

Change of Use from Residential to Commercial, for office use at:

TYTHE BARN, CARRIERS ROAD, CRANBROOK, KENT, TN17 3JU



1.0 + INTRODUCTION

The following statement has been produced in support of a Full Planning Application to change the use of a residential property back to its former use as commercial office at The Old Tythe Barn, Carriers Road, Cranbrook Kent TN17 3JU.

This statement sets out the key policy parameters, site context, planning history, the design approach and rationale and an analysis of the previous scheme to present a planning case to be considered for planning.

2.0 + THE SITE

The application site is situated off Carriers Road which is located within the built up confines of Cranbrook.

Cranbrook is located within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the site itself lies on the edge of the Cranbrook Conservation Area. It has been identified that the site is designated as an area of archaeological potential, however it does not fall within any other special designated area including flood risk zone.

The site comprises of the main barn, a garden to the rear of the property and a patio area to the south. The site is bounded by residential gardens of neighbouring properties. The application site has an established vehicular access and the main site area is not particularly visible within the general street scene.

The immediate built context is primarily residential, with a mix of commercial local businesses and community infrastructure, including Cranbrook Library, Jockey Lane Car park, Cranbrook Museum and Cranbrook Primary School.

Cranbrook Conservation Area

The aesthetic significance of the surrounding Conservation Area derives from the buildings ages, appearance form and scale and construction methods which is considered to be of a typical Kentish vernacular.

The area is built up of other properties, retail, cafe, pubs and restaurants with similar style buildings using a palette of brick, white weatherboarding, tile hanging, clay and slate tiles with roof forms, ridge patterns and appearance demonstrate a variety of types including gable end, hip, barn hip and cat-slides and creates a visually attractive street-scape.

Buildings of note in the immediate area are the Cranbrook Museum and Old Rectory Cottage which are Grade II listed and located to the west of Old Tythe Barn.

3.0 + PLANNING HISTORY

Planning Application relevant to the site include:

74/00047 - Conversion of stores to office - Application Permitted

77/00809 - Conversion of roof space to boardroom - Application Permitted

79/00609/FUL -Dormer window in roof space - Application Refused

80/00282/FUL- Extension - Application Approved

96/01753/FUL - Conversion of offices to a dwelling - Application Approved

97/01616/FUL - Conversion of commercial premises to residential

22/00350/FUL - Proposed internal alterations and associated structural work and alterations to existing fenestration to create opening for bi-fold doors

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK - NPPF (July 2021)

The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and puts "the presumption in favour of sustainable development" at the heart of the planning system. The following chapters are relevant to the proposal:

- Chapter 2 – Achieving Sustainable Development
- Chapter 6 - Building a strong, competitive economy
- Chapter 7 - Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- Chapter 9 - Promoting sustainable transport
- Chapter 11 - Making effective use of land
- Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Chapter 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

TUNBRIDGE WELLS LOCAL PLAN (2006)

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that where the Development Plan contains relevant policies, applications for development which are in accordance with these policies should be allowed unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) are material considerations.

- Policy EN5 - Development within, or affecting the character of, a Conservation Area
- Policy CR3 - Location of proposals for small scale (less than 500sq metres gross floorspace) Uses
- Policy H1 - Retention of existing stock
- Policy ED2 - Location of small scale (less than 500sq metres gross floorspace)
- Policy TP4 - Access to the Road Network
- Policy TP5 - Vehicle Parking Standards
- Policy TP8 - Vehicle parking for small scale changes to non residential and development affecting Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas
- TP9 - Cycle Parking

CORE STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT PLAN DOCUMENT 2010

- Policy 1 - Delivery of Development
- Policy 3 - Transport Infrastructure
- Policy 6 - Housing Provision
- Policy 7 - Employment Provision
- Policy 12 - Development in Cranbrook

The proposals alters the existing Class C3 residential nature of the property back into Commercial Class E (g)(i) offices.

Principle

The NPPF places a presumption in favour of sustainable development at the heart of the planning system. There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The NPPF states that the planning system should contribute to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, support strong, vibrant and healthy communities and contribute to protecting and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

Planning policies and decisions as part of the NPPF, should help to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should therefore be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local businesses needs and wider opportunities for development. The policies also support the role that town centres play at the heart of the local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation.

This application seeks the change of use from a 5 bed residential dwelling into commercial office space. The redevelopment of the site will provide a gross internal area of 248sqm that will provide flexible open plan accommodation across the two floors, and cater for the needs of modern workplace provisions. The occupier of the building has up to 18 members of staff. However, working to a hybrid model, it is rare that there will be more than 12 people in the office at any one time.

As part of the latest application, the building has recently undergone internal alterations and structural works to bring the building up to modern day standards. This application does not propose any further alterations to the external form of the existing building, and therefore the proposal will have no detrimental impact on the Conservation Area in line with Policy EN5.

Policies H1 and ED2 within the Local Plan recognise that it is not appropriate to separate small scale businesses from residential areas for which they can be a source of employment and local services. The site is situated within the Limits to Built Development, and forms a sustainable location within close proximity to a wide range of shops, services and public transport. The site forms a natural transition from the town centre to residential properties, with a prevailing character of mixed use development. It is therefore considered an appropriate and effective use of land, capable of accommodating a commercial purpose, and without having an impact on the character or amenities of the area.

The site provides an appropriate location for a small scale economic development, and the long term preservation of the building can be served for a commercial use. In line with Chapter 7 of the NPPF, the use as office accommodation is considered to contribute positively to the local economy as a means of diversifying and strengthening the local income, and providing employment to the area that enhances the vitality and viability of the local community.

The proposed development is considered to represent sustainable form of development as the proposal entails the re-use and refurbishment of an existing building. The site's sustainable location would promote social interaction within the services of the local community, and support healthy lifestyles by encouraging walking, cycling, and opportunities for employees to access the site via a range of transport options.

The site to which this application relates, once served as commercial premises before its conversion and change of use to residential accommodation (Planning Ref: 97/01616/FUL). Therefore, the use of the building for commercial purposes is well-established when considered against the history of the site, and would provide flexible and modern accommodation that will be attractive to the business market, and in turn encourage further investment in Cranbrook with the potential for further job creation.

It should also be noted that Tunbridge Wells Borough Council have recently met their 5 year housing supply, with a substantial amount of residential development currently being built within Cranbrook. Therefore, it is not considered that the loss of one residential unit would detrimentally impact the council's housing targets, and the addition of a commercial unit would provide local employment opportunities to support the new housing.

Parking and Access

In relation to parking and highways, an existing access to the building already exists with a good level of parking for up to 5 cars, and suitable driver visibility. EV charging points will be installed to accommodate the electric and hybrid cars currently used by the employees. In line with Policy TP4, the increase in traffic generated by the proposal would not be of such a level to have significant impact on highway safety, nor worsen the traffic conditions in terms of delay or the risk of accidents.

The site lies within the Limits of Built Development, and in a sustainable location with easy access to public transport. Car parking will be provided to the front of the property, with suitable off road parking along Carriers Road, and a public car park (Cranbrook Jockey Lane) opposite the site.

The proposal does not fall above the threshold for which a full Transport Assessment and Travel Plan is required for non-residential developments.

In line with Policy TP9 of the Local Plan, the provision of secure cycle storage facilities have been incorporated within the site and set out in accordance with Kent County Council's Cycling Strategy for Kent.

Residential Amenity

The proposal will introduce commercial development into the application site. The existing locality provides both residential and commercial uses within close proximity to the site, and therefore it is not considered that the change of use would result in undue harm by reason of additional noise and disturbance. As the property once served as residential accommodation, the overlooking impact towards neighbouring private amenity spaces would also be kept to a minimum.

Visual Amenity

The proposal does not incorporate any external alterations. The appearance of the building would remain unchanged, and therefore would not have a harmful impact on the visual amenity and character of the street scene or the wider conservation area in line with Policy EN5.

Landscaping

Apart from the inclusion of cycle storage, there will be no alterations to the site.

7.0 + CONCLUSION

The Government's most recent legislative provisions and guidance indicates that the proposed reuse and refurbishment of the existing building would be acceptable in accordance with relevant local and national planning policies.

The proposal represents a sustainable form of development, for which there is a presumption in favour, and is situated within a highly sustainable location, reducing the need for employees to travel to access shops, services and amenities within the area.

The proposal provides the opportunity to accommodate modern flexible office floorspace that will provide a better offer to the business market, and encourage investment and employment within the locality.

The proposed scheme is appropriate in terms of its impact in landscape, heritage and visual, amenity and transport terms and accords with the relevant policies of the Tunbridge Wells Local Plan and NPPF.

We therefore consider the scheme to be acceptable to warrant a positive recommendation.