

4.3 SE/16/00370/FUL

Date expired 14 April 2016

PROPOSAL:

Installation of 3 No. Velux style rooflights to the front (South) elevation to match existing size and materials. Conversion of existing storage space to office accommodation.

LOCATION:

Suffolk House, 154 High Street, Sevenoaks TN13 1XE

WARD(S):

Sevenoaks Town & St Johns

ITEM FOR DECISION

This application has been referred to Development Control Committee as Sevenoaks District Council is the applicant and owns the building / land in question.

RECOMMENDATION: That planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:-

1) The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

In pursuance of section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2) The materials to be used in the construction of the development shall be those indicated on the approved plan JHPRS85-002E.

To ensure that the appearance of the development is in harmony with the existing character of the area as supported by Policy EN1 of the Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan.

3) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: JHPRS85-002E, JHPRS85-005C and JHPRS85-006.

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

Note to Applicant

In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the NPPF Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals. SDC works with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner, by;

- Offering a duty officer service to provide initial planning advice,
- Providing a pre-application advice service,
- When appropriate, updating applicants/agents of any small scale issues that may arise in the processing of their application,
- Where possible and appropriate suggesting solutions to secure a successful

outcome,

- Allowing applicants to keep up to date with their application and viewing all consultees comments on line (www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/environment/planning/planning_services_online/654.asp),
- By providing a regular forum for planning agents,
- Working in line with the NPPF to encourage developments that improve the improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area,
- Providing easy on line access to planning policies and guidance, and
- Encouraging them to seek professional advice whenever appropriate.

In this instance the applicant/agent:

- 1) The application was considered by the Planning Committee where the applicant/agent had the opportunity to speak to the committee and promote the application.

Description of proposal

- 1 The proposal seeks to convert the roof space of the building which is currently used for storage to an office use. The only external changes to the building would be the insertion of 3 rooflights into the front (south facing) roof pitch. 100 square metres of additional office space would be created through the proposal.
- 2 The proposal includes two different internal layouts, one showing the proposed office space as being open plan (JHPRS85-006) the other shows the creation of one internal wall separating the office into two parts (JHPRS85-002E). As the differences between the two proposals are only internal alterations, permission would not be required for this part of the scheme and so, if granted either internal layout would be acceptable.

Description of Site

- 3 The application site consists of Suffolk House, a four storey property on the north eastern side of the junction between Pembroke Road and the High Street. The building is currently in use on the ground, first and second floors as an office with storage space and WC facilities on the third floor. The site is within the urban confines of Sevenoaks and is located in an area identified for Employment in the ADMP, the Sevenoaks Town Centre and a Business Area.

Constraints

- 4 Employment Allocation

- 5 Town Centre
- 6 Business Area

Relevant Planning History

- 7 15/03019/FUL - Installation of 2 No. additional dormer windows and 1 No velux rooflight to the Front (South) elevation to match existing size and materials. Installation of 6 No Photovoltaic (PV) Panels to the front (South) elevation - Granted, 13.11.2015

Consultations

Sevenoaks Town Council

- 8 Recommend approval.

Representations

- 9 None received.

Chief Planning Officer's Appraisal

Extant permissions

- 10 The application follows a similar application granted planning permission in November 2015 under reference 15/03019/FUL. The previous application sought to convert the roof space of the building to office use along with the creation of 2 additional dormer windows, 1 Velux rooflight and 6 Photovoltaic (PV) Panels to the south elevation. These external additions have been removed from the current scheme and replaced with three rooflights in the southern elevation. The extant permission forms a material consideration of this application.

Principle of conversion of storage space to office use

- 11 Policy *TLC1* of the *ADMP* states that within Sevenoaks Town Centre, residential, business, leisure, entertainment, arts, culture, tourism or community facilities will be permitted where consistent with criteria b), c) and d):
 - *Outside the Primary Retail Frontages and the area defined in policy EMP1(g) for B1 Business Use, and*
 - *On the upper floors of units within Sevenoaks Primary Retail Frontages where there will be no adverse impact on the functioning of the ground floor use.*

b) Within the Sevenoaks Primary Retail Frontage, at least 70% of the ground floor frontage will be maintained in A1 use. Where proposals would not lead to the percentage of A1 frontage falling below this level, A Class uses will be permitted where they would compliment the predominant retail function and not lead to a dead town centre frontage during regular shopping hours.

c) Within the Sevenoaks Secondary Retail Frontage, proposals for the use of ground floor premises for retail and other A Class uses will be permitted where they would not lead to a dead town centre frontage. Ground Floor A Class uses will be maintained except where evidence is provided by the applicant to show that these uses are no longer financially viable. In such circumstances, non-residential town centre uses at ground floor level would be permitted.

d) Within the areas defined in Policy EMP1, Business Uses will be retained or permitted.

- 12 The site lies within Sevenoaks Town Centre and forms part of the Sevenoaks High Street area ((f) - Appendix 4 of the ADMP) defined as Land for business under Policy EMP1 of the ADMP and is not within either a Primary or Secondary Retail Frontage.
- 13 The building is currently in B1 Office use on the first, second and third floors, the proposal seeks to also convert the roof space of the property into B1 office use. Additionally the site benefits from extant permission to convert the loft space to office granted under application reference 15/03019/FUL. As the site is currently in office use, because it is defined as land for business under Policy EMP1 and as there is extant permission for the conversion of the loft space the principle of the use of the roof space of the property as a B1 office is wholly acceptable.

Impact on character and appearance of the area

- 14 The *NPPF* and *Policy SC1* of the *Core strategy* both express that a ‘*presumption in favour of sustainable development*’ should be used when deciding applications. *Policy SP1* of the *Core Strategy*, *Policy EN1* of the *ADMP* and the *NPPF* highlight that new developments should be of a high standard of design that responds to the character of the locality.
- 15 The proposal would result in a minor exterior alteration to the building in the form of the creation of three additional rooflights on the southern roof pitch. The property already has a single rooflight on this roof pitch; I consider that the addition of three more, evenly spaced and matching rooflights would not impact negatively upon the character and appearance of the area.
- 16 Furthermore the proposed exterior changes are a reduction over the previous application (which is still extant) which sought to create additional bulk through the creation of two additional dormer windows and as such it would be less harmful to the character and appearance of the area than the scheme with extant permission.
- 17 Consequently the proposal is in accordance with the *NPPF*, policy *SP1* of the *Core Strategy* and policy *EN1* of the *ADMP*.

Impact on amenities

- 18 The *NPPF* and *Policy EN2* of the *ADMP* both require new developments to safeguard amenity as well as to provide an adequate standard of residential amenity for the current and future occupiers.
- 19 As has been stated previously in this report, the building is currently used as offices on the first, second and third floors. The conversion of the roof space to additional office space would therefore not result in any amenity impacts above and beyond those that already exist.
- 20 The creation of three new rooflights has the potential to overlook neighbouring properties. However it must be recognised that permission for a scheme which included two dormer windows in similar locations to the proposed rooflights was granted permission in November 2015; the proposal would offer less opportunity to overlook neighbouring properties than the extant permission. Additionally the rooflights would view to the south onto the High Street and Suffolk Way and not directly into any neighbouring properties or amenity spaces and would have much the same outlook as the existing rooflight and windows on the southern roof pitch of the property. As such I do not consider that there would be any loss of privacy to neighbouring properties resulting from the proposal.
- 21 Additionally as the proposal would not result in any increase in the built form there would be no loss of outlook or light to neighbouring properties resulting from the proposal.
- 22 Consequently the proposal is in accordance with the *NPPF*, policy *EN2* of the *ADMP* and the *Residential Extensions SPD*.

Parking

- 23 The proposal would convert 100 square metres of space currently used as storage to an office use. This would bring the total office floorspace of the property from 1594 square metres to 1694 square metres. The building benefits from 84 existing parking space to the rear, taking the proposed floor area into account, the parking ratio of the development would equate to 1 parking space for every 21.6 square metres of office space.
- 24 The Council does not have any adopted standards for parking; however as a guide the previous Kent parking standards applied a maximum ratio of 1 space per 25 square metres of office space. Given that the proposal would achieve in excess of these former standards in a town centre location where maximum standards are often significantly reduced I am satisfied that the existing parking provision is more than capable of accommodating the increase in office space as proposed.
- 25 Policies EN1 and T2 of the *ADMP* seek to ensure that new developments are provided with suitable parking facilities. Although policy T2 states that non-residential parking should be provided in accordance with advice from Kent County Council, in this instance given the generous parking standards already provided it has not been necessary to seek such advice.

Conclusion

- 26 The proposal would provide additional office space in the town centre within an area designated as an area for business use. The proposal would not impact significantly upon the character or appearance of the area, would not impact upon neighbouring amenity and provides generous amounts of parking. Consequently I am satisfied that the development is in accordance with the development plan and therefore my recommendation is to grant planning permission.

Contact Officer(s): Paul Dadswell Extension: 7463

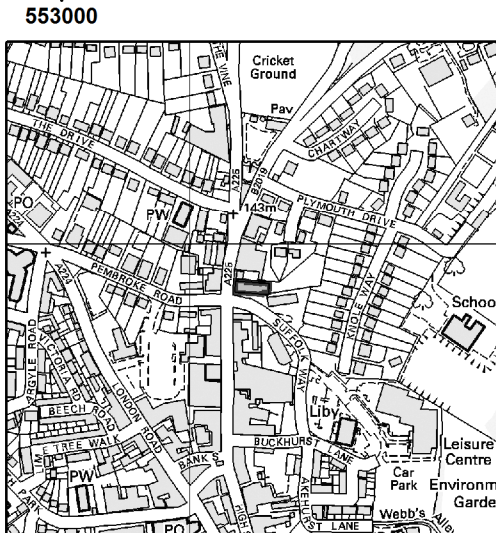
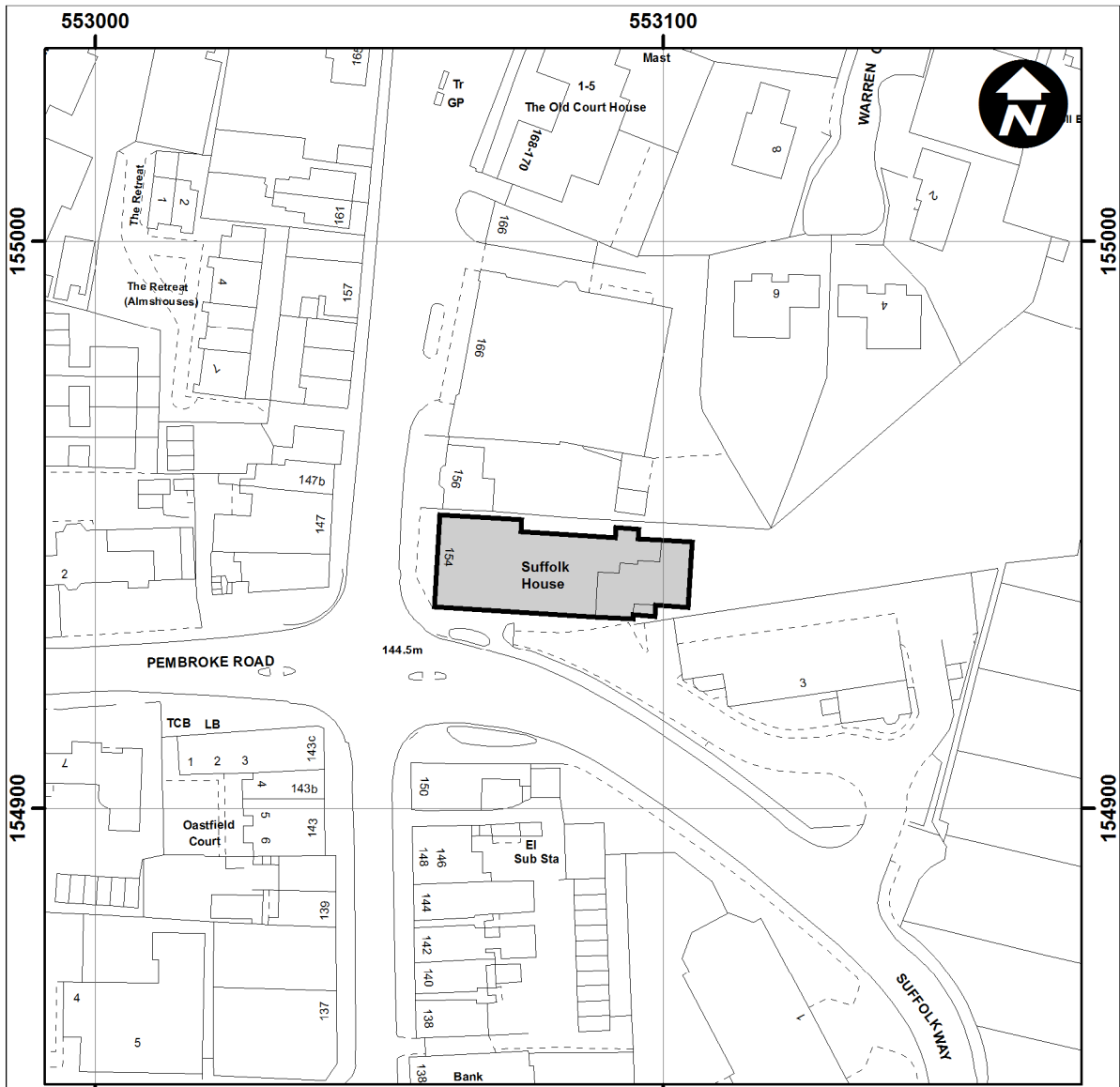
Richard Morris
Chief Planning Officer

Link to application details:

<https://pa.sevenoaks.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=O2AI00BK1YH00>

Link to associated documents:

<https://pa.sevenoaks.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=O2AI00BK1YH00>



Site Plan

Scale 1:1,250

Date 13/04/2016



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BLOCK PLAN

