

37-39 Sharps Road - Planning statement

1.0 Introduction

Planning permission is sought for the change of use of the ground floor of 37-39 Sharps Road, Leigh Park from A1 (retail) to D1 (community centre).

The first floor will remain in residential use (currently vacant but soon to be occupied should this change of use be accepted).

2.0 Relevant planning policy / history

Planning policy

The ground floor premises of the property are protected by Core Strategy Policy DM2 Protection of Existing Community Facilities and Shops.

This policy seeks to prevent the loss of land or premises last used as shops or community facilities.

Whilst this change of use application seeks a move away from retail, the premises will remain in community use. As such, the criteria listed in Policy DM2 relating to marketing periods etc are not relevant to this application.

Vacant since 2008, we have attempted to secure an occupier for the retail premises, however have been unable to agree an appropriate and viable deal that would bring the shop back into use.

As such, we believe the local need for a small community facility would be best served by converting these premises.

Planning history

Planning application APP/12/00585 for the '*Change of use from public amenity land to car parking consisting of 2 x private parking spaces and 6 x public parking space and incorporating alterations to dropped kerb, installation of 6 x bollards and new access area markings*' was granted conditional permission on 17th August 2012. This sought to re-arrange and formalise the parking to the front and side of the property in support of trying to attract an occupier for the retail premises. This permission has not yet been implemented.

3.0 Pre-application advice

Confirmation was sought from Havant's Planning Policy Team that the conversion of the premises from A1 to D1 would not trigger the requirement within policy DM2 to provide relevant marketing campaign information etc.

4.0 Use of property

The proposed Resident Participation Centre will be used as a focal point for a variety of meetings, activities and events for the benefit of the local community. For example a gardening club, job club, residents meetings and access to IT facilities will all be provided. The centre will also be available to other public bodies such as the Police and Fire Service to hold surgeries, information events etc. The centre will be operated and managed by PCC Resident Participation Officers.

The opening times and days will vary, and may include some early evening events/meetings; however as the previous retail premises had no opening hour's restriction and could be bought back into use with no planning application, a condition controlling opening hours / days is not sought or expected.

5.0 Design / Parking

The creation of this local community centre will involve mainly internal alterations, however as shown on drawing SR/CS/02 the west elevation will see an existing garage door bricked up to match the existing façade, whilst existing PVC windows on both the west and south elevations will be replaced. A new frontage will also be installed on the south elevation, together with a replacement fascia sign in the same position as the existing.

With regard to parking, the aforementioned planning permission (ref: APP/12/00585) will be implemented alongside this proposal, should planning permission be granted. This will provide 6 spaces to the front of the community centre which is considered more than adequate.

6.0 Summary

In the absence of being able to secure a retail occupier, the conversion of these vacant premises to a small community centre is considered to be an appropriate use of the site that is in line with adopted policy.