

COMMITTEE REPORT

ITEM 06

Reference:
17/00643/FUL

Site:
Town Hall
Ingrave Road
Brentwood
Essex
CM15 8AY

Ward:
Brentwood South

Parish:

Proposal:
Redevelopment of site to provide a mix use including “community hub” (sui generis use) at ground floor, offices (Use Class B1) within part of the basement and part of the ground floor and the entire first floor, and 19 flats (4 x 1 bed and 15 x 2 bed) at second and third floor level. Elevational alterations, roof extensions, a single storey colonnade extension to front east facing elevation and alterations to facilitate new vehicular and cycle parking layout, landscaping and boundary treatments.

Plan Number(s):

(01)100; (01)101; (01)102; (01)103; (01)104; (01)105; (01)200; (01)201;
(01)300; (01)600/B; (01)601/C; (01)602/C; (01)603/C; (01)7604/C; 01(605)/A;
(01)700/A; (01)701/A; (01)800; Site plan; 21706-001/A; 21706-02/C;
21706/03/A; Heritage Statement; Landscaping Details; Noise Impact Assessment;
Transport Statement; 21706/04/A;

Applicant:
Mr Greg Campbell

Case Officer: Mr Nick Howard

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

The proposal seeks full planning permission for the redevelopment of the site to provide a 'Community Hub' at ground floor, office use within part of the basement, ground floor and the entire first floor. On the second and third floor the proposal includes 19 flats of which 4 are one bedroom and 15 two bedroom. The applicant describes the 'Community Hub' as housing the Council's and other community group's public reception which may include: customer services centre, waiting area with café, arts and cultural experiences and provide back office space for other community groups.

With regard to the residential element, some of the units will have roof terraces and the residential element will have its own private entrance at the south west end of the building, access to the flats will be via a lift and a staircase. A covered cycle parking area would be provided for the future residents and 19 dedicated car parking spaces will be provided in the southern parking area. Visitors to the residential accommodation will have access to 11 shared spaces within the eastern parking area.

With regard to the non-residential element the proposal includes a provision of a community hub comprising 1500 square metres, which is in the form of an open plan layout. The Council Chamber will remain on the first floor. On part of the ground floor, basement and first floor the proposal is for an office use totalling 1436 square metres. It is envisaged that the non-residential floorspace will be occupied by about 250 employees.

The three car parking areas will be reconfigured to provide 131 car parking spaces of which the non-residential floorspace will be served by 99 car parking spaces from the entire northern car park and the remainder from the southern parking area. In addition, a cycle area to accommodate 44 bikes will be available for employees.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

The site comprises an irregular shaped area of land of approximately 0.98 hectares in area. Within the site is the town hall building which comprises four floors and a basement. The town hall was built in 1958 and then extended in 1984 with a southern wing and then in 1990 with a three-storey extension to the west facing (rear) elevation.

Around the building a significant part of the curtilage is hard-surfaced with three areas of car parking, one to the north, one to the east and one to the south providing approximately 180 spaces. In front of the building are three, although two are only used, main building entrances and an area of landscaping fronting onto Ingrave Road.

Vehicular access to the site is taken from two points on Ingrave Road. To the north of and adjacent to the site is a dentist practice, Regency House which is a Grade II listed building; opposite the main access is the Toby Priory public house. Residential properties abut the southern and western boundaries of the site and Shenfield common lies to the south.

The site is outside the Town Centre Conservation Area (CA), the southern boundary of the CA forms the northern boundary of the site.

3.0 RELEVANT HISTORY

- None of relevance to this application.

4.0 SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Detailed below is a summary of the consultation responses, if any received. The full version of each consultation response can be viewed on the Council's website via Public Access at the following link: <http://publicaccess.brentwood.gov.uk/online-applications/>

- **Historic Buildings And Conservation Officer-**

No objections the comments from the HBO are contained within the assessment section of the report.

- **Design Officer-**

No objections the comments from the design officer are contained within the assessment section of the report.

- **Highway Authority-**

The Highway Authority would not wish to raise an objection to the above application, given the existence and previous use of the building for B1 (office use), the location with good access to frequent and extensive public transport, the existence of on-street waiting restrictions outside the site, town centre car parks and Brentwood Borough Council's adopted parking standards, subject to conditions.

- **Environmental Health & Enforcement Manager-**

To be reported verbally at committee

- **Essex & Suffolk Water-**

We have no objection to this development subject to compliance with our requirements, consent is given to the development on the condition that a water connection is made onto our Company network for the new dwelling for revenue purposes.

- **Basildon Fire Station-**

The proposal does not appear to affect fire service access to existing premises in the vicinity. Fire service access to the proposed development appears sufficient subject to confirmation of works required within Fire Service regulations with regard conversion of the upper floors into flats.

- **Arboriculturalist-**

To be reported verbally at committee

- **Operational Services Manager-**

To be reported verbally at committee

5.0 SUMMARY OF NEIGHBOUR COMMENTS

This application has been advertised by way of individual neighbour notification letters, press advert and public site notice which has been displayed nearby.

Detailed below is a summary of the neighbour comments, if any received. The full version of each neighbour response can be viewed on the Council's website via Public Access at the following link: <http://publicaccess.brentwood.gov.uk/online-applications/>

Two letters of representation have been received that can be summarised as follows:

Levels between the south boundary and No's 8, 10 and 12 The Chase need to be reviewed as no retaining walls are shown;

Existing Japanese knotweed issue needs to be addressed

There is an existing badger run in the vicinity

Cars in the south car park need to face forward to avoid 'car pollution' to the occupiers of The Chase

New windows and dormers will increase overlooking

Proposed new look will greatly spoil and elegant building

6.0 POLICY CONTEXT

The starting point for determining an application is the development plan, in this instance, the Brentwood Replacement Local Plan (RLP) 2005. Applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Relevant material considerations for determining this application are the following RLP policies, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2012 and National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG) 2014.

RLP Policy:

CP1- Core Principles

E2-Areas allocated for office purposes,

TC4-Use of upper floors above commercial properties.

H6- Small unit accommodation

H9- Affordable housing on larger sites.

Local Development Plan:

The Council's emerging Local Development Plan is currently at draft stage (Regulation 18) and as there are outstanding objections to be resolved, only limited weight can be given to it in terms of decision-taking, as set out in paragraph 216 of the National Planning Policy Framework. As a plan advances and objections are resolved, more weight can be applied to the policies within it. Nevertheless, the draft Local Plan

provides a good indication of the direction of travel in terms of aspirations for growth in the Borough and where development is likely to come forward through draft housing and employment allocations. The next stage of the Local Plan will be a site-focused consultation (Regulation 18) later in 2017, followed by the Pre-Submission Draft (Regulation 19) which is currently anticipated to be published early in 2018. Following this, the Draft LDP will be submitted to the Secretary of State for an Examination in Public. Provided the Planning Inspectorate finds the plan to be sound it is estimated that it could be adopted in late 2018 or early 2019.

National Planning Policy Framework –

Chapters 1, 2, 4, 6, 7 and 8 are the most relevant.

7.0 ASSESSMENT

Principle

The site is situated within the settlement boundary of Brentwood as defined by the Brentwood Replacement Local Plan. The proposals map which forms part of the Local Plan identifies the site as comprising office use (Policy E2). Within the supporting text of Policy E2 'office' is defined as any use falling within Class B1 (a) and B1 (b). However, in reality, the scope of its use extends to visiting members of the public attending the reception desk and other services within the Council who provide face to face interaction and advice. As such, it is considered that the use of the building can be classed as a mix of B1, A2 and sui generis uses. Therefore, the lawful use of the building goes beyond the designation in the Local Plan proposals map.

The proposal to convert part of the building into a 'Community Hub' (sui generis) is acceptable, given that the proposal is ancillary to the overall use of the building as a town hall and forms part of its lawful use. The principle of retaining part of the building to office use accords with the 'allocation' within the Local Plan. Furthermore, the proposed office use will accommodate approximately 250 employees compared to 180 employees currently. The remainder of the building would be used for residential purposes which accords with Policy TC4 which supports the provision of residential accommodation on upper floors above commercial premises within the town centre.

Small unit residential accommodation

Policy H6 encourages a mix of units to be sought within new housing development and to ensure that at least 50% of the total units to be one or two bedroom units. The proposal is for all the units to be either one or two-bedroom properties, with the majority to be two-bedroom units. The proposal therefore accords with Policy H6.

Size of residential units.

In terms of the size of the units, the Government have nationally described space standards for residential units. Most of the units are two bedrooms designed for four persons. This requires 70 square metres or 79 square metres for the maisonettes. For the flats, they range from 70 to 140 square metres and therefore all meet the minimum standard. Regarding the maisonettes they range from 96-106 square metres and again meet the standards.

For the smaller two bedrooms/ three person flats the minimum requirement is 61 square metres and both flats exceed that standard. For the smaller one bedroom/ 2 person flats the minimum requirement is 50 square metres. The four smaller flats range from 50-58 square metres and therefore comply with the minimum requirement.

Overall the size of the residential units meets the government's minimum standards on the size of residential units.

Affordable housing

Policy H9 seeks on suitable sites of 20 units or more within Brentwood Urban Area a provision of affordable housing. The proposal is for 19 residential units, which falls below the threshold set out in the policy, and therefore no affordable housing is required to be provided. However, Policy H9 continues to state where the proposed residential development site is contiguous with one or more other potential residential development sites then the policy will apply and affordable housing will be sought. Therefore, if the Council in the future wish to develop an adjacent site then an affordable housing provision will be required.

Amenity space

The proposed development provides private amenity space for six of the units in the form of roof terraces. The remaining thirteen will therefore have no private amenity space. The Council standards require 20 square metres per unit. However, in this case the proposal is for a change of use and given the context of the area there is a small landscaped area to the front of the building and Shenfield Common is situated close by the site. Overall the combination of the proximity of a large area of open space and roof terraces serving some of the units provides sufficient amenity space for the proposed development.

Impact on adjacent conservation area and design issues.

The Conservation, Design and Heritage officer has provided the following information and comments:

The original building was designed in 1957 by Brandon John Jones RIBA 1908-1999. The building is cited in Pevsner as follows:

Town Hall, Ingrave Road. 1957 by John Brandon-Jones, Ashton & Broadbent. Long, three-storeys, in the Neo-Georgian manner learnt by Brandon-Jones in the 1930s from C. Cowles-Voysey. Matching extension at the S end by Brandon-Jones & Andrew Thorne, 1983-4. Load-bearing red brick with pantile roof. Very old-fashioned, but Brentwood's councillors spent their money wisely'. (Bettley J. & Pevsner, N., 2007, The Buildings of England Series: Essex).

Brentwood Town Hall is located on a prominent thoroughfare within the Brentwood Town Centre, at the southern gateway to the Brentwood Town Centre Conservation Area. A highly visible Civic Building, it benefits from a spacious setting, with landscaping to the frontage and parking to the north and south. The building is of architectural merit; designed by Brandon Jones RIBA, it is a good example of his traditional style. The original building has previously been subject to extensions, these have been sensitively undertaken and complement Jones' traditional intent.

Looking at the proposals for the site layout; the civic core of the building and its connectivity to the outdoor area at the frontage is positive, facilitating accessibility for all users and demarcating entry by improved wayfinding and new architecture. The residential use at the upper floors results in the introduction of new dormers, these are proportionate, to the existing dormer openings and will not result in a diminution of appearance.

Layout and access for the varying uses is rational and improves circulation and flow; however, the cycle storage proposed to be located at the front of the building should be open and not within a timber enclosure, this will negate visual clutter in the sight line of a principle elevation, Sheffield type stands would suffice. In addition, any refuse for the non-residential use should be contained in an appropriate location within the north car park, it is not clear where this is to be sited. A condition in respect of the design of the cycle storage and the location of the refuse areas can be imposed.

In terms of the design intent, including materiality and detail, such aspects of the proposals have evidently been developed with a sensitive consideration towards the host form. Contrast is added by way of a more modern materiality in respect of fenestration and entrance foyer form. Such new elements do not serve to challenge the original intent from a nationally accredited architect (Jones), precedents for the design intent were discussed and developed at the pre-application stage. The rear of the building is improved by way of new façade treatment including fenestration, although this is less significant elevation, the context of the Mews has been considered in design terms.

In summary and based on the comments of the Design Officer, the proposals are of Good Design as set out in National Planning Policy. The retention of the building is fully supported and the extensions will serve to enhance this historic building. The proposal accords with Policy CP1 (i) and (iii) in this respect.

Impact on neighbouring residential properties

The closest neighbouring properties are a block of flats to the west of the site (rear of the building). In particular Block 5-6 which comprises four storeys is approximately 17.6 metres from the west elevation of the Town Hall. At present the office employees on the upper floors of the Town Hall can overlook the occupants of the neighbouring residents to the west. Although the Essex Design Guide requires a distance of 35 metres between living rooms from different properties, the current situation carries significant weight.

The applicant has proposed a couple of measures to enhance the relationship between the rear elevation of the building and the block to the west. These include setting back the second-floor fenestration with deep window reveals and dividing the fenestration into a pair of windows. Furthermore, they consider the views are mitigated through an oblique field of view and the neighbouring block has narrow windows. Also, the neighbouring block is sited lower in level and the eye of the future occupants would be drawn more to the roof of the neighbouring building rather than the windows. Overall the proposal is not considered to raise concerns of overlooking from the residential element into the neighbouring block.

Turning to the properties to the south of the site, in particular the properties on 'The Chase'. One representation has been received on the grounds of overlooking. The proposal includes a number of residential units with views out of the southern elevation at second and third floor level. The distance from the southern elevation of the building to the nearest property on 'The Chase' is about 65 metres, which is a significant distance and would not create any potential for overlooking. The proposal overall therefore complies with Policy CP1 (ii).

Highway Issues

The application is supported by a transport assessment, which concludes there would be no adverse impact on the highway network. The site is within a highly sustainable location close to the centre of Brentwood. The Highway Authority have no objection to the proposal given the existence and previous use of the building and the location with good access to frequent and extensive public transport.

With regard to the proposed car parks, the northern car park currently accommodates 79 spaces, the eastern car park accommodates 13 spaces and the southern car park accommodates 70 spaces. Furthermore, there is another 16 spaces available for staff at the rear of the building providing a total of 178 spaces

The proposed redevelopment scheme involves relaying the northern and southern car park to include a total of 131 parking spaces of which 64 would be in the northern car park, 54 in the southern car park and 13 in the eastern parking area.

The proposed non-residential floorspace including the community hub, office in the basement, ground and first floor of the building would generate a need for 99 car parking spaces. This need would be accommodated in the northern car park and 35 spaces in the southern car park. The remaining 19 spaces in the southern car park would serve the future residents of the proposed flats with two spaces for visitors on the access road opposite the eastern car park. This level of car parking, although reduced from the existing provision, is similar to the County Council maximum parking standards required for office use and meets the reduced provision for residential car parking standards given the site's town centre location.

One objector is concerned with light pollution from cars using the southern car park in hours of darkness. The car park has extensive landscaping around its perimeter and therefore would not cause harm to the living conditions of neighbouring residents.

Other Issues

One representation has been received that they consider that there is Japanese Knotweed in the southern car park. No evidence was submitted to support this claim, however, if it is there, it would be dealt with by the contractors and does not affect the re-development of the building. The other issues raised by third parties have been dealt with in the assessment section of the report.

8.0 CONCLUSION

The proposed mixed-use re-development of the building will provide much needed residential accommodation, improved office facilities and a community hub. The appearance of the building will be enhanced and make a positive contribution to its surroundings.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION

The Application be APPROVED 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.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2.The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the approved drawing(s) listed above and specifications.

Reason: To ensure that the development is as permitted by the local planning authority and for the avoidance of doubt.

3.No development shall take place until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the building hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to safeguard the character and appearance of the area.

4.No development shall take place until samples of windows and balustrades to be used in the construction of the building hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to safeguard the character and appearance of the area.

5. The area for parking identified on the approved drawing shall be provided prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted and shall thereafter remain available for parking the vehicles of the occupiers of the building

Reason: To ensure that adequate on-site parking is available in the interests of highway safety and maintaining the character and appearance of the area.

6. Notwithstanding the submitted plans and prior to the commencement of development details of the design of the cycle storage shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In Order to safeguard the character and appearance of the area.

7. Prior to first occupation of the proposed development, details regarding the location of the non-residential bin storage area shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In Order to safeguard the character and appearance of the area.

8. Prior to first occupation of the proposed development, the Developer shall be responsible for the provision and implementation of a Residential Travel Information Pack per dwelling, for sustainable transport, approved by Essex County Council, (to include six one day travel vouchers for use with the relevant local public transport operator).

Reason: In the interests of reducing the need to travel by car and promoting sustainable development and transport

9. The development shall not be commenced until details of the treatment of all boundaries including drawings of any gates, fences, walls or other means of enclosure have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved boundary treatments shall be completed prior to the first occupation of the development and shall thereafter be permanently retained and maintained.

Reason: In the interests of safeguarding the character and appearance of the area and living conditions of adjacent occupiers.

Informative(s)

1. The following development plan policies contained in the Brentwood Replacement Local Plan 2005 are relevant to this decision: CP1, E2, TC4, H6 & H9 ;the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 and NPPG 2014.
2. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.
3. All work within or affecting the highway is to be laid out and constructed by prior arrangement with, and to the requirements and satisfaction of, the Highway Authority, details to be agreed before the commencement of works.

The applicants should be advised to contact the Development Management Team by email at development.management@essexhighways.org or by post to: SMO3 - Essex Highways, Childerditch Highways Depot, Hall Drive, Brentwood. CM13 3HD.

Documents:

All background documents including application forms, drawings and other supporting documentation relating to this application can be viewed online:

www.brentwood.gov.uk/planning