

4.3- SE/15/03019/FUL Date expired 20 November 2015

PROPOSAL: 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 6No. Photovoltaic (PV) Panels to the front (South) elevation.

LOCATION: Suffolk House , 154 High Street, Sevenoaks TN13 1XE

WARD(S): Sevenoaks Town & St Johns

ITEM FOR DECISION

This application is being 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 external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match those used on the existing building.

To ensure that the appearance of the development is in harmony with the existing character of the building 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: JHP RS85 - 001, 002B, 003, 004 and 005A

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.as)

p),

- 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 This application seeks to create additional usable space within part of the roof area of an existing office building. The roof area is already partly in use as office accommodation, and the application seeks to add two dormer windows to the south facing elevation to allow conversion of the remaining space into office use.
- 2 The area in question is currently used as storage space for the existing office accommodation. However, it is not lit by windows. The application seeks to erect two triangle shaped dormer windows on the southern elevation to provide light to this space, together with a roof light. The dormers and roof light would match those currently on the building. This would enable the space to be let out.
- 3 The existing office provides around 1600sqm of space. The proposed additional area created through conversion of roof space would be around 86sqm.
- 4 The application also seeks permission to install 6 no solar panels on the southern roof slope of the building, above the existing and proposed dormer windows.

Description of Site

- 5 Suffolk House is a large purpose built office arranged over three floors with further accommodation in the roof space. It was built in the 1980's and is of typical design for its age. A large car park providing 84 spaces is located to the east of the building.
- 6 The building occupies a prominent position within Sevenoaks Town Centre, on the junction of the High Street and Suffolk Way. It is surrounded by other buildings predominantly in commercial uses, some of which have residential accommodation on upper floors.
- 7 The building falls within a designated employment site under policy EMP1 of the ADMP. It falls outside of the High Street conservation area, which ends at 150 High Street on the opposite side of Suffolk Way. Otherwise there are no material planning designations.

Constraints

- 8 Protected Employment Site
- 9 Adjacent to the High Street conservation area

Policies

ADMP:

- 10 Policies – EN1, EN2, EMP1, TLC1, T1, T2

Sevenoaks Core Strategy:

- 11 Policies – LO1, LO2, LO3, SP1, SP8

Other:

- 12 The National Planning Policy Framework
- 13 The Sevenoaks High Street Conservation Area Appraisal

Planning History

- 14 SE/85/00333 – Demolition of existing retail, storage and office buildings and erection of an office building - Approved

Consultations

Sevenoaks Town Council –

- 15 Sevenoaks Town Council recommended approval.

Representations

- 16 None received

Chief Planning Officer's Appraisal

- 17 This application has been reported to the Planning Committee as it relates a development where the Council is the applicant and owner of the land in question.

Principal Issues

- 18 The existing building provides office employment in a sustainable town centre location, compliant with national and local planning policies. This application seeks to modify the existing building to provide further lettable office space, through conversion of part of the roofspace. Policy EMP1 of the ADMP identifies this site and surrounding area as a designated employment site and supports the retention, intensification and regeneration of such sites for business uses. On this basis, the principle of creating additional office space within the building is fully supported.

- 19 The main issue therefore relates to the suitability of the specific external changes proposed to the building. Policies SP1 of the Core Strategy and EN1 of the ADMP state that all development should be high quality and relate well to an area in terms of scale, height and form.
- 20 In this respect, the two dormer windows and roof light as proposed would match existing dormers and roof lights on the buildings, and would be subservient to the main roof. They would therefore be in keeping with the design and style of the existing building. The small amount of additional bulk added to the building would not be harmful.
- 21 The proposed solar panels would be sited at a slightly higher level on the roof slope than the existing / proposed dormers. Although on an elevation fronting the public highway, the solar panels would be a modest addition to the roof slope, and would also be largely obscured by the existing / proposed dormer windows.
- 22 The southern elevation would face across Suffolk Way towards the side elevation of 150 High Street, which marks the boundary of the Sevenoaks High Street conservation area. Section 72 of the Town and Country Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a duty on a Local Planning Authority to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving and/or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. Likewise policies SP1 of the Core Strategy and EN4 of the ADMP seek to protect heritage assets and their settings.
- 23 In this instance, the application site falls outside of the conservation area, but given its close proximity to the boundary, consideration should be given to the impact of the development on the setting of the conservation area. In this respect, the existing office is a large building in the context of Sevenoaks Town Centre. However views of the office building from the High Street Conservation Area are limited, largely due to the fact that existing buildings within the conservation area physically obstruct views of the office building.
- 24 As a result, the proposed development would only be visible from within the conservation area from the opposite side of Suffolk Way. In this context, the extensions / alterations as proposed would be modest in scale and size and would match existing design features on the building. It would not increase the scale or prominence of the building to a degree where it would affect or harm the setting of the conservation area. Therefore it would not conflict with the above mentioned legislation or policies.
- 25 The proposed dormers and roof lights would face towards the flank wall of 150 High Street. This property is in use as a retail premises on the ground floor with offices above. A distance of 27 metres is maintained between Suffolk House and 150 High Street. Given the modest nature of the proposal, the separation distance, and the nature of the use of each building, no harmful impacts on the amenities of 150 High Street would be likely to arise.
- 26 Another office building at 3 Suffolk Way is sited immediately to the east of the application site. Due to the orientation of each building, the proposed dormer windows would not face towards this property, and given the modest nature of the proposal it would not have any harmful impacts upon No 3 Suffolk Way.

- 27 Policy EN2 of the ADMP states that new development should safeguard existing amenities. On the basis of the above I consider that the development would comply with this policy.
- 28 The development would add 86sqm of additional office space to the building, with an overall floor area for the building in the region of 1680 sqm. The existing office is also provided with 84 car parking spaces. Taking the proposed floor area into account, the parking ratio would equate to 1 parking space for every 20sqm of office space. The Council does not have any adopted parking standards for office space. However, as a guide, the previous Kent parking standards applied a maximum ratio of 1 space per 25 sqm of office space. Given that the development would achieve in excess of these former standards in a town centre location where maximum standards are often significantly reduced, I am of the opinion that the existing parking provision is more than capable of accommodating the small increase in office space as proposed.
- 29 Policies EN1(d) 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 on site, it has not been necessary to seek such advice.

Conclusion

- 30 The proposal would provide additional office space in the town centre, where such provision is directed by local and national planning policies. It would result in a modest extension and alteration to the roof of the building and the impact of this upon the local surroundings and setting of the conservation area would not be harmful. Parking provision on the site is generous by town centre standards. I am satisfied that the development is fully compliant with the development plans, and on this basis that planning permission should be granted.

Background Papers

Site and Block Plan

Contact Officer(s): Mr A Byrne Extension: 7225

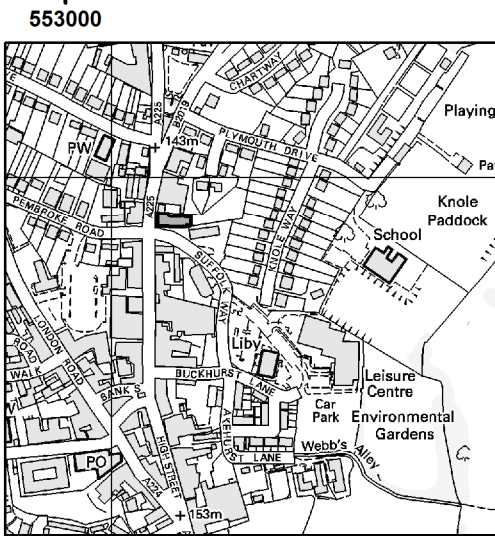
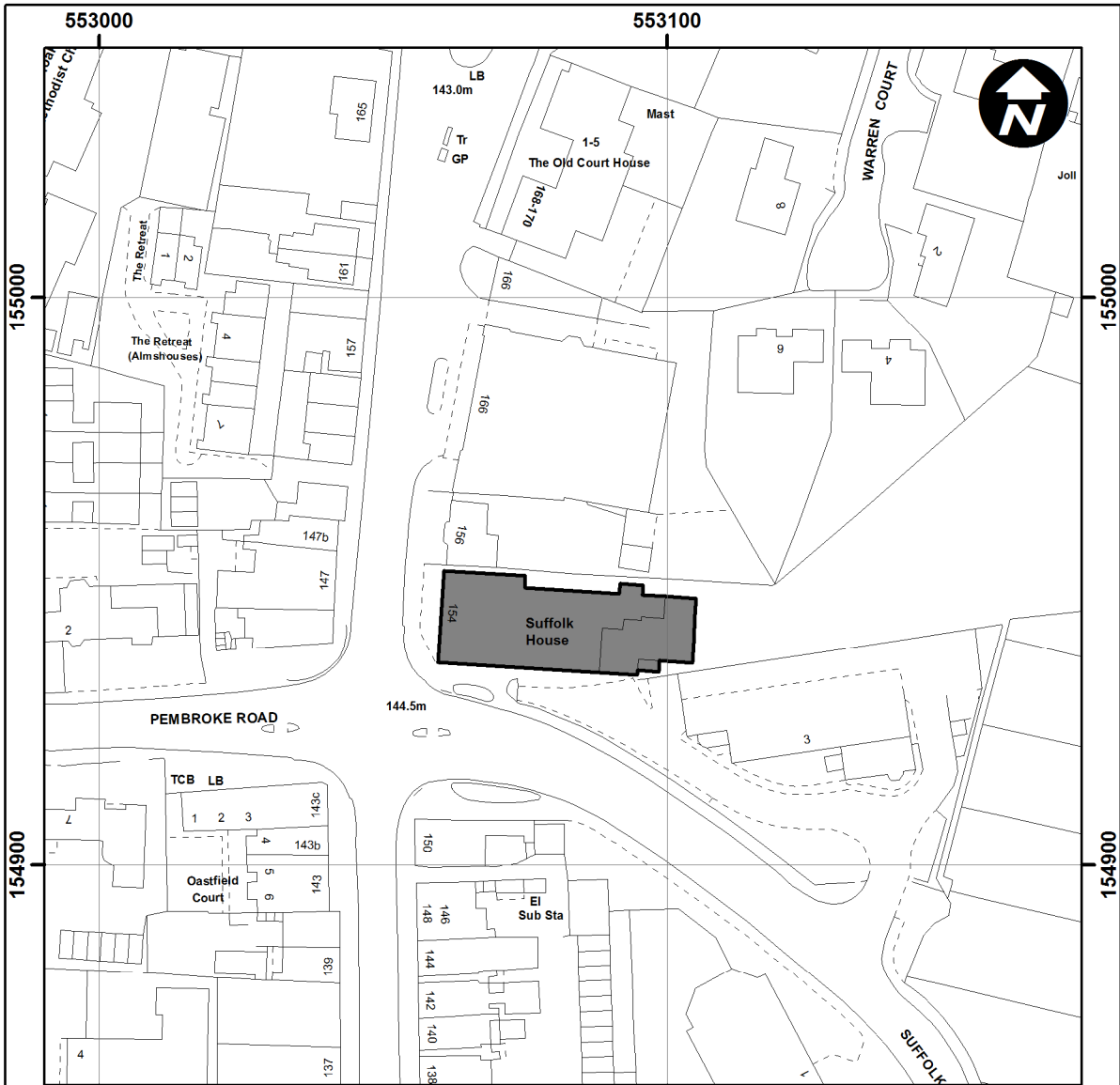
Richard Morris
Chief Planning Officer

Link to application details:

<http://pa.sevenoaks.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=NV8PTYBK10C00>

Link to associated documents:

<http://pa.sevenoaks.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=NV8PTYBK10C00>



Site Plan

Scale 1:1,250

Date 28/10/2015



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Ordnance Survey 100019428.

Block Plan

