



REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE

REPORT

17 November 2011

Subject Heading:

P1448.11 – 36 High Street, Romford

Change of use from Class A1 (retail) to form drop-in support facility for the elderly (Application received 27th September 2011).

Report Author and contact details:

Helen Oakerbee (Planning Control Manager) 01708 432800

Policy context:

Local Development Framework
London Plan
National Planning Policy

Financial summary:

None

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

Ensuring a clean, safe and green borough	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Championing education and learning for all	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing economic, social and cultural activity in thriving towns and villages	<input type="checkbox"/>
Value and enhance the life of our residents	<input type="checkbox"/>
Delivering high customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	<input type="checkbox"/>

SUMMARY

This application relates to the change of use of a vacant retail unit within Romford town centre to form an information and advice centre for the elderly. The planning issues are set out in the report below and include issues relating to the principle of the development, impact on amenity and parking/highway 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 accordance 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 the LDF Development Control Policies DPD Policy DC61.

3. Restriction of use - Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 the use hereby permitted shall be an advice and information centre only and shall be used for no other purpose(s) whatsoever including any other use in Class A2 of the Order, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To restrict the use of the premises to one compatible with the surrounding area and to enable the Local Planning Authority to exercise control over any future use not forming part of this application and in order that the development accords with LDF Romford Area Action Plan DPD Policy ROM11 and the LDF Development Control Policies DPD Policy DC61.

4. Hours of use - The premises shall not be used for the purposes hereby permitted other than between the hours of 0800 and 2100 on any day 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 the LDF Development Control Policies DPD Policy DC61.

INFORMATIVES

1. The applicant is advised that separate consent may be required to display an advertisement on the premises or to alter the existing shop front.

2. Reason for Approval:

It is considered that the proposal satisfies the relevant criteria of Policies DC33, DC61, DC63 and DC68 of the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document and Policies ROM6, ROM11, ROM20 and ROMSSA4 of the Romford Area Action Plan Development Plan Document.

REPORT DETAIL

1. **Site Description:**

1.1 The application site is located on the northern side of the High Street approximately 45 metres to the north east of the junction with Angel Way. The site comprises a single ground floor commercial unit which is presently vacant. The unit has most recently been in use as a retail shop (Class A1) selling wedding outfits. The site comprises 122 square metres of floor space. The application premises is located within a four storey terraced building with commercial uses at ground floor, offices at the first floor level and flats on the second and third floors.

1.2 The application site is located within the retail fringe area of Romford town centre and is within the Romford Conservation Area.

2. **Description of Proposal:**

2.1 The application seeks permission for a change of use from Class A1 (retail) to form a drop in advice and information centre for the elderly (Class A2). The purpose of establishing an information centre is to provide face-to-face information and advice to members of the public. The application premises has been specifically chosen as it is judged to be highly accessible and in a location where sufficient footfall can be achieved. The centre will be operated by a grant funded consortium of local organisations. The centre is due to open around 6 to 7 hours a day Monday to Friday and around 4 hours on Saturday with an option for later night opening until 8pm one night a week should demand exist.

3. **Background Information:**

3.1 The goal of providing better information and advice is a key underpinning element of the personalisation of adult social care. It enables people to make informed choices about services and activities, empowers them to understand how to meet their needs effectively and can delay or prevent the need for more acute support developing. In this way the transformation of

information and advice can improve the quality of life for citizens by providing generic advice on housing and health issues.

- 3.2 The Council has undertaken research, through holding focus groups and interviews across the Borough, into the way in which it delivers information and advice for the elderly. From this research it has been established that there is a need for a physical presence for an information and advice service within a central location. It was further established that this service needs to be, and be seen to be, independent of the Council. It is anticipated that the proposed centre will be able to provide advice for those wishing to live independently at home, energy efficiency and personal safety together with information about community based leisure and social activities such as bowls clubs and bridge evenings.

4. Relevant History:

- 4.1 None relevant.

5. Consultations/Representations:

- 5.1 The application has been advertised and a site notice displayed. Neighbour notification letters have also been sent to 42 adjoining occupiers. No letters of representation have been received.

5. Staff Comments

- 5.1 The issues raised by this application are the principle of development, the impact on amenity and parking/highway issues. Policies CP4, CP17 and CP18 of the LDF Core Strategy Development Plan Document and Policies DC33, DC61, DC63 and DC68 of the LDF Development Control Policies Development Plan Document are relevant. Policies ROM6, ROM9, ROM11, ROM20 and ROMSSA4 of the Romford Area Action Plan Development Plan Document are also material considerations. Policies 4.7, 4.8, 6.9, 6.12, 6.13, 7.4 and 7.8 of the London Plan are relevant. PPS1 (Delivering Sustainable Development), PPS4 (Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth), PPG13 (Transport) and PPG15 (Planning and the Historic Environment) are also material considerations.

5.2 Principle of Development

- 5.2.1 The application site is located within the retail fringe area of Romford town centre where Policy ROM11 of the Romford Area Action Plan Development Plan Document advises that retail uses (Class A1) will be permitted at ground floor level. Planning permission for non-retail uses (Classes A2-A5) will be granted at ground floor level provided that the use:

- Complements the retail function;
- Has an active frontage;
- Is open during core retailing hours;

- Does not significantly harm the character, function and vitality and viability of the centre.

5.2.2 The proposed use of the premises for the purposes of an advice and information centre is judged to fall under Class A2 (financial and professional services). Staff are of the view that the proposal has the potential to make a positive contribution to pedestrian flows and Members may agree that the proposal would display many similar characteristics to some Class A1 uses in terms of the general level of activity. Indeed it is intended that the proposed advice and information centre will be open during normal shopping hours. Staff are of the view that the proposed use would provide a complementary service for the shopping public and would provide an appropriate use within this retail fringe location in accordance with Policy ROM11.

5.2.3 Government guidance on town centres contained within PPS4 states that Local Authorities should seek to improve and encourage a variety of uses in town centres to promote their vitality and vitality. Staff are of the view that the proposed use is appropriate to a shopping area and would meet with the objectives of PPS4.

5.3 Conservation Area Implications

5.3.1 It is not considered that the proposal would have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the Romford Conservation Area.

5.4 Design/Impact on Street scene

5.4.1 The proposal would involve no alterations to the exterior of the building. Any changes to the shop front or the provision of advertisements will be considered through separate applications.

5.5 Impact on amenity

5.5.1 The application site is located in an area which is characterised by commercial premises where a certain level of activity and associated noise is to be expected. Given that the proposed advice and information centre would be open predominantly during normal shopping hours it is not considered that the proposal would be harmful to amenity. Although some limited evening opening is proposed (until 8pm) this would not be harmful in staff's view given existing background noise levels and the location of the site.

5.4 Highway/parking issues

5.4.1 The application site has no off-street car parking facilities for customers or staff. Customers and staff attending the site would therefore need to rely upon either public transport or a local car park. The application site is located within a highly accessible town centre location therefore the absence of any car parking provision is considered to be acceptable having

regard to PPG13. The site is accessible by a variety of transport modes including public transport, walking, cycling and the car. For these reasons it is considered that the proposal would pose no adverse effect on the function of the highway. Servicing of the unit in terms of refuse collection could take place from Angel Way at the rear of the site.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Having regard to all relevant factors and material planning considerations staff are of the view that this proposal for an advice and information centre (Class A2) would be an acceptable use in this location. Staff are of the view that the proposal would not be harmful to the vitality and viability of the retail fringe area of Romford town centre or to the character of the Romford Conservation Area. The proposal is considered to be acceptable in all other respects and it is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

None.

Legal implications and risks:

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

Human Resources implications and risks:

None.

Equalities implications and risks:

This proposal would provide an advice and information centre for elderly residents within the Borough. The proposals are judged to be an important way of supporting residents enabling them to service their own needs effectively thus delaying or preventing the need for more acute support.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Application form, plans and supporting statements received on 27th September 2011.