

Prior Approval application under Class MA
Part-change of use of ground floor from Class E commercial unit to form
2 x C3 residential units with renting of Class E fronting Victoria Road

Introduction

This report has been prepared to support a prior approval planning application for proposals affecting 33-34 Victoria Road, Netley.

The application is seeking confirmation of whether Prior Approval is required for a proposed: change of use from commercial, business and service (Use Class E) to dwelling houses (Use Class C3) in accordance with paragraph MA.2, Class MA of Schedule 2, Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

The proposals a change of use relate solely to the rear of the ground floor of 33-34 Victoria Road. No external alterations are sought under this application, but indicative proposals for external works show how the conversion would work, it should be noted no changes are required to the front elevation and an extant approval exists for the rear of the commercial unit to be converted to form a C3 unit exists and so no harm occurs to the Conservation Area in either of these respects.

As noted above an extant approval exists (F/23/94881) for the conversion of the rear of the ground floor to form 1 x C3 unit, along with alterations to the existing Class E unit. The principle of a C3 use on the ground floor has therefore been established and accepted.

Whilst external changes are not subject to this planning application, the changes as visible from the Conservation Area mirror those as approved under F/23/94881 and are shown on the submitted drawings for clarity.

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

This is a Class MA application and is for the creation of 2 x C3 residential units to the rear of the ground floor under the Prior Approval process.

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 (established under F/23/94881)

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

The existing and proposed uses are all seen in the local area and are considered suitable, the ground floor has an extant consent for C3 use to the rear of the building and so no harm can be alleged.

Amount

Existing

Ground Floor:

Use Class E (retail) 143sq/m

First Floor:

Use Class C3 (residential) 79sq/m

Proposed

Ground floor:

Use Class E, 52sq/m. It is considered appropriate as no loss of retail frontage occurs and a rear servicing route is still provided for the retail units. A smaller commercial unit has already been accepted under F/2394881 and so no harm can be alleged with its size, which is more suitable for the location and are more likely to be occupied with the lower associated running costs.

2 x one-bedroom, one person residential unit. The spaces are compliant with the Nationally Described Space Standards at over 37sq/m.

First floor:

Use Class C3 (residential) 79sq/m (no change, not part of application)

Design / Scale

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

This application is Prior Approval change of use and so a separate application for external alterations will be made. Works to the rear are minimal and are associated with doors and window 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.

Changes are not required at all to the front elevation facing Victoria Road. However to enhance the Conservation Area, the changes as accepted under F/23/94881 are proposed, these are seen as a vast improvement over the existing and enhance the conservation area. The frontage will look to replicate that as existed in the early 1900s, drawing upon typical Victorian shop frontage elements.

Access

Refer to the application drawings, access to the C3 on ground floor will utilise that of the approved C3 scheme, with a separate access for the additional flat as shown.

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 unit retains its access from Victoria Road, with no harm occurring.

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 unit will see any deliveries being made from Victoria Road, this is considered to be of less impact over the existing / previous situation given the unit is smaller and will likely require less servicing.

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

Assessment under Prior Approval

Natural Light:

The flats are open plan, studio units. The habitable living area has windows to the rear, this is as per the approved, extant scheme for residential conversion under F/23/94881.

The flats have been designed with the habitable living space to the rear amenity area, and the non habitable, shower room and kitchen located deeper in to the plan. Additional secondary window openings are proposed as shown.

Highways Impacts:

Rear access to C3 exists and is as per the approved F/23/94881 application. A car parking survey has been undertaken and ample space exists for the additional C3 units.

Access to the retail unit from Victoria Road is to be retained with a dedicated service door to the rear as currently exists.

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.

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 unit will see any deliveries being made from Victoria Road, this is considered to be of less impact over the existing / previous situation given the unit is smaller and will likely require less servicing.

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

Contamination:

No known contamination risks exist. In addition, the proposed works are above ground conversion works.

Noise Impacts:

C3 Residential conversion has already been consented under F/23/94881 and so no additional harm occurs. Habitable space is located away from the Class E use, with acoustic treatment to the party walls and WC / Kitchen placed at the closest point to further mitigate.

C3 use already exists on first floor and C3 use has already been accepted and approved on the rear ground floor under F/23/94881.

Heritage Impacts:

No change is required from Victoria Road, therefore no harm or alteration is visible from the Conservation Area. The rear external changes are not visible from any public vantage point and are similar to those already consented under F/23/94881.

Flooding:

Referring to EA mapping, the site is not located in an area of flood risk.

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

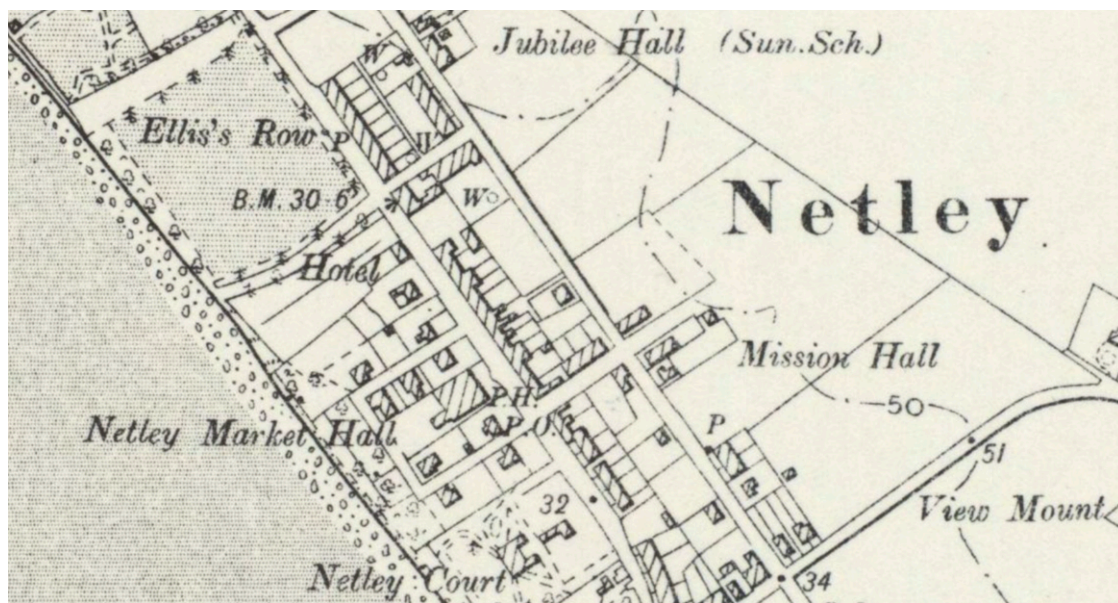


Figure 5: OS Map 6inch, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Sheet LXXIII.NE
Revised: 1895 to 1896, Published: 1898

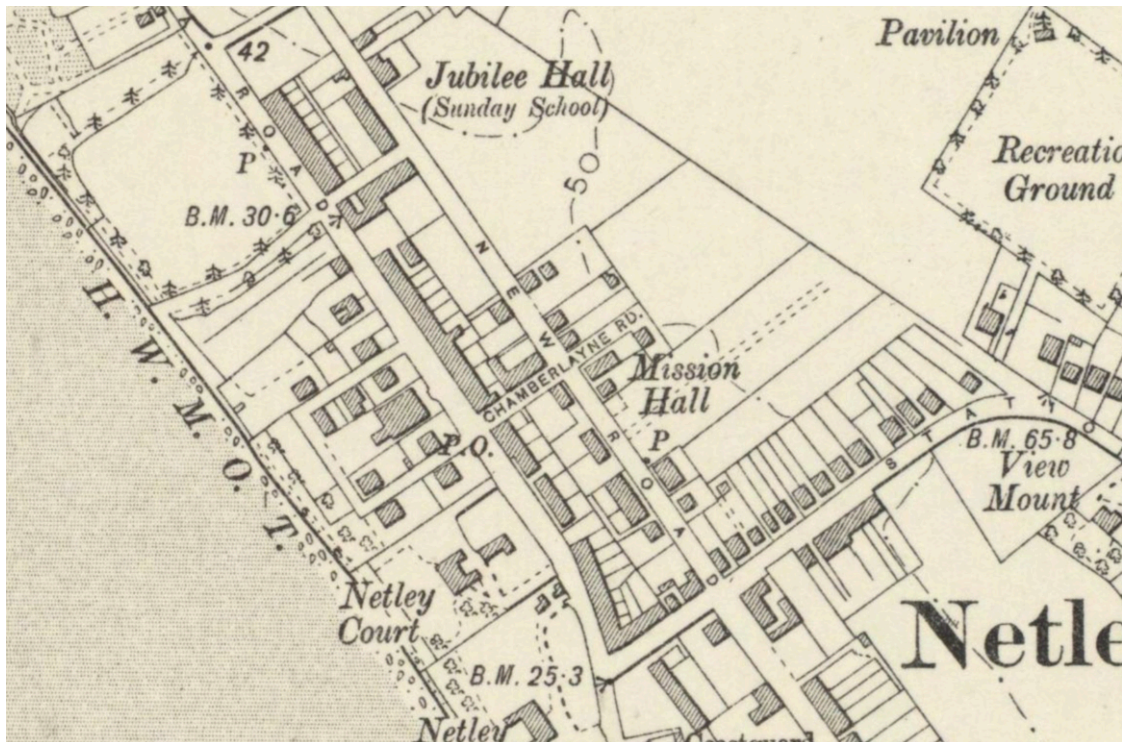


Figure 6: OS Map 6inch, Hampshire & Isle of Wight Sheet LXXIII.NE
Revised: 1907, Published: 1909

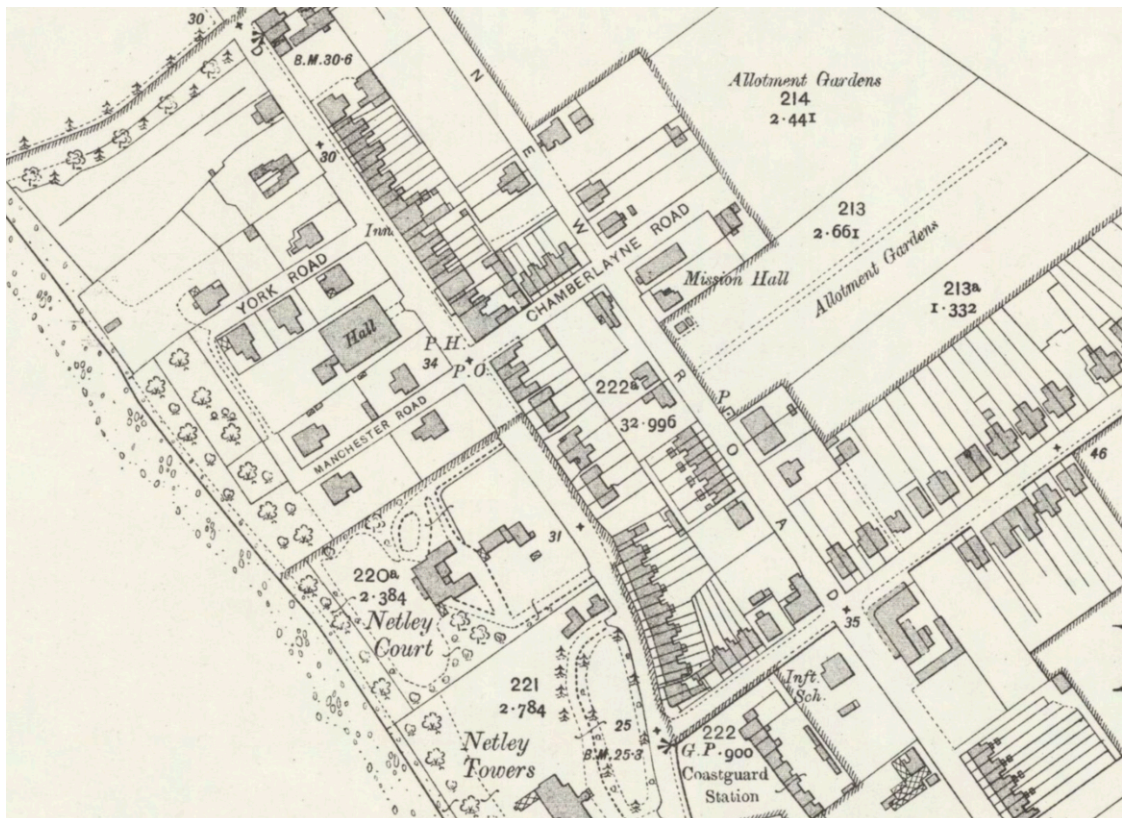
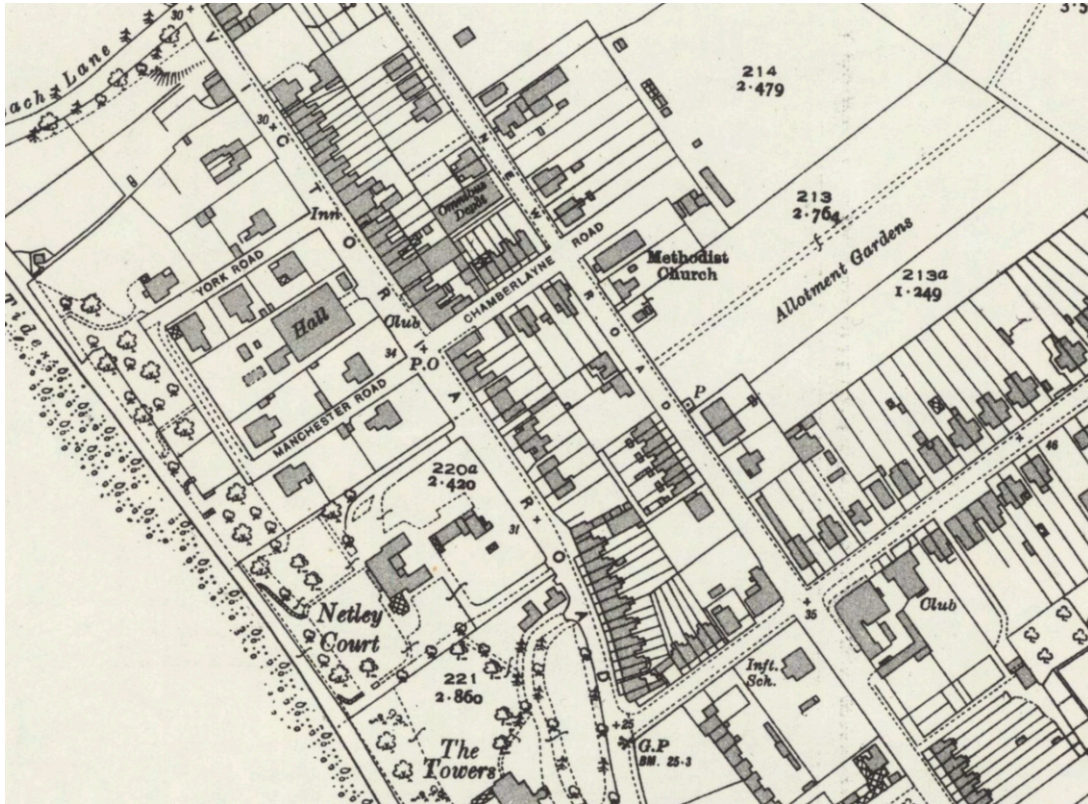


Figure 7: OS Map 25inch, Hampshire and Isle of Wight LXXIII.4
Revised: 1907, Published: 1909



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

Whilst the application is for a change of use, the applicant wishes to make alterations of the facade, this will be by separate application, since exchanges are not considered with the Prior Approval process. The proposal is simple and looks to alter the frontage as already approved under F/23/94881.

Conclusion

For the purposes of this Prior Approval application, no changes to the exterior occur from public vantage point and the conservation area on Victoria Road.

The reduction to a commercial unit of 52sq/m on the ground floor does not impact on the use of the ground floor unit, the reduction in area is seen to bring the ground floor commercial unit back in to use, and care has been taken to ensure a rear servicing route is provided whilst retaining 100% of its active frontage.