

Officer Report to Committee

Application reference: 20/0119

Ward: LAYTON
Application type: Full Planning Permission
Location: 3-5 WESTCLIFFE DRIVE, BLACKPOOL, FY3 7BJ
Proposal: Erection of a first floor extension and use of first floor as two self-contained flats

Recommendation: **Grant Permission**

Case officer: Bethany Thornton
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1.0 BLACKPOOL COUNCIL PLAN 2019-2024

- 1.1 The Council Plan sets out two priorities. The first is ‘the economy: maximising growth and opportunity across Blackpool’, and the second is ‘communities: creating stronger communities and increasing resilience.
- 1.2 This application would create permanent residential accommodation in an appropriate location within a district centre. It would contribute towards creating a stronger community by providing permanent residential accommodation in an accessible location. As such it would accord with the Council’s second priority.

2.0 SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The principle of the creation of permanent residential units above a commercial unit within a district centre is considered acceptable. Amendments have been made to the scheme in response to officer concerns that improve the layout and appearance of the property. As such, and as will be set out below, Members are respectfully recommended to grant planning permission for the proposal.

3.0 INTRODUCTION

- 3.1 This application is before the Planning Committee in the interest of transparency because the Chairman of the Planning Committee is employed by the business occupying the site.

4.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

- 4.1 A part one-storey part two-storey building on the corner at the junction between Westcliffe Drive and Grenfell Avenue. The roofing at both levels is flat, with parapet walls on the roof of the ground floor. The walls are red brick and there is black panelling on the front elevation of the ground floor with a fascia sign above it.
- 4.2 Both floors are currently used as offices and the adjoining building on Westcliffe Drive is also used for offices. Immediately to the rear on Grenfell Avenue is a children's centre, which has been converted from a residential property. Across Grenfell Avenue on the opposite corner is a shop at ground floor level with a residential unit to the rear. Some other buildings on Westcliffe Drive have residential flats at first floor level.
- 4.3 The site is within a district centre and falls within the landfill gas consultation area. The site is not subject to any other designations or constraints.

5.0 DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

- 5.1 The proposal is for the erection of a first floor extension and use of the first floor as two self-contained residential flats. One of the flats would have one bedroom and the other would have two bedrooms. The development would include the demolition of part of the front of the first floor and the insertion of bay windows on the front elevation. The proposed first floor would be 13.7m wide at the front, 9.5m wide at the rear, and 14.7m in length with an extra 4.0m of balcony at the rear.
- 5.2 The roofing would be hipped at the front and on the side elevation facing onto Grenfell Avenue with a gabled end to the rear, projecting past the back of the roofing of the neighbouring property.
- 5.3 The existing fascia sign on the front elevation would be removed. The proposed first floor would have two bay windows and two regular windows on the front elevation. An existing sign would be removed from the side elevation and there would be three windows at first floor level and the three existing windows at ground floor level would be retained. There would be two windows and two doors on the rear elevation leading out onto the rear balcony. There would be two doors on the side elevation at ground floor level; one used to access the flats via a staircase that leads up to the rear balcony and the other used to access the downstairs offices.

6.0 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 6.1 No relevant planning history.

7.0 MAIN PLANNING ISSUES

- 7.1 The main planning issues are considered to be:
- the principle of permanent residential accommodation in the location

- impact on residential amenity
- visual impact
- highway impact and parking adequacy

8.0 CONSULTATION RESPONSES

8.1 **Environmental Protection** – There is an area identified for bin storage on the plans, however it is unclear if this will be for the commercial units or residential units. Confirmation on the storage of waste for commercial and residential will be required including whether all flats will have access to the bin store area and if it will be for the use of euro bins or for 240 litre wheeled bins.

8.2 **Local Highway Authority** – No objections to the proposal.

9.0 REPRESENTATIONS

- Press notice published: Not Applicable
- Site notice displayed: Not Applicable
- Neighbours notified: 27/02/2020

9.1 No representations have been received in time for inclusion in this report. If any comments are received in advance of the Committee meeting they will be reported through the update note.

10.0 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

10.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

10.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was adopted in February 2019. It sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development. The following sections are most relevant to this application:

- Section 5 - Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- Section 8 - Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Section 11 - Making effective use of land
- Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places

10.2 National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

10.2.1 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) expands upon and offers clarity on the points of policy set out in the NPPF.

10.3 Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027

10.3.1 The Core Strategy was adopted in January 2016. The following policies are most relevant to this application:

- CS2 Housing Provision
- CS7 Quality of Design
- CS12 Sustainable Neighbourhoods
- CS13 Housing Mix, Density and Standards

10.4 Blackpool Local Plan 2011-2016 (saved policies)

10.4.1 The Blackpool Local Plan was adopted in June 2006. A number of policies in the Local Plan have now been superseded by policies in the Core Strategy but others have been saved until the Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies has been produced. The following saved policies are most relevant to this application:

- LQ1 Lifting the Quality of Design
- LQ14 Extension and Alterations
- HN5 Conversions and Subdivisions
- BH3 Residential Amenity
- BH13 District Centres
- AS1 Access, Parking, and Highway Safety

10.5 Blackpool Local Plan Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies (emerging policies)

10.5.1 The Blackpool Local Plan Part 2 has been subject to an informal consultation exercise and will be subject to formal consultation later this year. At this point in time limited weight can be attached to the policies proposed. Nevertheless, the following draft policies in Part 2 are most relevant to this application:

- Policy DM6: Residential Conversations and Sub-Divisions
- Policy DM15: District and Local Centres
- Policy DM19: Extensions and Alterations
- Policy DM39: Transport Requirements for New Development

10.6 Other Relevant Policy Guidance

10.6.1 New Homes from Old Places – Adopted March 2011 – This SPD provides guidance and sets out standards for the conversion of commercial properties into residential.

10.6.2 Technical Housing Standards – March 2015 – This is a national document that sets out space and amenity standards for residential development.

11.0 ASSESSMENT

11.1 Principle

- 11.1.1 Policy BH13 of the Blackpool Local Plan does not permit the conversion of properties in district centres to residential and other non-active frontages. However, in this case it is only the upper floor of the property being converted and the building would retain the active frontage of the offices below.
- 11.1.2 The Council's New Homes from Old Places Supplementary Planning Document establishes a threshold of 160m² original floorspace below which subdivision is unacceptable; the aim of this threshold is to safeguard self-contained family accommodation units. The proposed floorspace being created would be 164.2m² and would be split into two flats. In this case the subdivision is considered acceptable as the dwellings would be at first floor level which, even with a large floorspace, would not lend itself well to family homes.
- 11.1.3 The application property falls within the 6.9% most deprived area in the country. Flats comprise 6.5% of the local housing stock. This compares with local, regional and national averages of 25%, 16% and 22% respectively and as such does not indicate an existing over-concentration. The housing stock is predominantly dwellings comprising of two-bed units. The proposed flats would not undermine the housing mix standards set out in Policy CS13 of the Core Strategy.
- 11.1.4 The scheme would make a quantitative contribution towards the borough's housing requirement. However the scale of this contribution would be negligible and, as the Council can demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, this carries little weight in the planning balance.
- 11.1.5 The development is not of sufficient scale to require provision of public open space or affordable housing, or contributions towards local education and health care provision.

11.2 Amenity

- 11.2.1 The Council's New Homes from Old Places Supplementary Planning Document establishes that when creating flats each dwelling must be self-contained and when development involves the creation of up to three flats within a building at least one of them should have two or more bedrooms. Two flats are proposed and one of them would have two double bedrooms.
- 11.2.2 To comply with the national technical housing standards, the two-bedroom flat would have to have a floorspace of 70m² and the one-bedroom flat would need a floorspace of 50m², and each of the bedrooms would have to be at least 11.5m². The proposed flats would be 70.9m² and 85.9² and the smallest bedroom would be 13.1m² and therefore the proposed development would comply with and exceed the technical housing standards. The proposed flats would also comply with the standards set out in the Council's Supplementary Planning Document, which

specifies the total living area must be at least 29m². The balconies to the rear would provide some outdoor amenity space.

- 11.2.3 None of the bedrooms would be against the wall separating the two flats and all three bedrooms would have at least one window to allow natural light. It is unfortunate that the bathrooms would lack natural ventilation, but this in isolation does not weigh significantly against the proposal. The use of the ground floor as office space means that no unacceptable noise issues are anticipated.
- 11.2.4 The rear extension would project around 2.8m behind the rear wall of the adjoining neighbour. Although not strictly relevant to this type of application, the Council's Extending Your Home Supplementary Planning Document is permissive of rear extensions up to 3m in length. This indicates that this level of projection does not unduly compromise neighbour amenity. It is noted that the extension would sit to the south of the neighbour but, as the nearest window is set somewhat away from the boundary, the level of projection is considered to be acceptable.
- 11.2.5 The Council's New Homes from Old Places states that for upper floor dwellings the use of roofs to create attractive terraces or balconies is encouraged as long as there are no adverse effects on the privacy or outlook of neighbours. The rear terrace would be used to access the external doors to the flats and would be opposite the side elevation of a children's centre that has one small window at first floor level, therefore any impact on privacy or outlook would be minimal.

11.3 Visual Impact

- 11.3.1 Reducing the front of the property and installing bay windows would allow for it to integrate well with the adjoining building and the other properties on Westcliffe Drive. The plans have been amended so that the front of the roof would also line up with the adjoining property and the existing parapet would be removed. The side elevation facing onto Grenfell Avenue would have a hipped roof which would appear more coherent with the building directly across the street and more sympathetic with the residential dwellings along Grenfell Avenue. Expanding the first floor would not make the property look out of place as the site is surrounded by other two-storey properties and part of the building would still be left as a single storey, meaning the building as a whole would not look overly dominant within with street scene of Grenfell Avenue. The nature of the ground floor frontage does not allow for the first floor fenestration to meaningfully align. The first floor arrangement is considered to be acceptable and to establish appropriate residential character.
- 11.3.2 Overall, the proposals would be visually sympathetic with the surrounding area and the design is appropriate for the proposed use.

11.4 Access, Highway Safety and Parking

- 11.4.1 An additional door would be inserted into the ground floor side elevation to provide a rear access point for the ground floor offices. Access to the proposed flats would be via an entrance on Grenfell Avenue, therefore no safety issues are anticipated.

The entrance area has also been marked up as a communal bin store but this would constitute an unacceptable arrival point. A condition would be imposed on any permission granted to require the agreement of bin storage arrangements at first floor level.

11.4.2 No parking is proposed as part of the scheme and there is no opportunity to create any. There is designated on-street parking on Grenfell Avenue for resident permit holders but nearby parking is otherwise restricted. However, the site is in an accessible location close to shops and services and the public transport network. As such, whilst the lack of parking is unfortunate, it is unavoidable and must therefore be accepted. The scheme is not anticipated to have any detrimental impacts on highway safety or function and Highways have raised no objections to the proposals.

11.5 Other issues

11.5.1 No drainage or flood risk issues identified.

11.5.2 No ecological impacts would result and no trees would be affected.

11.5.3 Air, land and water quality would be unaffected and the site would not be expected to be at undue risk from such.

11.5.4 The application has been considered in the context of the Council's general duty in all its functions to have regard to community safety issues as required by section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (as amended).

11.5.5 Under Article 8 and Article 1 of the first protocol to the Convention on Human Rights, a person is entitled to the right to respect for private and family life, and the peaceful enjoyment of his/her property. However, these rights are qualified in that they must be set against the general interest and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This application does not raise any specific human rights issues.

11.6 Sustainability and planning balance appraisal

11.6.1 Sustainability comprises economic, environmental and social components.

11.6.2 Economically the scheme would have a very limited impact but the creation of new residential units would help to support local shops and services and some employment would be generated during conversion.

11.6.3 Environmentally, the external alterations would be acceptable, there would be no detrimental impact on drainage and environmental quality and biodiversity would not be materially affected. There is no reason to suppose that residents would be dependent upon private car use.

11.6.4 Socially, the scheme would make a positive contribution towards a more balanced housing stock in the local area. In this case, the creation of flats is acceptable as they would be located above a commercial unit and lend themselves best to this use. In

the relevant area 6.5% of residential units are flats and the minority are one bedroom, therefore the creation of these flats would not exacerbate any existing overconcentration of flats in the area. As such, the scheme would support the Council's regeneration objectives for the area and the flats would offer a reasonable standard of living. The scheme would contribute towards the borough's housing needs albeit to a negligible extent.

12.0 CONCLUSION

12..1 As set out above, the scheme is judged to represent sustainable development and offer quality residential units that would provide a reasonable standard of living. No other material planning considerations have been identified that would outweigh this assessment and on this basis, planning permission should be granted.

13.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS

13.1 Planning Application File(s) 20/0119 which can be accessed via the link below:
<https://idoxpa.blackpool.gov.uk/online-applications/search.do?action=simple>

14.0 RECOMMENDATION

14.1 Approve 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: Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

- 2 The development shall be carried out, except where modified by the conditions attached to this permission, in accordance with the planning application received by the Local Planning Authority including the following plans and information:
Location Plan received by the Council on 27/02/2020 and drawings;

Existing and Proposed Plans and Elevations - B/20/30/01-RevB

The development shall thereafter be retained and maintained in accordance with these approved details.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and so the Local Planning Authority can be satisfied as to the details of the permission.

- 3 (a) The external materials to be used on the extension hereby approved shall match those of the main building in colour, size, texture and design unless otherwise first submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of any above ground construction.

(b) Prior to first occupation;

- (i) the materials of the balustrade around the first floor terrace shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority and
- (ii) this agreed balustrade shall be provided and shall thereafter be retained and maintained as such.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the site and streetscene in accordance with Policy CS7 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 and Policies LQ1 and LQ14 of the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016.

- 4 (a) No flat shall be occupied until all of the internal and external alterations shown on the approved plans have been carried out in full and in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In order to ensure that the accommodation provides an adequate standard of residential amenity to improve the external appearance of the property and ensure that it has appropriate residential character in accordance with Policies CS7, CS12 and CS13 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027, Policies LQ1, LQ14, BH3 and HN5 of the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016, and the Council's New Homes from Old Places Supplementary Planning Document 2011.

- 5 The accommodation shall be used for permanent residential occupation within Class C3 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) only and for no other purpose.

Reason: In order to safeguard the living conditions of the occupants of nearby residential properties and the character of the area in accordance with Policies CS7, CS12 and CS23 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 and Policies BH3 of the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016.

- 6 Notwithstanding the provisions of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) no change of use from Use Class C3 to Use Class C4 shall take place without the written approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To safeguard the living conditions of the occupants of nearby residential premises and to prevent the further establishment of Houses in Multiple Occupation which would further increase the stock of poor quality accommodation in the town and further undermine the aim of creating balanced and healthy communities, in accordance with Policies CS7, CS12 and CS13 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 and Policies BH3 and HN5 of the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016.

- 7 Notwithstanding the information shown on the approved plan and before the development hereby approved is first brought into use:

- (a) details of refuse storage provision to include location size, design and materials shall be submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority; and

(b) the refuse storage agreed pursuant to part (a) of this condition shall be implemented in full and in full accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interest of the appearance of the site and locality and to safeguard the amenities of nearby residents in accordance with Policy CS7 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 and Policies LQ1 and BH3 of the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016.