

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Executive Director of Housing, Environmental and Economic Development

Planning Committee: 2 August 2011

DC11/122/COU: Change of use of office accommodation to form 3 flats and associated external alterations including rooflights and a 3 storey rear extension at 82 Main Street, Alexandria by Harich Ltd.

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1** This application relates to a property in which the Council has an ownership interest. Under the terms of the approved scheme of delegation it therefore requires to be determined by the Planning Committee.

2. DEVELOPMENT DETAILS

- 2.1** The application relates to the upper floor of a two storey commercial building situated within Alexandria town centre. The premises cover an area of approximately 200m² which is divided between two offices and an attic. The premises were last used by a company called OnePlus and have been vacant since January 2007. The premises are accessed from a shared stair at the rear. They are located on the western side of Main Street and occupy a prominent location close to the Smollett Fountain. There is a public car park at the rear of the building. This section of Main Street contains a mixture of uses including shops, offices, hot food takeaways, a post office and a betting shop. There are already flats on the upper floors of buildings in the vicinity. On the opposite side of the road is the vacant former Kippen Dairy site.
- 2.2** Planning permission is sought for a change of use of the upper floor office accommodation into three residential flats. Internally, the layout would be altered to provide two one bedroom properties on the first floor, whilst the attic would be converted into a two bedroom property. Externally, five rooflights would be formed on the front elevation and four at the rear to cater for the attic conversion. At the rear of the building, the existing access stair would be removed and replaced by a three storey extension which would house an internal stairwell.

3. CONSULTATIONS

- 3.1** The Environmental Health Service has no objection subject to confirmation that suitable sound proofing measures will be installed to prevent any unacceptable noise disturbance from traffic.

- 3.2 The Roads Service and Estates Service each have no objection to the proposed development.

4. REPRESENTATIONS

- 4.1 There have been no representations submitted in relation to this application.

5. ASSESSMENT AGAINST THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010

- 5.1 The site lies within Alexandria Town Centre, and Policy RET5 states that applications for non-retail uses, particularly where they involve the re-use of vacant upper floors, will be favourably considered where they contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre and do not conflict with other local plan policies. Since the premises were last used as office accommodation, there would be no loss of existing retail space and the proposal would result in premises which have been lying vacant being brought back into use. The site is located within the defined Town Centre and the creation of three flats above ground level is considered to be an appropriate use for such a location, and one which would add to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre. Consequently, it is considered that the proposal would be in accordance with Policy RET5.

6. ASSESSMENT AGAINST MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Scottish Planning Policy

- 6.1 The SPP supports the provision of a mixture of uses and activities within town centres, to be achieved by encouraging retail and other commercial uses in town centre locations. The provision of additional residential accommodation within a town centre can add to the long term sustainability of an area, create additional footfall and contribute to improving the evening environment/economy. Residential accommodation within a town centre is acknowledged to have an important role to play in contributing to a successful and vibrant location, and the proposed use is therefore considered to be consistent with the principles of the SPP.

Appearance and Location

- 6.2 The premises have been vacant for almost four years and it is desirable that they be brought back into use in order to avoid deterioration in their appearance and to bring further activity into the town centre. The building is of a traditional design with a pitched. Although rooflights will be added to both the front and rear roof slopes, the main external alteration would involve the formation of a three storey rear extension. The purpose of the extension would be to allow a new stairwell to be formed in place of the existing external access stair. In order to minimise the impact of the extension, it would have a

slate roof and would be finished in a coloured render to match the red sandstone on the rear of the building. Although the surrounding area includes various commercial uses it is considered that the flats would not conflict with the neighbouring business uses. The site occupies a town centre location and whilst it does not have dedicated car parking facilities, it backs onto a large public car park and the Roads Service has no objections to the residential use.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1** The proposal would bring a vacant part of a building back into use and would not detract from the existing uses within a mixed area of the town centre. It is considered that the proposed residential accommodation would enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre and is therefore supported by local planning policies

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1** **Grant** full planning permission subject to conditions set out in Section 9 below.

9. CONDITIONS

- 01.** The development hereby approved shall commence within a period of 3 years from the date of this decision notice.
- 02.** The developer shall submit to the Planning Authority in writing upon the forms specified for the purpose and attached to this decision notice:
- a)** A Notice of Commencement of Development as soon as practicable once it is decided to commence the development hereby approved (which shall be prior to the development commencing);
 - b)** A Notice of Completion of Development as soon as practicable once the development has been completed.
- 03.** Prior to the commencement of development, details of sound proofing measures to minimise noise nuisance arising from traffic noise for the development shall be submitted for the further written approval of the Planning Authority and thereafter implemented as approved prior to the flats being brought into use.
- 04.** Details of the treatment of the external walls of the new stairwell including the colour of the treatment shall be submitted to and approved by the Planning Authority and shall be implemented prior to the flats being brought into use.

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and Economic Development
Date: 19 July 2011

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Appendix: None.

Background Papers:

1. Application forms and plans;
2. Consultation responses;
3. Scottish Planning Policy; and
4. West Dunbartonshire Local Plan 2010.

Wards affected: Ward 2 (Leven)