expires 18/11

Development Control – Delegated Officer Report

Application Number: ADC/0467/08 **Recommendation - Application Refused**

Site: **15 Crabtree Arcade Grand Avenue Lancing West Sussex**

Proposal: **Change of use and alteration of groundfloor shop (Class A1) to a one-bedroom flat (Class C3)**

The Application

15 Crabtree Arcade is an end of terrace property on the east side of Grand Avenue which comprises a vacant shop at ground floor with a flat above. It is one of 14 similar properties which form a local shopping parade in Crabtree Lane and Grand Avenue.

It is proposed to change the use of the ground floor shop to a self contained 1- bedroom flat. The shopfront with recessed entrance would be replaced with a conventional residential frontage which would be flush with the front of the building and with less glazing.

The applicants claim that the property is poorly located and as a result has struggled to be economically viable as a retail unit. A change of use to a flat would, in their opinion, be a more appropriate use for the premises.

Consultations and Representations

Consultations/Comments

Adur District Council – The Environmental Health Officer requested further information re. 'stacking'. Comments that there is a lack of defensible space to the front of the property. (A plan was subsequently submitted by the applicants which shows that the proposed ground floor layout would reflect the existing first floor layout and there would consequently be no 'stacking' concerns.)

Lancing Parish Council – Object as the proposal is a change to the character of the parade of shops which is considered to be detrimental to the street scene

Third Parties

None

Relevant Planning Policies and Guidance

Adopted West Sussex Structure Plan 2001-2016 (WSCC 2005) (saved policies): LOC1, ERA1, CH1, DEV1
Adopted Adur District Local Plan 1993 – 2006 (ADC 1996) (saved policies): AG1, AS1, AE5, AE6 and Appendix 11 'Supplementary Planning Guidance' comprising Development Control Standard No.4 'Flat Conversions'
PPS1 'Delivering Sustainable Development (ODPM 2005)
PPS6 'Planning for Town Centres' (ODPM 2005)

Planning Assessment

Policies

Crabtree Arcade, despite being detached from the main shopping facilities in South Street, is identified as a town centre shopping area under AS1 of the Adur District Local Plan. This policy states, among other criteria, that development which involves the loss of existing shopping provision (Use Classes A1 and A3) will not be permitted if the proposal is likely to detract from the character and vitality of the area.

PPS6 'Planning for Town Centres' contains a short section on providing for local shopping and other services. It refers to the importance of having an easily accessible network of local centres from a sustainability point of view and states that the need for local shops is equally important in both urban and rural areas. "Local authorities should, where appropriate, seek to protect existing facilities which provide for people's day-to-day needs and seek to remedy deficiencies in local shopping and other facilities to help address social exclusion" (para2.58).

Principle of Conversion

The property is subject to policy AS1 which seeks to resist the loss of shopping facilities. The applicants have submitted in support of their proposal a letter from the managing agents of the property which states that the previous occupier (Sussex Computer Shop Ltd) was forced to vacate after a lack of trade. Prior to their tenancy, however, there was a well established domestic equipment supplier/repairer who vacated in 2005, again due to it not being viable to continue.

The applicant's agent claims that the site is located off the main parade of shops in Crabtree Lane, and is away from pedestrian footfall. They also comment that Grand Avenue is a predominantly residential street. However, they have confirmed that the premises have only been marketed since the beginning of August 2008. The property does have an agent's signboard on display and a visit to the website of Brookers Commercial confirms that it is being marketed at the present day. However, three months is not considered to be sufficient time to fully assess the viability of the property. All the other shops in the parade appear to be occupied and operating successfully,

including those in Grand Avenue, and it is considered that the case for the loss of this shop has not been satisfactorily demonstrated to date.

Visual amenity and character

The proposed alterations to the front elevation of the property are considered to harm the character and appearance of the parade as a whole. At present there is a shopfront with a recessed doorway. The adjoining shops in the parade each have differing frontage designs but collectively they form a distinct parade which adds to the character of this part of Lancing. The proposal would remove the fascia and shopfront and replace it with a brick frontage containing one window and an entrance door. This would detract from the general appearance of the parade and could set a precedent for further changes of use and shopfront which would cumulatively detract from the character and vitality of the area.

Residential amenity

The proposed flat would comply with the Council's SPG on flat conversions in that it would have a floor area and room size suitable for a 1-bed property. The layout would reflect the upper floor and therefore would avoid problems associated with poor 'stacking'. The ground floor flat would have sole access to the rear garden where bin and bike storage would be provided. The garden size is acceptable for a 1-bed flat.

Recommendation

REFUSE on ground that :-

1. The proposal is unacceptable to the Local Planning Authority in that it would result in the loss of existing shopping facilities and shopfront to the detriment of the character, appearance and vitality of the shopping area. The proposal therefore conflicts with the policies of the West Sussex Structure Plan (DEV1) and the Adur District Local Plan (AS1, AE6) and PPS6 'Planning for Town Centres'.

Case Officer P Barnett Date 10/11/08

10/11/08.