

**North Northamptonshire Area Planning Committee
(Thrapston)
10 May 2023**

Application Reference	NE/22/01569/FUL
Case Officer	Chris Hill
Location	155 Wellingborough Road, Rushden, NN10 9TB
Development	Proposed demolition of single storey element, front two storey extension, loft conversion including external fire exit staircase.
Applicant	Elsby And Co Ltd - Christina Barclay
Agent	Sidey Design Architecture - Mr Jon Sidey
Ward	Rushden Pemberton West Ward
Overall Expiry Date	03.02.2023
Agreed Extension of Time	15.05.2023

Scheme of Delegation

This application is brought to committee because of conditional objection from Rushden Town Council due to objections made by the Local Highways Authority.

1. Recommendation

- 1.1 That planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions.

2. The Proposal

- 2.1 The proposed development consists of the following elements:

- Demolition of the existing single storey front extension facing onto Wellingborough Road.
- Erection of a 2-storey gable end extension in place of the demolished extension. It would measure 5.72 metres in depth, 5.24 metres in width, 8.6 metres in total height and a height to eaves of 5.6 metres. It would feature three windows on both the ground and first floor facing Wellingborough Road and a triple set of windows on the ground and first floor facing Brookfield Road. It would have an appearance

similar to that of the gable ends currently featured, with a deeper projection that matches the depth of the neighbouring property No. 153 Wellingborough Road.

- The construction of an external fire exit staircase, to facilitate building control compliant access and egress to a proposed loft conversion, wrapping around the south and east facing elevations and starting in the car park accessed from Brookfield Road. This would also insert a fire escape door on the rear elevation at the 1st floor.
- The conversion of the existing loft, to facilitate additional office and storage space for the ongoing use of the building. It would be accessed via an internal staircase and via the east facing elevation off of the external staircase that is proposed. It would include 3 rooflights presenting on the south roof slope and 6 rooflights on the north facing roof slope.

3. Site Description

- 3.1 The site sits within Wellingborough Road, itself a busy through road within Rushden. The area is typified by dense residential and commercial properties.
- 3.2 The site itself hosts an existing two storey red brick building that lies on the south side of Wellingborough Road. It is adjacent to the junction with Brookfield Road, where the rear parking courtyard is accessed from.
- 3.3 It is not within a Conservation Area, is within Flood Zone 1 and is not in close proximity to any listed buildings.

4. Relevant Planning History

- 4.1 18/00961/FUL - Replacement of all timber framed single glazed windows to front elevation with upvc framed double glazed windows. Replacement front/porch door (under balcony) – Granted 02.07.2018
- 4.2 98/00848/FUL - Conversion of office building to 6 flats and provision of parking facilities - Granted 11.02.1999
- 4.3 80/01540/FUL - Part use for office and store for car washing machine business – Granted 19.12.1980

5. Consultation Responses

A full copy of all comments received can be found on the Council's website [here](#)

5.1 Rushden Town Council

Rushden Town Council had no objection to this application subject to the LHA having no objections

5.2 Neighbours / Responses to Publicity

No neighbour letters or responses to the site notice, posted for 21 days have been received.

5.3 Local Highway Authority (LHA)

In respect of the above planning application, the local highway authority (LHA) has the following observations, comments and recommendations:

- Due to the increase of office floor space, the applicant will need to demonstrate the correct number of parking spaces as per the NNC Adopted Parking Standards (September 2016). Please see below.
- The LHA would also require further information regarding the suggestion that some staff will have to park on the road, in the Design & Access Statement. For example, how will it be decided which members of staff will park on the road?
- It is contrary to NNC Adopted Policy for the intensification of usage of an existing access on a principal county road to be permitted. The local highway authority actively resists all such applications on the grounds of highway safety, and the likely obstruction to traffic taking place on a principal road whilst a vehicle sits stationary on the carriageway waiting to turn into the site against oncoming traffic. To mitigate this, a dedicated right hand turn lane will be required. The A5001 is a principal county road and carries a considerable volume of traffic throughout the day, and particularly during the two peak periods of the day.
- Please note that the proposed means of vehicular egress at the front of the building appears to be less than 10 metres from the give way line of the adjacent junction (in accordance with the LHA Standing Advice Documents dated June 2016).
- The access to the rear of the building must have a minimum width of 4.5 metres for the first 10 metres from the highway boundary. This enables two opposing vehicles to pass each other at the point of access. This in turn ensures that a vehicle entering a site does not stop and turn within the highway to allow an emerging vehicle out. Where the access is bounded by structures (e.g. wall, fence, trees, embankment etc.) on one or both sides, the width of the access must be increased to 5.5 metres.
- The applicant must provide the necessary 2 metres x 2 metres pedestrian visibility splays required on both sides of the access. These splays must be contained fully within the applicant's site and not include any public highway land, or any other third party owned land. The splays shall be permanently retained and kept free of all obstacles to visibility over 0.6 metres in height above access / footway level.

5.4 Others

The following were consulted but did not comment:

- Natural England
- Nature Space Officer
- Ecology Officer
- Northamptonshire Fire Service
- Northamptonshire Police

6. Relevant Planning Policies and Considerations

6.1 Statutory Duty

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
National Design Guide (NDG) (2019)

6.3 North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (JCS) (2016)

Policy 1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
Policy 8 - North Northamptonshire Place Shaping Principles
Policy 22 – Delivering Economic Prosperity

6.4 Rushden Neighbourhood Plan (NP) (2018)

Policy EJ3 – Existing Employment Floorspace
Policy T1 - Development generating a transport impact
Policy T2 - Car park provision

6.5 Other Relevant Documents

Northamptonshire County Council - Local Highway Authority Standing Advice for Local Planning Authorities (2016)
Northamptonshire County Council - Local Highway Authority Parking Standards (2016)

7. Evaluation

The key issues for consideration are:

- Principle of Development
- Visual Impact
- Impact on Neighbouring Amenities
- Highway Matters

7.1 **Principle of Development**

7.1.1 The proposed development would be an increase in the maximum floorspace and scale of a commercial unit (Use Class E). The site is also

located in an area that features a number of extensive commercial uses, mixed with residential. Policy 22 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy seeks to prioritise the enhancement of existing employment sites and Policy EJ3 seeks to safeguard existing employment sites. There are no other planning policies that would constrain the principle of the proposed development. The principle of the proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable subject to other material planning considerations.

7.2 Visual Impact

- 7.2.1 The proposed development would remove an existing double pitched roof single storey extension. The single storey extension sits closer to the public highway than the majority of the building by some distance. It is of a more recent construction than the rest of the building and of a lower quality, including window proportions and render that are at odds with the existing structure.
- 7.2.2 The proposed two-storey front extension would be larger than the single storey extension by some considerable margin in terms of height, but would project forward an identical amount and be of the same width. It would introduce a gable end that would mimic the existing pair of gable ends, introducing a sympathetic and architecturally rhymical addition in terms of the number of windows on the ground and first floor, height, width and material treatment. It would enclose the end of the front car park in a manner that would not be incongruous with the existing building or the wider street scene. Whilst substantial in scale, it would not read as visually at odds with either the existing building nor its immediate neighbour and would replace a visually poor-quality single storey extension that currently harbours both of these issues.
- 7.2.3 The proposed loft conversion would introduce roof lights on both the front facing elevation, facing onto Wellingborough Road, and to the rear car parking courtyard. Although not a common feature, rooflights can be found in a number of locations along Wellingborough Road and the number of rooflights proposed facing the road itself is modest, would be viewed setback from the road and ultimately not harm the character of either the building or street scene. As they are largely only visible within the parking courtyard, the rooflights to the rear are considered to have a lesser visual impact and acceptable for largely the same reasons.
- 7.2.4 The proposed fire escape would introduce an industrial element to what is otherwise a Victorian-style red brick building. It would however be inserted along a narrow gap between the building and No. 153 Wellingborough and is not considered visually prominent outside of the car park. A number of examples of such fire escape staircases can be found in the immediate vicinity and is not an unusual feature of a commercial building. On balance, it is considered a reasonable feature given the pragmatic need.
- 7.2.5 The proposed extension is to be constructed of materials to match existing. The proposed rooflights are assumed to be upvc, of which all windows currently existing are themselves having been replaced in 2018/2019. Given

the prominent location of the elevation, it is considered reasonable to require the submission of materials for approval of the LPA prior to commencement.

- 7.2.6 Overall the proposed development is considered sensitive to the existing character and appearance of the building, replaces a poor quality existing extension and is modest in terms of its introduction of new features such as rooflights and a fire escape staircase.

7.3 **Impact on Neighbouring Amenity**

- 7.3.1 The proposed extension, whilst two stories in height, would be adjacent to a blank elevation of No. 153 Wellingborough Road. Accordingly it is not considered to negatively impact the amenity of said dwelling, nor does the extension impact any properties across the road given the separation the public highways provides.

- 7.3.2 The proposed roof conversion, including rooflights, are considered to not materially impact the amenity of any neighbouring properties by virtue of the height of the windows in question and the existing 1st floor windows. Additionally, the rear of the building largely faces a large car park.

- 7.3.3 The proposed fire escape stairwell would offer views of the garden of No. 153 Wellingborough Road. However, such views would rarely if ever be experienced given the function of the staircase as a fire escape route and not a primary access. Given that an internal access stairwell, readily accessible from both the rear and front of the building, it is considered that this would be the primary means of access and egress and that the building control regulation of the fire escape would be an adequate means of ensuring such.

7.4 **Highways**

- 7.4.1 The Local Highways Authority (LHA) have expressed comments drawing attention to a number of matters. The agent for the application has clarified that no changes to access are proposed as there is no scope to do so, nor that any additional parking is to be provided.

- 7.4.2 Under the NNC Adopted Parking Standards (September 2016), to which the use of the office would be considered under the historic 'B1: Business' use class, the required number of spaces would be 1 space per 30sqm. The existing commercial property has 12 spaces, and currently measures 319sqm internally. The proposed extension and loft conversion would increase this to 464sqm. This would equate to the need for a total 15 spaces. The proposed total number of employees to be gained from the increased operational spaces would be 9 full time equivalent employees.

- 7.4.3 The location of the proposed development is serviced by regular public transport and would, by regular convention, be considered a sustainable location. Cycle storage is provided within the existing building.

- 7.4.4 It is considered therefore that it is not unreasonable that a number of staff employed at this location, being town centre adjacent, would undertake their commute to the office location on foot, bicycle or public transport. Whilst a

parking beat survey has not been submitted, the supposition contained with the D&A access that some small amount of on-street parking can be found in proximity is not disputed. The shortfall of 3 spaces is not therefore considered adequate a reason for refusal in isolation.

- 7.4.5 The LHA's comments express that the intensification of usage of an existing access off of a principal county road would be resisted, and that they would seek a right turn lane. They also express that the existing access is inadequate.
- 7.4.6 Owing to the existing structures along Wellingborough Road and Brookfield Road it would not be practical to introduce a dedicated right hand turn lane nor would it be possible to widen the access. The existing rear parking courtyard access measures approximately 4.4 metres and is itself off of Brookfield Road, not directly off Wellingborough. The parking to the front would remain much more broadly accessible, but again off of Brookfield Road.
- 7.4.7 Whilst some modest intensification of the access would occur, presumably from the arrival and departure of staff or clients, it is not considered that the increase amounts to a significant impact on highways safety or parking such that refusal would be warranted.

8. Other Matters

- 8.1 Equality Act 2010: It is not considered that the proposal raises any concerns in relation to the Equality Act (2010).
- 8.2 Flood Risk & Drainage: The proposed development is within Flood Zone 1, the lowest risk of flooding issues and drainage issues, and is not considered to heighten the risk of such.
- 8.3 Environmental Matters: The proposed development is not considered to give rise to any additional impacts in terms of noise given the form of employment undertaken at this site.
- 8.4 Ecology: The proposed development is not considered to give rise to any impacts in terms of Ecology.

9. Conclusion / Planning Balance

- 9.1 The enlargement and retention of employment space is acceptable and encouraged in principle and the proposed development is considered to be acceptable in terms of its visual impact, impact on the amenity of surrounding units, impact in terms of drainage, ecology and noise. The proposed development represents a marginal increase in highways usage but sits in a sustainable location with only a minor shortfall in parking provision. On balance, the proposed development is considered to be an acceptable.

10. Recommendation

- 10.1 That planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions.

11. Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To ensure compliance with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

22-008-02 REV A LOCATION PLAN INC PROPOSED PLANS
22-008-DAS DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Application Form Dated: 08/12/2022

Reason: To assist in defining the terms of the planning permission.

3. Prior to the commencement, samples of the materials to be used in the proposed development, including windows, shall be submitted for assessment and shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity.