although work has begun on a unilateral undertaking this has not yet been completed and as such is a reason for refusal.

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL

DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND/OR LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:-

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

Policies

Policy 59.BE of the Local Plan (2001-2011) requires development to take full and proper account of the context of the site including the character and appearance of the locality and be appropriate in mass, scale, materials, layout, design and siting. It also requires a high standard of

ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL

DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND/OR LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

landscape design, have a satisfactory means of access and layout for vehicles, cyclist and pedestrians, make provision for refuse and cycle storage and avoid unduly impacting on neighbouring uses through overlooking, loss of light, loss of outlook, noise and fumes.

Policy 141.TC of the Local Plan (2001-2011) states that leisure, office or residential uses on the upper floors in shopping areas will be permitted provided:

i. the amenity of the upper floor use would not be adversely affected by the existing ground floor use; and
ii. it makes adequate provision for the disposal, storage and collection of waste.

Draft Policy DM1 of the Draft Local Plan (2011-2029) requires new residential developments and conversions for one bedroom dwellings to have a minimum gross internal floor space of 51m2 with at least; 2.5m storage space; 22m2 living, cooking and eating area; and 12m2 sleeping area. This is based on the English Partnership Standards and the draft policy adds more detail to the internal space section in the council's adopted SPD on Quality Places.

Assessment

Principle

The proposal is to convert the first floor from an office to a residential use. The site is located over a post office within Hedge End Town Centre. The planning submission includes marketing information demonstrating that although the property has been advertised for just over three years no office use has been found. Rather than the property lying vacant, it is preferable to be put into a residential use that will provide trade for the town centre. The site is in a sustainable location, close to public transport, shops and community facilities. It is therefore considered that the principle of residential accommodation in this property is acceptable.

Living Accommodation

Although a residential use is acceptable, it is considered that four one bedroom flats would be an overdevelopment of the site. The floor area of each flat is roughly 40m2, which is 11m2 less than the recommended minimum floor area (as per draft policy DM1) and significantly lower than the neighbouring one/ two bed residential conversions.

The lack of floor space is particularly apparent in smaller properties and would result in insufficient living, cooking and eating area (of 15.1m2 compared to 22m2 minimum standard), restricted sleeping area (of 9.3m2 compared to 22m2 standard) and almost no storage space. Simply put each one bedroom flat is not of a sufficient size to provide its occupiers with enough space to live in.

I also have strong reservations about the quality of the living accommodation. During the pre-application stage the layout was adjusted and further roof lights/ sun pipes added. However, the layout of flats 1 and 4 remain an issue with a long, narrow (2.5m wide) and fairly unusable kitchen/ living area. The kitchens would also be very dark, being positioned a long way back from the only window. A kitchen is classed as a habitable room and would receive very limited light (failing the natural light test outline in fig.79 within SPG: Quality Places). Another concern would be the use of roof lights/ sun pipes to some of the bedrooms & shower rooms that would provide no natural ventilation.

Noise & Disturbance

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ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSAL

DEVELOPMENT PLAN AND/OR LEGISLATIVE BACKGROUND

The location of flat 2 (adjacent to the existing air conditioning units and flue pipes) has been assessed, but the Council's Environmental Health Unit consider that secondary glazing would adequately protect the flat occupiers from this external noise source. Likewise the downstairs post office, due to the nature of the business and opening hours should not cause unacceptable levels of noise and disturbance to the flat occupiers.

Car Parking
There are currently five unallocated car parking spaces within the rear communal car park that are assigned to the existing office use. The Council's Engineers have raised a holding objection as they require proof of these car parking spaces in order to ensure that the car park is not over utilised. However, this is considered unnecessary as the flats would be located in a highly sustainable location, where the Council would accept minimal parking provision. In addition the residential use would require less car parking spaces than the designated office use and unlike the office use these spaces are most likely to be utilised outside of core shopping hours.

Bin storage
The Council is able to provide a bin collection service from the rear car park and there would be space behind the property for the required number of bins.

Amenity Space
Due to the site constraints no amenity space can be provided for the residential use. However, this is considered acceptable as the site is close to facilities and there is a park within 100m of the site.

Amenity of Neighbouring Residents
The impact on adjoining neighbours has been considered, but as the scheme involves minimal alterations to the building there should be no loss of outlook, light or privacy from any of the adjoining properties.

OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

It is considered that there are no other material considerations to warrant a decision otherwise than in accordance with the Development Plan and legislative background.

CONCLUSIONS

Recommend Refusal.

It maybe worth re-considering the use of studio flats, which provide more flexible living accommodate and as such only require a total minimum floor area of 32m2.