

**Part-change of use of ground floor from 1 x Class E commercial unit to form
2 x Class E commercial units and 1 x 1-bedroom flat and
Conversion of first floor from 1 x 2-bedroom flat to form 2 x one bedroom flats**

Introduction

The ground floor of the building has been empty since September 2018, it detracts from the street and does not contribute positively to the conservation area.

An opportunity therefore exists to enhance the street scene and conservation area by injecting life into the building in a manner that is considered appropriate and sympathetic.

In its vacant state, the building is likely to deteriorate further and this will have further negative implications for the area. The ground floor unit at 143 sq/m is large and despite marketing and end user has not been found, this is not surprising given its out-of-town location and lack of general footfall, which lends the commercial unit to a niche user and therefore a smaller size, with lower associated running costs.

Location / Site

The application site is located midway on the 'inland' side of Victoria Road within a mixed use area of Netley Abbey.

The existing building is mixed in use and has been throughout its life, most recently 'Co-op' occupied the ground floor with a single residential unit above. The building is part of a terrace of commercial premises with residential on upper floors.

The building is within the Netley Abbey Conservation Area (see heritage section below), but it is not Listed and there are no Listed Buildings nor heritage assets in the vicinity of the site.

Proposal

The proposal consists of:

Ground floor:

Splitting existing retail unit to form 2 x commercial units fronting Victoria Road, with associated external works. Part change of use of rear ground floor from Use Class E to form a one bedroom residential unit.

First Floor:

Convert existing two-bedroom flat to form 2 x one-bedroom flats.

The above works include the provision of dedicated refuse stores for each use along with cycle stores for residential uses.

Use

Existing

Ground floor, Use Class E (retail)

First floor, Use Class C3 (residential)

Proposed

Ground floor, Use Class E (no change), C3 residential

First floor, Use Class C3 (residential), no change.

The existing and proposed uses are all seen in the local area and are considered suitable.

Amount

Existing

Ground Floor:

Use Class E (retail) 143sq/m

First Floor:

Use Class C3 (residential) 79sq/m

Proposed

Ground floor:

Use Class E, 94sq/m. This is a reduction in 49sq/m of Class E floor area. It is considered appropriate as no loss of retail frontage occurs and a rear servicing route is still provided for each of the retail units. The retail units at 37sq/m and 53sq/m are more suitable for the location and are more likely to be occupied with the lower associated running costs.

1 x one bedroom residential unit.

First floor:

Use Class C3

No decrease in C3 floor area, the existing two bedroom flat is to be converted to form 2 x one bedroom flats. The spaces are compliant with the Nationally Described Space Standards at 37sq/m and have double aspect windows, front and back.

Policy DM22 (1) permits a reduction in Class E use where:

- a. the new use retains an active ground floor frontage;
- b. it does not adversely affect amenity of an area or the appearance of the frontage; and
- c. it does not have a negative impact on the provision of services or on the sustainability of a key shopping area

It is noted that Policy DM22 (3) restricts a change of use to residential within the defined shopping frontages to *upper floors* only. A rear *ground floor* residential unit is proposed within this scheme, which is a departure from Policy. However, a balanced approach is asked to be given on the provision of the additional residential unit which will enable the commercial element to be brought back in to life. The rear element of the site is primarily residential in use currently, with only a refuse store linked to the ground floor use; the ground floor is serviced from Victoria Road.

It should also be noted that the Prior Approval process allows the conversion of Class E to form Use class C3 under Class MA, where the change of use is considered acceptable in principle.

The loss of 49sq/m of rear ground floor commercial does not impact on the use of the ground floor unit(s), the reduction in area is seen to bring the ground floor commercial units back in to use, and care has been taken to ensure a rear servicing route is provided whilst retaining 100% of its active frontage.

A balanced approach to the part change of use is re-iterated for this particular site.

Design / Scale

The scale exists and no additional volume is to be created.

Works to the rear are minimal and are associated with doors to allow separate entrances to the residential units along with new side service access doors for the retail units, the changes from the rear are not perceived from public vantage point and are not considered harmful.

The main changes occur to the front elevation facing Victoria Road. These are seen as a vast improvement over the existing and enhance the conservation area.

With the existing retail unit to be converted to form 2 separate units, the frontage will look to replicate that as existed in the early 1900s, drawing upon typical Victorian shop frontage elements.

Each retail unit will have its own centrally located door, these will sit below a fanlight; the existing pilaster, fascia and cornice detailing will remain intact.

The upper floor to the facade will have its render repaired and repainted in a colour to match the existing or an off-white which can either be agreed by the LPA during the application stage or via condition.

Access

Currently the building has a single access point from Victoria Road, with a pedestrian access gate from a rear service yard on New Road behind.

2 rear entrances exist, one at ground floor allowing the commercial unit access to a refuse storage area. Steps provide access to first floor where the residential unit has its own private access.

As noted above, the proposal looks to provide 2 separate retail units and so the altered frontage has 2 pedestrian doors. To the rear 2 new doors to the side of the ground floor unit provide service access to the commercial refuse area.

Each residential unit has its own private entrance from the rear. The existing steps are to be replaced with a lower incline and therefore improved access. The commercial units retain access from Victoria Road, with each unit having its own frontage.

Parking

The site is located in an accessible location and within 20 meters of a bus stop where the BlueStar (15) service runs frequently between Hamble, through Woolston and to Southampton City where all services, amenities and transport links are found.

The site is also conveniently located to be able to cycle or walk to the nearby Woolston, with dedicated cycle pathway following Southampton Water.

Netley itself also has a train station with services to Southampton and Portsmouth, the station is within a 15 minute walk.

Given its accessible location, the proposal comes forward as nil parking; no parking currently exists and no opportunity exists within the application site for additional parking.

To encourage the use of sustainable transport, cycle storage is provided for the residential units, this is in the secure rear yard with the benefit of natural surveillance.

Amenity

The layouts of the flats provide all habitable rooms with windows and outlook. Whilst no dedicated private amenity space can exist for the residential units given the size of the site and the requirement to provide refuse and cycle storage, a small area of outside space exists for the drying of clothes along with defensible space planting.

The numerous amenities of Netley are all within short walking distance; Royal Victoria Country Park, Netley Playground, The Cricket Field, Netley Recreation Ground and the beach at Netley are all open spaces within the immediate vicinity. In addition, the amenities of Weston Shore Promenade, Pitch and Putt and Play Areas are all within a 1 mile, pedestrian friendly walk.

Refuse / Servicing

The existing commercial unit has a large refuse collection area / hardstanding within the rear service yard. It is proposed to provide a dedicated storage area for the commercial unit to improve on the current situation. As with the current situation, the retail units will see any deliveries being made from Victoria Road, this is considered to be of less impact over the existing / previous situation given the units are smaller and will likely require less servicing.

As with the commercial unit, a dedicated refuse store is to be provided for the residential units.

Biodiversity / Ecology

The proposed works are internal alterations and no loss of planting occurs as a result of the development, the new refuse and cycle storage structures will have water butts and so no additional surface water run off will occur.

Nitrates

The Nutrient Budget Calculator has been completed and the applicant will purchase credits inline as agreed to mitigate against additional nitrates which occur as a result of the application for the additional 2 residential units.

Heritage Statement

Introduction

Victoria Road runs parallel to Southampton water and forms the heart of the village of Netley Abbey.

Number 33-34 is located midway along the road on the northern 'inland' side. Originally 2 shops with 2 residential units above, around 1938 the owner of both number 34 purchased the shop and flat at 33 Victoria Road and walls were removed to form 1 shop on the ground floor with a single flat above, and it has remained as such since.



Figure 1: 33-34 Victoria Road, Front Elevation



Figure 2: Satellite image showing wider context

Location / Context

Netley Abbey, in the parish of Hound is situated on the north east bank of Southampton Water midway between Hamble and the Royal Victoria Country Park to the south east and Woolston in Southampton to the north west. The remaining Victorian part of the village runs along Victoria Road from the gates to the grounds of the former hospital, parallel to the shoreline until Abbey Hill Road. The heavily treed area of Abbey Hill contain the grounds of Netley Abbey and Netley Castle, as well as those of the Church of Edward the Confessor.

Netley village has grown since the Victorian era outward from the hospital grounds at the south, northwards along the edge of Southampton Water to Abbey Hill. The expansion of the village was due to the pressure of housing hospital employees. The Netley Abbey Conservation Area is linear in form encompassing the main Victorian buildings that give the village its special interest are the historically significant buildings of the Abbey and Castle on the outskirts of the village.

The Victorian development of Netley Abbey followed the arrival of the railway, – Netley Station opening in 1866, and the establishment of the Royal Victoria Hospital after the foundation stone was laid by Queen Victoria in May 1856. Opened in 1863, the military hospital saw service until 1966 when fire damaged the building. It was subsequently demolished, leaving only the Chapel standing today.

The hospital required the support of civilian trades and services. Houses, shops, pubs and hotels developed along Victoria Road, as it was named in 1863. Ellis Row opposite the recreation ground was built between 1858-65 by the builder Mr S.Ellis. The Prince Consort public house started life as the Army and Navy Hotel.

While quarters for officers and physicians were built in the grounds around the hospital, terraced houses and detached villas were built in Victoria Road. Later more substantial houses, such as Netley Court, Netley Towers and Netley Cliff House, were built in sites on top of the cliffs opposite Station Road.

Today the legacy of Victorian development is clearly evident, with a range of uses that contribute to a vibrant community.

The landscape and Victorian development has generated two distinctive forms of building along Victoria Road, that is the centre of the conservation area.

On the landward side of Victoria Road where the application site is located, development is predominantly a two storey terraced form sited close to the back of footpath providing houses and shops. The terraces comprise a range of materials with brick and rendered walls, slate and concrete tile roofs.



Figure 3: Netley Abbey Conservation Area

Map Progression

Historical maps below show how the building at 33-34 Victoria road was once narrower and 2 separate units. Over time, as retail uses expanded and grew, outbuildings and rearward extensions are evident on this run of terrace units.

This is particularly clear on the differences between mapping dated 1907 and 1932. This would seem to concur with accounts of the business expanding in 1911 where the owner, a Mr George Cosier was running the 2 shops as a Hairdressing Salon and a Tobacconist Shop and by the 1930s had also become a newsagent (see figure 9), with much of his business coming from the nearby Royal Victoria Hospital.



Figure 4: OS Map 6inch, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Sheet LXXIII
Surveyed: 1866 to 1869, Published: 1870



Figure 5: OS Map 6inch, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Sheet LXXIII.NE
Revised: 1895 to 1896, Published: 1898

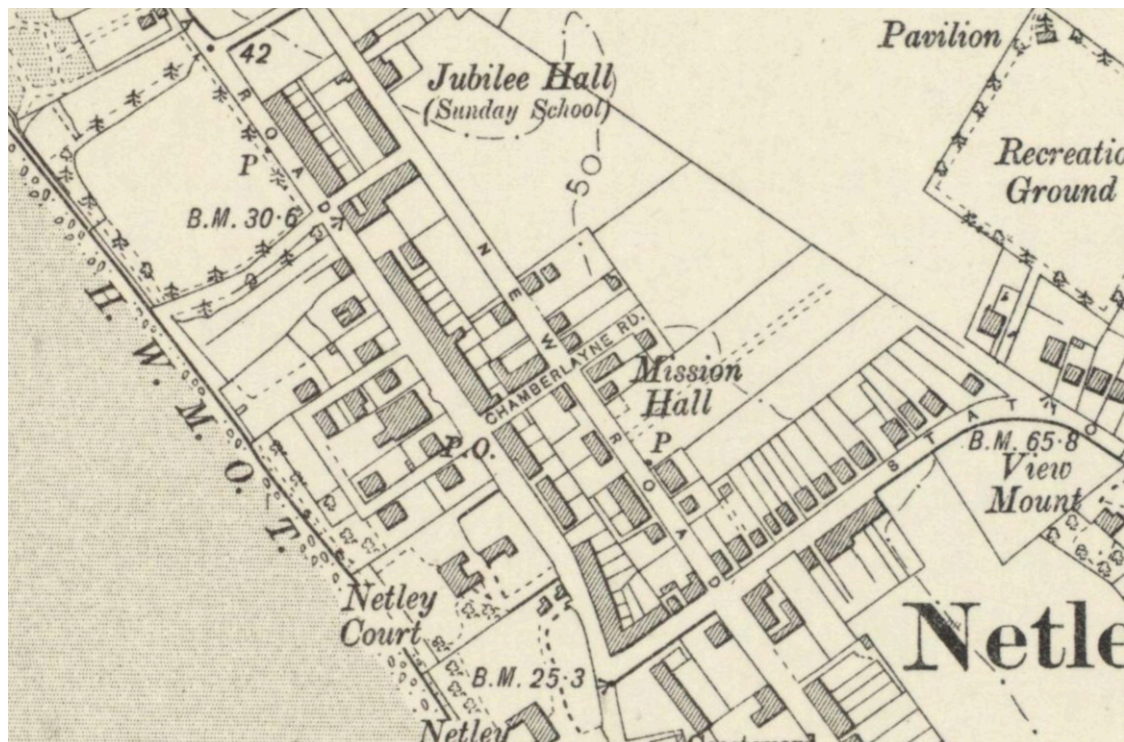


Figure 6: OS Map 6inch, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Sheet LXXIII.NE
Revised: 1907, Published: 1909

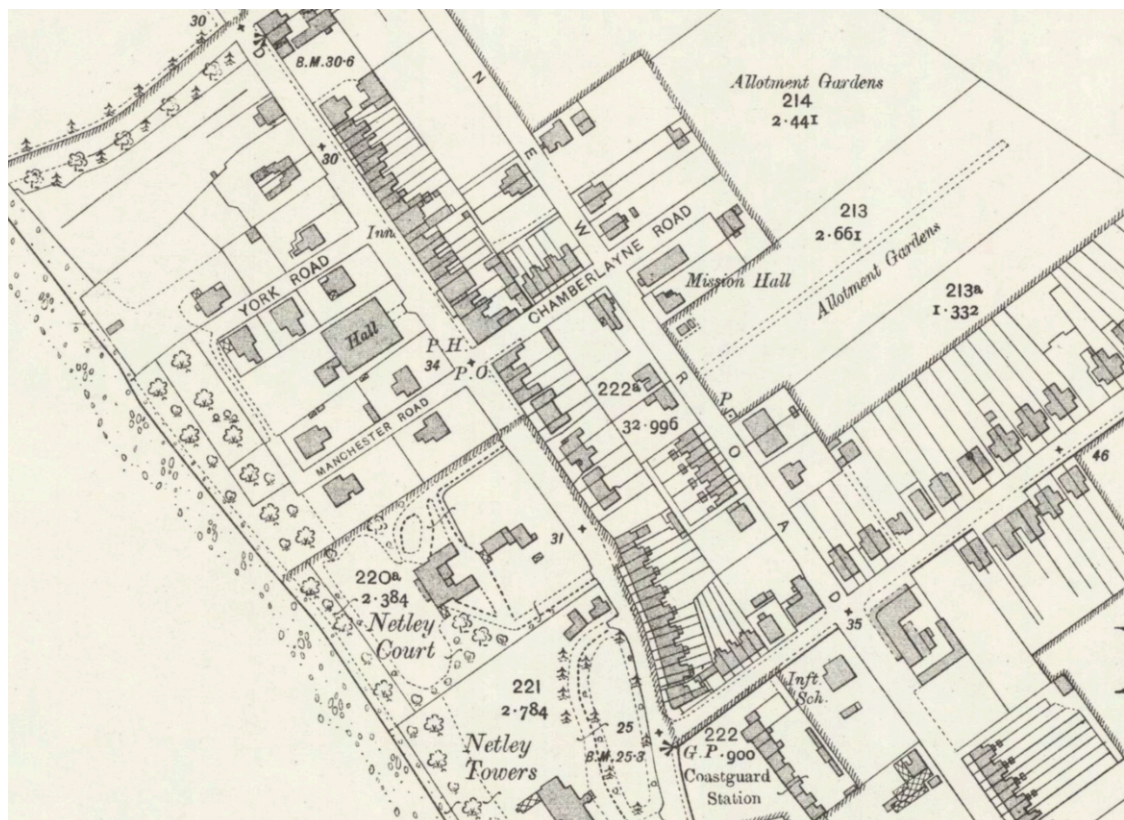


Figure 7: OS Map 25inch, Hampshire and Isle of Wight LXXIII.4
Revised: 1907, Published: 1909

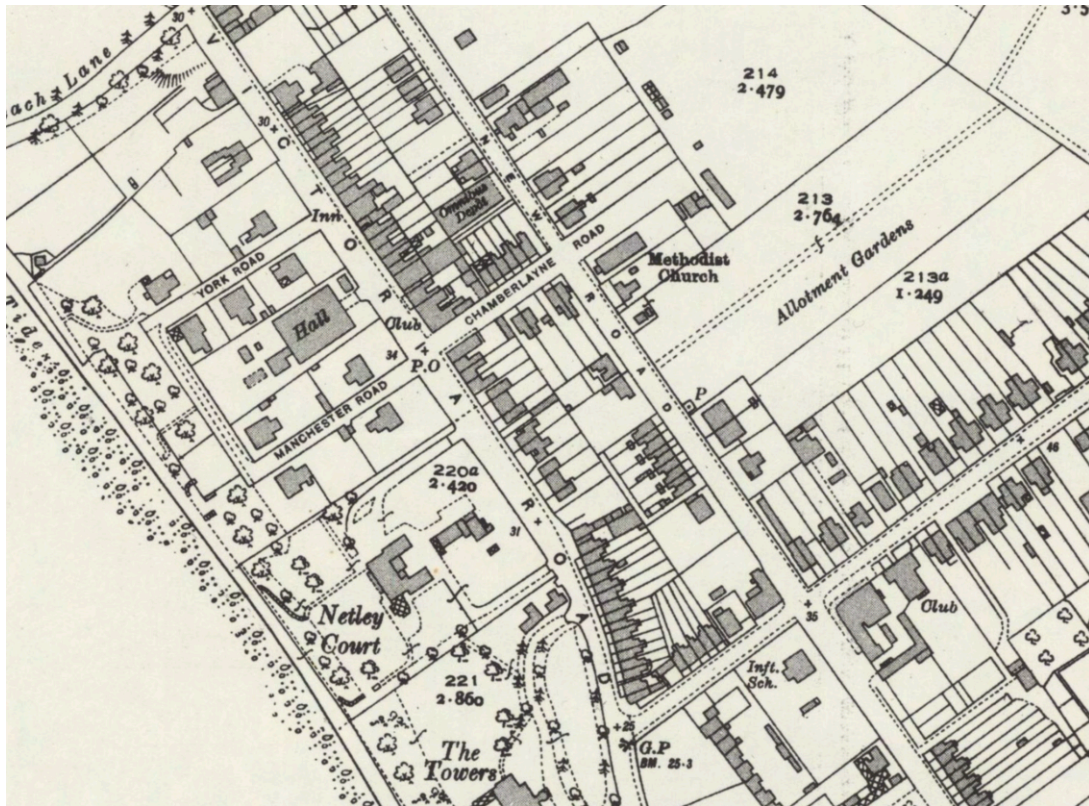


Figure 8: OS Map 25inch, Hampshire and Isle of Wight LXXIII.4
Revised: 1932, Published: 1933



Figure 9: OS Map 1:10,560 1949-1968

Photographs



Figure 10: Photograph 1920s
33-34 Victoria Road in centre of image.
Phipps Garage in the near ground for reference still in same use today as 'Netley Garage'



Figure 11: Equivalent view, current day (March, 2023)
Phipps Garage in the near ground for reference still in same use today as 'Netley Garage'



Figure 12: 33, 34, 35 Victoria Road showing removal of historic entrances



Figure 13: Application Site displaying canopy to frontage



Figure 14: Current day equivalent



Figure 15: Application Site looking eastwards



Figure 16: Current day equivalent

Figures 10 to 16 demonstrate the change in 100 years from the 1920s to 2020s. The expansion of commercial activity in the 18th century meant that buildings were designed with a shop front as an integral part of the building.

Glass was, by then commonly used and a typical shopfront of the 18th and early 19th centuries incorporated fashionable elements of classical proportion and detailing. Shopfronts were divided by pilasters or columns which supported an entablature. The shop window had a stall-riser as its base which reflects the days in which goods were sold across an unglazed opening. The entablature incorporated a flat fascia which allowed the name and nature of the shop to be advertised.

It also provided a clear distinction between the retail area and domestic use on upper floors.

Post war development has seen a move away from the traditions of the past towards a modern approach often with little or no regard to the character of buildings or historic street scene.

This in part is true of that of the application site and that at 35 Victoria Road and whilst attempt has been made to incorporate historical features such as transoms and fanlights, there is an opportunity to improve upon the facade and thus enhance the conservation area.

Historical Features

Although currently boarded up, the building displays many examples of a Victorian shop frontage and although have altered over time, are still reflective of the original design intent.

Its angled fascia reflective of the use of canopies (see figure 13) along with pilaster, cornice and finial typical of Victorian shop frontages.

In its current form, vacant and boarded up, it *detracts* from the conservation area and is in need of a new lease of life.

Significance

As with the remaining properties within the terrace, the frontage of numbers 33-34 contribute to the overall character of the road. However there have been numerous additions to the shop fronts over the past 70 years, although the surrounds to the openings has been retained, the openings themselves are of little historical or aesthetic significance.

Internally, on the ground floor, changes connected with amalgamating the units has clearly taken place and little is left of any historical importance.

Impact of proposed changes

The proposal is simple and looks to alter the frontage and return to its original number of units. Existing historical features will be retained and new openings typical of the historical uses are proposed.

From public vantage point and the conservation area on Victoria Road, the design picks up on historical mapping and photographs (see figure 17 in particular), this will allow the creation of 2 smaller commercial units which are seen as suitable.

Commercial growth and development from the 1990s onward saw the rise of larger stores and decline of smaller retail outlets, with much larger 'out of town' national stores reducing the need for these medium retail stores. This is evident with the vacant commercial building at 33-34 Victoria Road. However in recent years, post - Covid19 pandemic, the requirement for smaller local retailers is on the rise; these smaller 'boutique' units represent a growing change in the way people live with growing demand for niche products and services of which this site and location is suited.

Smaller commercial units in an area such as Netley Abbey are more likely to thrive, adding to the vibrancy of the street and therefore the success and enhancement of the conservation area.

Regard has been paid to the way in which the units are split and care taken to ensure the proportions and design are reflective of the conservation area.

Externally, changes perceived from the public domain relate only to those on the front (south west) elevation, these are simple and draw upon the historical design of the building.
The building lies within the Netley conservation Area and its current form does not contribute positively to the area.

An opportunity therefore exists to enhance the Conservation Area, the proposals will allow the building to be regenerated and give it a new lease of life, thus contributing positively to the area.



Figure 17: 33-34 Victoria Road taken in the 1930s.





Images above show the proposed changes to facade on Victoria Road

Conclusion

As demonstrated on the submitted drawings, the proposed works to split the current layout in to 2 separate shops will have no negative impact on the building nor its setting within a conservation area. The building is not Listed and so no harm can be asserted by any internal alterations, that said, works proposed appear to be largely a reversal of earlier modifications.

As part of the works, the external walls to first floor fronting Victoria Road will be repaired and repainted and so an improvement occurs; currently the render is in poor condition. An 'off-white' colour is proposed, a suitable RAL can be agreed either by condition, or during the application process.

From public vantage point within the conservation area, no perceived changes from the splitting of existing residential unit back to form 2 residential units occur and therefore no harm or impact on the conservation area occurs.

The loss of 49sq/m of rear ground floor commercial does not impact on the use of the ground floor unit(s), the reduction in area is seen to bring the ground floor commercial units back in to use, and care has been taken to ensure a rear servicing route is provided whilst retaining 100% of its active frontage.

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