

MC/15/0318

Date Received: 30 January, 2015

Location: The Whitewall Centre, Whitewall Road, Medway City Estate,
Strood, Kent, ME2 4DZ

Proposal: Retrospective application for change of use from office to 1no-
bedroomed self-contained flat

Applicant: Masterhitch (Europe) Ltd

Agent:
Ward Strood Rural

Recommendation of Officers to the Planning Committee, to be considered and determined by the Planning Committee at a meeting to be held on 29 April, 2015.

Recommendation - Approval with Conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Site Location Plan and drawing no's 0001, received 24 March 2015 revised, 0002 RevC, 0003, 0005, 0006, 0008 & 0009 received 23 February 2015.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

- 2 The use of the flat hereby permitted shall be in association with the main use of The Whitewall Centre, for works/caretakers and shall not benefit from a separate address point, shall remain accessible internally and shall not be separated from reliance on the main building or sold off as a separate dwelling unit in its own right.

Reason: In the interests of amenity and to ensure accordance with the provisions set out under Local Plan Policy ED1 and BNE2.

For the reasons for this recommendation for approval please see Planning Appraisal Section and Conclusions at the end of this report.

Proposal

The application, a resubmission of MC/14/2443, seeks retrospective planning permission for the change of use from office to one 1 bedroomed self-contained flat.

Relevant Planning History

MC/14/2443	Retrospective application for change of use from office to Two 1 bedroomed self-contained flats Refused 28 October 2014
MC/01/0089	Variation of condition 03 on planning permission MC2000/0858 [part change of use from plant hire depot to construction plant theme park] to extend the opening hours from March-November, 10am to 6pm. Approval with Conditions 23/03/2001
MC/00/0858	Part change of use from plant hire depot to construction plant theme park. Approval with Conditions 04/08/2000

Representations

The application has been advertised on site and by individual neighbour notification to the owners and occupiers of neighbouring properties. Frindsbury Extra Parish Council has also been consulted.

Frindsbury Extra Parish Council raises objection to this application as the proposal is contrary to the designation of Medway City Estate as a business only and not mixed use development.

Development Plan

The Development Plan for the area comprises the Medway Local Plan 2003. The policies referred to within this document and used in the processing of this application have been assessed against the National Planning Policy Framework, 2012 and are considered to conform.

Planning Appraisal

Background

The proposal has been submitted retrospectively, and seeks to address the areas of concern raised via the refusal on MC/14/2443, reducing the number of flats from 2 to 1 in order that the living accommodation accords with the provisions set out within the Medway Housing Design Standards (interim) 2011.

Main Issues

The main issues for consideration are whether the principle for conversion into flats is accepted, impact on the character of the street scene, neighbour amenity and the amenity of future occupants and impact on traffic and parking in the area.

Principle

The application site is located within the Medway City Estate, defined within the Medway Local Plan as being within an existing employment area, where Policy ED1 advises that development will only be permitted for Class B1, B2, and B8 development. Proposals resulting in the loss of existing industrial, business or storage and distribution development to other uses will not be permitted. The change of use to residential accommodation has in this case resulted in the loss of office space. The application submission advises that the office space was redundant, and the accommodation has been provided on site for caretaker and security staff to help reduce risk of theft and criminal damage to the property. The residential accommodation provides a 'live-work' solution and in this regard can be considered ancillary to the main B1 Light Industrial and Office use on site. A condition is recommended to ensure those residing in the flat are associated and in connection with the main use of the building. As such there is no principle objection to the scheme under the provisions set out under Local Plan Policy ED1.

Street Scene and Design

The proposed change of use is being applied for retrospectively, and all the external works associated with the creation of one work-place flat have already been carried out, as have the internal alterations. The external appearance of the site is much the same as before, and on approach to the site it is not immediately obvious that any residential accommodation exists. The unit benefits from patio doors which open out onto a roof top area above the flatroof front projection below. The flat is accessed internally. Other than the insertion of windows and doors to the front, there have been no external alterations and as such the design of the development remains appropriate within this industrial setting and overall accords with the provisions set out under Local Plan Policy BNE1.

Amenity

The proposal would not adversely affect the amenities of neighbouring properties in terms of loss of privacy. As there are no further extensions to the property to accommodate the residential units, the proposal does not have a detrimental impact on neighbouring properties in terms of loss of outlook, daylight or sunlight. There are no immediate neighbours in residential use.

Consideration as to the potential noise disturbance for occupants living alongside other industrial uses has been considered. The uses cease in the evening and so there would be no harm caused to occupants of the flats in terms of noise.

With regard to the amenities of occupants and future occupants of the flats, following reduction from two flats to one (albeit employees of the main use), the level of accommodation is now considered adequate and exceeds The National Housing Design Standards. In this regard the proposal is considered acceptable under the provisions set out within Local Plan Policy BNE2, which seeks to secure the amenities of future occupants as well as the amenities enjoyed by nearby and adjacent properties.

Highways

There is adequate parking for staff members on site, and allocated spaces for the caretakers/security staff who live in the accommodation. There are no objections to the proposal under the provisions set out under Local Plan Policies T1 and T13.

Local Finance Considerations

There are no Local Finance Considerations relating to this application.

Conclusions and Reasons for Approval

The application is considered acceptable in principle and does not result in harm to the visual amenity of the area. The level of accommodation provided now exceeds the National Housing standards and the concerns of the previous application have been addressed. The proposal therefore accords with the above mentioned Development Plan policies and is recommended for approval.

The application would normally be determined under delegated powers but is being referred to Planning Committee due to the representation received from The Parish Council

Background Papers

The relevant background papers relating to the individual applications comprise: the applications and all supporting documentation submitted therewith; and items identified in any Relevant History and Representations section within the report.

Any information referred to is available for inspection in the Planning Offices of Medway Council at Gun Wharf, Dock Road, Chatham ME4 4TR and here <http://publicaccess.medway.gov.uk/online-applications/>