

<b>Item 3c</b>	<b>16/00045/FUL</b>
<b>Case Officer</b>	<b>Iain Crossland</b>
<b>Ward</b>	<b>Chorley North East Ward</b>
<b>Proposal</b>	<b>Change of use from offices to 4 no. residential apartments, with a two storey rear extension and the existing retail unit retained</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Post Office 60 Park Road Chorley PR7 1QU</b>
<b>Applicant</b>	<b>Mr Philip Walmsley</b>
<b>Consultation expiry:</b>	<b>29 February 2016</b>
<b>Decision due by:</b>	<b>14 March 2016</b>

**Recommendation**

It is recommended that this application is approved subject to conditions.

**Executive Summary**

The main issues to consider are the impact on the Local Centre, loss of an employment use, impact on neighbour amenity, impact on the character and appearance of the surrounding area and the impact on parking and highway safety.

**Representations**

**In total 1 representation has been received which makes the following comments:**

- There may be unstable ground conditions due to previous demolition in the area.
- The plans have no measurements on them

**Consultees**

<b>Consultee</b>	<b>Summary of Comments received</b>
LCC Highways	Any comments will be reported on the addendum

## **Assessment**

### The Site

1. The application site comprises an end terraced property that occupies a corner plot on Park Road and Commercial Road. The building is three storeys in height and is of traditional design style faced in red brick, with a roof laid in slates. There is a small yard to the rear of the building. The building is used for offices, and was most recently occupied by a building services consultancy. There is also a small retail unit at ground floor that was most recently used as a hairdressers.
2. The site is located within predominantly residential area with some commercial and service uses in the vicinity. The character of the surrounding buildings is largely traditional. There is a public car park to the rear of the site. The site is located within the core settlement area of Chorley and is within a Local Centre.

### The Proposal

3. The proposed development is for a change of use from offices to 4 no. residential apartments, with a two storey rear extension and the retention of the existing retail unit. The proposed extension would project approximately 4.1m to the rear / side of the existing property. It would be approximately 8.4m in width and would have a dual pitched roof with a ridge and eaves height approximately 2.2m lower than the existing ridge and eaves.

## **Assessment**

The main issues are as follows:-

Issue 1 – Loss of employment use

Issue 2 – Impact on neighbour amenity / noise

Issue 3 – Impact on character and appearance of the locality

Issue 4 – Impact on highways/access

### Principle of the Development

4. The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) states that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means that development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay.
5. The Central Lancashire Core Strategy focuses growth in Key Service Centres such as Chorley town, where the application site is located.
6. Policy 10: Employment Premises and Sites of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy 2012, deals specifically with buildings that have most recently been used for a Class B use stating that there will be a presumption of them being retained for employment use. A number of criteria are set out under which proposals for redevelopment for other uses will be considered, and these are assessed within the report.
7. In addition to this Core Strategy Policy 11e) must also be considered, which is worded to maintain, improve and control the mix of uses in the existing Local Centres so as to appropriately serve local needs.
8. The site is within a Local Centre and is covered by Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026 Policy EP7 (Development and Change of Use in District and Local Centres). Policy EP7 states that planning permission will not be granted for non-retail uses (including the loss of A1 use) unless it can be shown that there is no demand for retail or commercial use or the property was last occupied by a non retail/non commercial use. This will need to be demonstrated through an active 12 month marketing process showing that the property has been offered for sale on the open market at a realistic price and that no reasonable offers have been refused. However, the retail floorspace is to be retained.

### Loss of employment use

9. Proposals on all employment sites/premises for re-use or development other than Class B employment uses are assessed against a series of prescribed criteria, and the proposed development is assessed as follows:

*a) There would not be an unacceptable adverse impact on the type, quality and quantity of employment land supply:*

The site is small scale and the building is of older stock not designed specifically for office use therefore its loss would have a negligible impact on the type, quality and quantity of employment land supply in the borough.

*b) The provision and need for the proposed use:*

The proposed development would contribute towards meeting the identified housing need within the Borough.

*c) The relative suitability of the site for employment and for alternative use:*

The site is equally suitable for office use or the proposed residential use.

*d) The location of the site and its relationship to other uses*

The proximity of the unit to an attached residential dwellinghouse at 58 Park Road is a key factor in this instance. The current use of the building as offices does not impact on the amenity of the occupiers of this dwelling and it is considered that a change of use to residential would not reduce the amenity levels enjoyed by the occupiers of the adjoining property. There would be negligible impact in relation to other nearby uses, which are largely residential in any case.

*e) Whether the ability to accommodate smaller scale requirements would be compromised*

The office is already small scale and its conversion to residential would result in the loss of this small scale provision.

*f) There would be a net improvement in amenity.*

There would be no material change in amenity.

*g) convincing evidence of lack of demand through a rigorous and active 12 month marketing period for employment re-use and employment redevelopment;*

The property is empty and is currently being marketed for sale, although no details have been submitted in support of the application.

*h) an assessment of the viability of employment development including employment re-use and employment redevelopment.*

No assessment has been provided and therefore the viability of the site for employment development including employment re-use and employment redevelopment is unknown.

10. The proposed development does not meet all of the above criteria, particularly around the viability of the site in terms of continuing to provide an employment use. It is noted, however, that the building could be converted to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class O of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015. This represents a realistic fall-back position under which the office use would be lost in any case, without the ability of the planning process to prevent or control the change.

11. In this instance it is considered that on the basis that the office could be changed to residential without the need to apply for planning permission, and that there is a realistic prospect that this would occur, then this outweighs the weight which could be attached to Policy 10 in refusing the application.

#### Impact on neighbour amenity / noise

12. The proposed development would be located immediately adjacent to a residential dwellinghouse at 58 Park Road to the south of the application site. There are existing windows in the side elevation of the application property, however, these would not serve habitable rooms. The proposed extension would not have any windows in the side elevation facing 58 Park Road and the windows in the rear elevation would not provide any direct views of this property. The extension would not project beyond a 45 degree line drawn from the near edge of the closest rear facing window to a habitable room at 58 Park Road. This, and the relative positioning to the north, would mean that there would be no unacceptable impact on light to or outlook from 58 Park Road.
13. The proposed development would result in windows to habitable rooms facing the side elevation of 62 Park Road, which is located on the opposite side of Commercial Road. There are windows in the side elevation of 62 Park Road which would be located approximately 18m from the proposed development. It is noted that the relationship of the windows at the application property reflects a long established relationship and must be considered in the context of the area, whereby the windows face directly onto a busy highway, which separates the two premises. On this basis it is not considered that the proposed development would impact on privacy to an extent that could be considered harmful over and above the existing circumstances.
14. The change of use to residential accommodation would have similar levels of noise and disturbance as the existing office use, and would be similar to that created by a standard dwellinghouse. A residential use is a highly compatible use when viewed in the context of adjoining residential uses.

#### Impact on character and appearance of the locality

15. The proposed development would result in a two storey rear / side extension. This would continue the line of the building frontage along Commercial Road, which replicates the historic form of Commercial Road prior to the demolition of a building in this position in the 1970s. It would have a dual pitched roof with a gable end parallel to that of the existing building. The pitch would match that of the existing building and would have a ridge and eaves height approximately 2.2m lower than the existing building. The proposed extension would appear appropriately subservient whilst reflecting the existing form of development and historic pattern of development along Commercial Road. Matching materials would be used.
16. Although the proposed extension would be highly prominent, its design, scale and siting would be compatible with the appearance of the existing building and would not compromise the character of the street scene or surrounding area.

#### Impact on highways/access

17. No specific off street parking has been proposed as part of the development. There is, however, a public car park immediately to the rear of the site, which serves the offices. It is also noted that there are on street parking opportunities nearby and on surrounding streets. The site is within 140m of a high frequency bus route, 160m from supermarkets and approximately 500m from the town centre. Such good access to public transport and local amenities result in the location being highly sustainable, such that a relaxation in the car parking standards can be made as per the provisions of policy ST4 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026.
18. It is accepted that there is already parking demand generated by the existing office units and that this must be considered in relation to the proposed development. The residential parking demand generated by this proposal would be similar to that which is already generated by the office.
19. Given the sustainability credentials of the location and existing parking demand already generated by the office, the lack of specific parking provision is considered acceptable in this instance.

### Public Open Space

20. In line with Local Plan policy HS4, a scheme would be required to contribute towards the off-site provision of public open space. It is recommended that a condition is attached to secure this.

### Other matters

21. There may be unstable ground conditions due to previous demolition in the area: This is a detail that would be dealt with as part of the building control process.

22. The plans have no measurements on them: The plans have been provided to an accepted scale, which enable measurements to be taken in support of a full planning assessment.

### **Overall Conclusion**

23. The proposed development would result in the loss of an employment premises, however, this is justified by a realistic fall-back position. There would be no detrimental impact on the vitality and viability of the local centre in which the site is located since the retail use is to be retained. There would be no detrimental impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers or the appearance and character of the area. In addition the development is located in a sustainable location and would not have an unacceptable impact on highway safety. On the basis of the above, it is recommended that planning permission be granted.

### **Planning Policies**

In accordance with s.38 (6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the application is to be determined in accordance with the development plan (the Central Lancashire Core Strategy, the Adopted Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Consideration of the proposal has had regard to guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the development plan. The specific policies/ guidance considerations are contained within the body of the report.

### **Planning History**

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Decision</b>	<b>Date</b>
03/00250/COU	Change of use from post office and accommodation to offices (Use class B1)	Approved	19 May 2003
75/00577/FUL	Advertisement panel	Refused	09 September 1975