Expiry Date - 16/02/2024

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: AWDM/1588/23 Recommendation – APPROVE

Site: 58 Montague Street Worthing West Sussex BN11 3HE

Proposal: Replacement of existing glazed shop-front with new glazed shop-front.

Date of site visit: 05.01.2024

Neighbours checked: Y

Additional neighbour notifications: N

Site and Surroundings

The application relates to a mid-terraced retail unit on the north side on the pedestrianised area of Montague Street. The unit is currently vacant with the former occupier Clintons. The adjacent units are Poundland and Holland & Barrett to the east and west respectively. The shopfront comprises a pair of red aluminium framed double doors recessed centrally of the shopfront with a single pane glazed window either side. The fascia is partly blank with the branding of the previous occupier still in-situ. The building is two-storey with the upper-floor linked to the ground-floor; access is located to the rear of the ground-floor unit. The upper floor also has a lawful Class E use. The external appearance to the first-floor fronting Montague Street is facing brick with no branding, which matches the appearance of properties adjacent. Montague Street at this point is within the town centre boundary and primary shopping frontage, as defined in the Worthing Local Plan 2023 policies map. The property is not within a Conservation Area but this section of Montague Street is bordered by South Street Conservation Area to the east and Montague Street Conservation Area to the west.

Permission has recently been granted at the property for the installation of internally illuminated fascia sign and 1 no. projection sign under AWDM/1676/23 (decision issued 29 January 2024).

Proposal

Permission is sought to pull the recessed entrance forward to be flush with the shopfront and replace the pair of double doors with single double doors, along with the installation of a new single door to the easterly side of the shopfront. The doors would be glazed with aluminium frames and a polyester powder coated paint finish. The larger panel to the westerly side of the shopfront would be sub-divided. The new single door would serve a new staircase for access to the first-floor of the adjacent building No. 56 Montague Street.

Further description of the proposal is contained within the design and access statement submitted as part of the application:

'The intention is to retain the existing quality of the shop front with toughened glass and secure fully glazed double doors with aluminium frames. The new side door will likewise have matching aluminium frames and a mullion will conceal the junction of the glazing with the new internal wall for the stairwell. The doors will be suitable for disabled people, both in terms of ease of opening and width.'

Relevant Planning History:

Approvals at the application property for:

- The installation of new shopfront and first-floor rear extension under WB/0254/73 (decision issued 03 April 1973).

- The installation of new shop front under WB/1140/86 (decision issued 08 January 1987) and internally illuminated fascia sign under WB/1141/86A (decision issued 08 January 1987).

- Retrospective advertisement consent for the retention of internally illuminated fascia sign under AWDM/0910/14 (decision issued 10 Sep 2014).

- Installation of internally illuminated fascia sign and 1 no. projection sign under AWDM/1676/23 (decision issued 29 January 2024).

Approvals at adjacent property No. 56 for:

- Retrospective planning permission for the retention of (partial) new shop front and 2 no. entrance door sets (to replace existing door sets and central area of shopfront) under AWDM/1336/18 (decision issued 25 Oct 2018).

- External alterations to facades at 1st, 2nd and 3rd floors to include replacement and alteration of windows and addition of window openings under AWDM/1329/21 (decision issued 22 Nov 2021).

Consultations: None.

Representations: None received.

Relevant Planning Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (Revised December 2023)
National Planning Practice Guidance

Worthing Local Plan (2023) 2020-2036
SP1 (Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development)
DM5 (Quality of the Built Environment)

Expiry Date - 16/02/2024

DM6 (Public Realm)
DM13 (Retail and Town Centre Uses)

Planning Assessment

Principle

The town centre provides a focus for retail, leisure, tourism, cultural and community activities and is an important economic driver providing employment and business opportunities. There is no objection in principle to replacement shopfronts, especially to vacant frontages located in the central core of the town centre and within the 'primary shopping frontages' designation, providing it does not undermine the policy approach.

The Worthing Local Plan sets out the requirements for primary shopping frontages and states that the focus will be to 'retain a significant quantum of units (65%) in retail uses and resist those uses that may undermine the strategy for this area'. Policy DM13 (Retail and Town Centre Uses) stipulates that changes 'will be carefully controlled to ensure that they support, rather than detract from, the successful functioning of the centres and their ability to meet local needs, according to their function in the hierarchy. When considering all such proposals regard will be had as to whether they would:

i) Make a positive contribution to the vitality, viability and diversity of the centre;

ii) Not unacceptably impact on daytime footfall;

iii) Maintain a strong role for the centre in providing a varied range of Worthing Town Centre convenience goods and meeting other day-to-day needs;

iv) Positively restore and/or enhance the character and appearance of the frontage;

v) Maintain the continuity of active frontages;

vi) Be of a scale and type of use appropriate to the size and function of the centre, or part of the centre concerned;

vii) Ensure that any proposal will cause no significant adverse effects for the occupiers of neighbouring properties;

viii) Ensure that that there will be no severe negative impact on parking arrangements;

ix) Retain or re-provides ancillary facilities within individual premises, (such as loading, storage, staff or administrative facilities), unless it is demonstrated that these are no longer necessary for appropriate future use of the premises…'

It is considered that the commercial use associated with the new occupier (cardfactory) would positively contribute to the vitality and viability of the town centre and generate footfall to what is currently a vacant and inactive unit/ shopfront.

Following discussions with the agent, it was clarified that the single door to the easterly side of the shopfront is to provide access to the staircase leading to the first-floor of the adjacent building No. 56, and the access to No. 58 would be unchanged. It is understood that the first-floor of No. 56 comprises a large space within a prominent location which has been vacant for many years and offers no ancillary facilities in connection to the ground-floor retail use, which denotes that this floor space has no effect on the viability of the business.

It is considered that the introduction of the secondary door and staircase would make the first-floor of No. 56 more attractive to potential tenants while not adversely affecting the vitality and viability of the shopfront and wider high street. The small loss of floor space to install the staircase is not anticipated to undermine the use of the ground-floor of No. 58 as a viable unit.

The proposal conforms to the Council's policy approach for units in this location.

Visual amenity

It is understood that the proposed alterations to the entrance of the shopfront is to improve the internal layout of the unit. The proposed flush form of the double doors would have a neutral effect on visual amenity. There would be consistency in the design across the shopfront and glazing with aluminium frames is considered acceptable in this location. The proposed shopfront would not harmfully detract from the character of the street scene, but rather restore and enhance the appearance of the shopfront.

Residential Amenity

The operations expected to be carried out at the commercial unit are not anticipated to significantly differ to those of the former use or use of other units within the area; it would be consistent with a use within a primary shopping frontage location and there are no residential amenity grounds to resist the proposal.

Recommendation

APPROVE subject to Conditions:-

1. Drawing Numbers
2. Standard Time Limit
3. Materials and Design
4. Hours

Expiry Date - 16/02/2024

Informative

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.

Is recommendation contrary to letter(s) of representation? N

Case Officer: Jason Albon Date: 16/02/2024

Authorised by: Louise Prew Date: 16/02/2024