

REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE

REPORT

27 October 2011

Subject Heading:

P1073.11 – Victoria House, 1 Durham Avenue, Romford

Change of use from C3 – Dwelling house to B1 – office, ramp to new office access, removal of a portacabin and container store (Application received 15th July 2011)

Report Author and contact details:

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Policy context:

Local Development Framework

Financial summary:

None

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	[]
Championing education and learning for all	[]
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	[]
Valuing and enhancing the lives of our residents	[x]
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	[]

SUMMARY

This application is for a change of use of a two bedroom ground floor flat from C3 (dwelling house) to B1 (office), a ramp and the removal of a portacabin and container store. The flat has been vacant since August 2008 and ceases to be housing accommodation. Homes in Havering have been pursuing this proposed change of use for some time and therefore, the flat was not re-let. The flat would be used as office

accommodation for the local tenant management organisation, DELTA, which would be beneficial to the residents of the Victoria House estate. The planning issues are set out in the report below, which focuses on the principle of change of use, the impact on the streetscene, the impact on amenity and parking and highways considerations. Staff are of the view that the proposal is acceptable and it is recommended that permission be granted subject to conditions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

1. Time Limit – The development to which this permission relates must be commenced not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. Accordance with plans - The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accord with the approved plans, particulars and specifications.

Reason: The Local Planning Authority consider it essential that the whole of the development is carried out and that no departure whatsoever is made from the details approved, since the development would not necessarily be acceptable if partly carried out or carried out differently in any degree from the details submitted. Also, in order that the development accords with Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

3. Hours of use - The premises shall not be used for the purposes hereby permitted other than between the hours of 09:00 and 18:00 on Mondays to Fridays and not at all on Saturdays, Sundays, Bank or Public holidays without the prior consent in writing of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To enable the Local Planning Authority to retain control in the interests of amenity, and in order that the development accords with Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

4. Noise insulation - Prior to the first use of the office hereby approved, details of a noise insulation scheme to minimise the amount of noise emanating from the office shall be submitted and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest of residential amenity.

5. Storage of refuse - Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted, provision shall be made for the storage of refuse awaiting collection

according to details which shall previously have been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of amenity of occupiers of the development and also the visual amenity of the development and the locality generally, and in order that the development accords with the Development Control Policies Development Plan Document Policy DC61.

INFORMATIVES

1. Reason for Approval:

It is considered that the proposal satisfies the relevant criteria of Policies DC1 and DC61 of the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Site Description

- 1.1 The application site is a ground floor flat, which forms part of Victoria House located on the north side of Durham Avenue, Romford. There are flats on the upper floors of the building in residential use. There are garages to the north and north east of the site. There are residential properties located to the east, south and west of the site.

2. Description of Proposal

- 2.1 The application is for a change of use of a two bedroom ground floor flat from C3 (dwelling house) to B1 (office), a ramp and the removal of a portacabin and container store.
- 2.2 The flat has been vacant since August 2008 and ceases to be housing accommodation. The flat would be used as office accommodation for the local tenant management organisation, DELTA, which would be beneficial to the residents of the Victoria House estate. Since 2006, DELTA has operated from a portacabin on the DELTA estate, which provides only limited and cramped office accommodation and does not have any meeting room facilities.
- 2.3 There would be five full time employees. Opening hours are proposed to be between 9am and 5.30pm Monday to Friday.
- 2.4 Following a site visit, it is noted that the portacabin and container store have already been removed from the site.
- 2.5 The ramp would provide access to the office and would be located adjacent to the southern and western flanks of Victoria House.

3. Relevant History

No relevant planning history.

4. Consultations/Representations

- 4.1 Neighbour notification letters have been sent to 104 local addresses. No letters of representation have been received.

5. Staff Comments

- 5.1 The issues arising from this application are the principle of change of use, the impact on the streetscene, the impact on amenity and parking and highways considerations. Policies DC1 and DC61 of the LDF Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document are relevant to the determination of the application.

6. Principle of Development

- 6.1 Policy DC1 of the LDF Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD states that planning permission resulting in the net loss of existing housing will only be granted in exceptional circumstances where it involves the provision of essential community facilities, for example health or education, which are necessary to meet the specific needs of the community; or the proposal is necessary to deliver mixed and balanced communities.
- 6.2 In this instance, the principle of the change of use is contrary to Policy DC1, although it is deemed to be acceptable as it would be beneficial to the local community and there are exceptional circumstances in this case. The flat has been vacant since August 2008 and ceases to be housing accommodation. Homes in Havering have been pursuing this proposed change of use for some time and therefore, the flat was not re-let. The flat would be used as office accommodation for the local tenant management organisation, DELTA, which would be beneficial to the residents of the Victoria House estate. Since 2006, DELTA has operated from a portacabin on the DELTA estate, which provides only limited and cramped office accommodation and does not have any meeting room facilities.

7. Design/Street scene

- 7.1 The proposal is seeking to alter the appearance to the southern and western flanks of Victoria House through the introduction of a ramp. The proposed ramp is of a suitable design and materials which would not look out of character within the surrounding area.

8. Impact on Amenity

- 8.1 It is considered that the change of use would not result in a significant loss of amenity to neighbouring occupiers, given the use of the premises as an office for five employees. When reviewing the merits of this application, consideration was

given to the fact that the flat would be used as office accommodation for the local tenant management organisation, DELTA, which would be beneficial to the residents of the Victoria House estate.

- 8.2 The proposed opening hours for the office are 9am to 5.30pm Monday to Friday. The opening hours will be secured by condition and will cover from 9am to 6pm Monday to Friday. It is considered that extending the opening hours from 5.30pm to 6pm will not adversely affect neighbouring amenity, as these are standard office hours and it would not result in any activity during the evenings. It is considered that the opening hours should not result in a significant loss of amenity to neighbouring occupiers given that the ground floor of the building would be used as an office.
- 8.3 It is considered that the ramp would not be harmful to residential amenity, as it would be relatively well separated from neighbouring properties.

9. Highway/Parking

- 9.1 In respect of parking issues Council policy DC33 seeks to ensure that the proposal provides adequate car parking on site. For the proposed office (B1) use the Council's parking standard recommends one space per 100 square metres of floor space. The office would have a floor area of 64 square metres. The proposal does not provide any car parking provision. Although, the Highway Authority has no objection to the proposal, as there are parking bays in close proximity to the site in Durham Avenue and Elvet Avenue. It is considered that the proposal would not create any highway or parking issues. The storage of refuse has been secured by condition.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 The proposed change of use is considered to be acceptable in principle, as there are exceptional circumstances in this case. Staff are of the view that the proposal would not adversely affect the streetscene or residential amenity. It is considered that the proposal would not create any highway or parking issues. It is recommended that planning permission is granted, subject to conditions.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

None.

Legal implications and risks:

This application is considered on its own merits and independently from the Council's interest as owner of the site.

Human Resources implications and risks:

None.

Equalities implications and risks:

The Council's planning policies are implemented with regard to Equalities and Diversity.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Application form and plans received on 15th July 2011.