
17/00494/COU

**COUNCIL OFFICES, SOUTH STREET, ROCHFORD, SS4
1BW**

**CHANGE OF USE OF NO.17 SOUTH STREET TO A MIXED
USE FOR B1 (BUSINESS OFFICE) AND USE FOR
CONFERRING, WEDDINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS, E.G
SUPERNATURAL EVENINGS AND GARDEN PARTIES**

APPLICANT: ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL

ZONING: TOWN CENTRES

PARISH: ROCHFORD PARISH COUNCIL

WARD: ROCHE SOUTH

1 PLANNING APPLICATION DETAILS

- 1.1 This application is to be heard by the Development Committee as the applicant is Rochford District Council.
- 1.2 The proposal is to maintain the existing use Class B1 (Offices) for hot desking purposes and add a varied leisure use - Use Class D2 (Assembly and leisure). It is proposed this use would be as a wedding venue and for special events.

2 THE SITE

- 2.1 The site is located within the complex of Council buildings on the eastern side of South Street.
- 2.2 The building is a two storey Grade II* listed building, formerly a Hall House. The building has been used as office space and has a gross internal floorspace of 169m².
- 2.3 To the rear of the building is a small courtyard area leading out to a walled rear garden area. The garden area is laid to lawn with decorative flower beds to the perimeter and a number of mature trees.

3 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 There is no relevant planning history for the building itself; however, there is a tandem application for listed building consent – 17/00495/LBC.

4 CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

Rochford Parish Council

- 4.1 Members felt that this site would be better used as a Community Facility rather than offices or residential, but queried the availability of parking at or near to the site. They also requested that this building is listed as a Community Asset.

Essex County Council (ECC) Historic Environment

- 4.2 The application affects a listed building, which is an example of a 17th century hall house, listed grade II, now offices. Elements of the historic fabric of the building may eventually be altered or destroyed during this conversion. It is, therefore, essential that a heritage assessment is carried out to assess the significance of this building, to inform future works and determine if other mitigation work is required, such as historic building survey. Ideally, this assessment should have been submitted with the application, but must be now carried out prior to the commencement of any work.

- 4.3 Recommendation: Heritage Assessment

'No development or conversion of any kind shall take place until the applicant has produced a heritage assessment, which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority'.

ECC Highways

- 4.4 From a highway and transportation perspective the impact of the proposal is acceptable to the Highway Authority subject to the following condition:
- (1) Prior to commencement of the development, the areas within the curtilage of the site for the purpose of loading / unloading / reception and storage of building materials and manoeuvring of all vehicles, including construction traffic, shall be provided clear of the highway.

5 MATERIAL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

- 5.1 The proposed development has to be assessed against relevant planning policy and with regard to any other material planning considerations. In determining this application, regard must be given to section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The relevant parts of the adopted Development Plan are the Rochford District Core Strategy (adopted December 2011), the Allocations Plan (adopted February 2014) and the Development Management Plan (adopted December 2014).

Principle of development

- 5.2 The Rochford District Council Local Development Framework Allocations Plan (adopted 25 February 2014) forms part of the Development Plan for Rochford District. The Allocations Plan superseded the proposals map that accompanied the 2006 Replacement Local Plan. The building is located within the Rochford Town Centre and Conservation Area.
- 5.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Section 2) emphasises the importance of ensuring that local planning policies support the vitality and viability of town centres and their role at the heart of communities. Practically, this means that Local Planning Authorities should promote a diverse retail offer and adopt a town centres first approach, which requires retail, leisure and entertainment, office, and arts, culture and tourism uses to locate in centres ahead of other alternatives.
- 5.4 The Rochford Town Centre Area Action Plan encourages use that would support economic activity within the town whilst recognising its historic character.
- 5.5 Enabling the building to be used for appropriate purposes that would attract visitors to the town centre and provide linkages with other facilities on offer is considered to be in accordance with local and national planning policy.

Parking

- 5.6 The adopted vehicle parking standards for both Class B1 and Classes D1/D2 are maximum standards. For Class B1 this is a maximum of 1 space per 30m² of floor space and for D2 – other uses a maximum of 1 space per 20m². This results in a maximum of 6 spaces. There would be no parking specifically relating to the use of the building. Given the town centre location, it is not considered necessary that the proposed use should be required to provide vehicle parking facilities especially due to the availability of nearby car park facilities.
- 5.7 Arrangements could be made to set down outside the venue and park in local car parks if required. There are two main car parks: one is at Back Lane (171 spaces) and the other at the rail station (202 spaces). Both of these operate on a pay-and-display basis and appear to have spare capacity. The Market Square also accommodates a taxi rank with six spaces and a further number of free parking spaces subject to limited waiting restrictions.
- 5.8 The site is also readily accessible by public transport. The site is within walking distance of the Rochford railway station. Buses regularly pass down South Street with stops approximately 50m away.
- 5.9 Cycle and Powered Two Wheeler parking provision is available on the Council site.

Heritage asset

- 5.10 17 South Street is the oldest building in Rochford of a residential nature and of significant local historical interest. Paragraph 131 of the NPPF, states that, in determining planning applications, Local Planning Authorities should take account of the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation.
- 5.11 The development, as proposed, would not make any physical changes to the building and its historic value. The proposal is to allow the continued office usage of the building for office purposes and to enable alternative uses to coexist that would attract visitors to enjoy the heritage asset. As such, it is not considered that there would be any detriment to the significance of the heritage asset.

Impact on amenity

- 5.12 Protecting the amenities of nearby residents are key considerations when assessing the impact and suitability of any proposal. The Millview Court sheltered housing complex is located to the east of the site and it is considered that the proposed low key usage of the building would not be expected to generate any adverse impact on residential amenity generally, given the background of town centre activity.

6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 In determining this application, regard must be given to section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, which requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The proposal relates to a variation in the usage of an existing building in order to continue the existing usage and provide benefit to the general public seeking an attractive and historic location as a wedding venue and for other functions. There is not considered to be a justification to refuse planning permission.

7 RECOMMENDATION

- 7.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

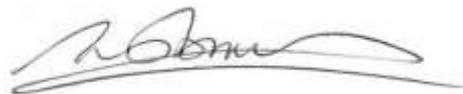
To advise the Secretary of State that it is minded to approve Listed Building Consent subject to the following condition:

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason for Decision and Statement

The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against the adopted

Development Plan and all material considerations, including planning policies and any representations that may have been received, and subsequently determining to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework. The proposal is considered not to cause significant demonstrable harm to any development plan interests, other material considerations, to the character and appearance of the area, to the street scene or residential amenity such as to justify refusing the application; nor to surrounding occupiers in neighbouring streets.



Assistant Director, Planning & Regeneration Services

Matthew Thomas

Relevant Development Plan Policies and Proposals

Core Strategy 2011 – CP2, T8, RTC5

Rochford Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan 2007

Rochford Town Centre Area Action Plan 2015

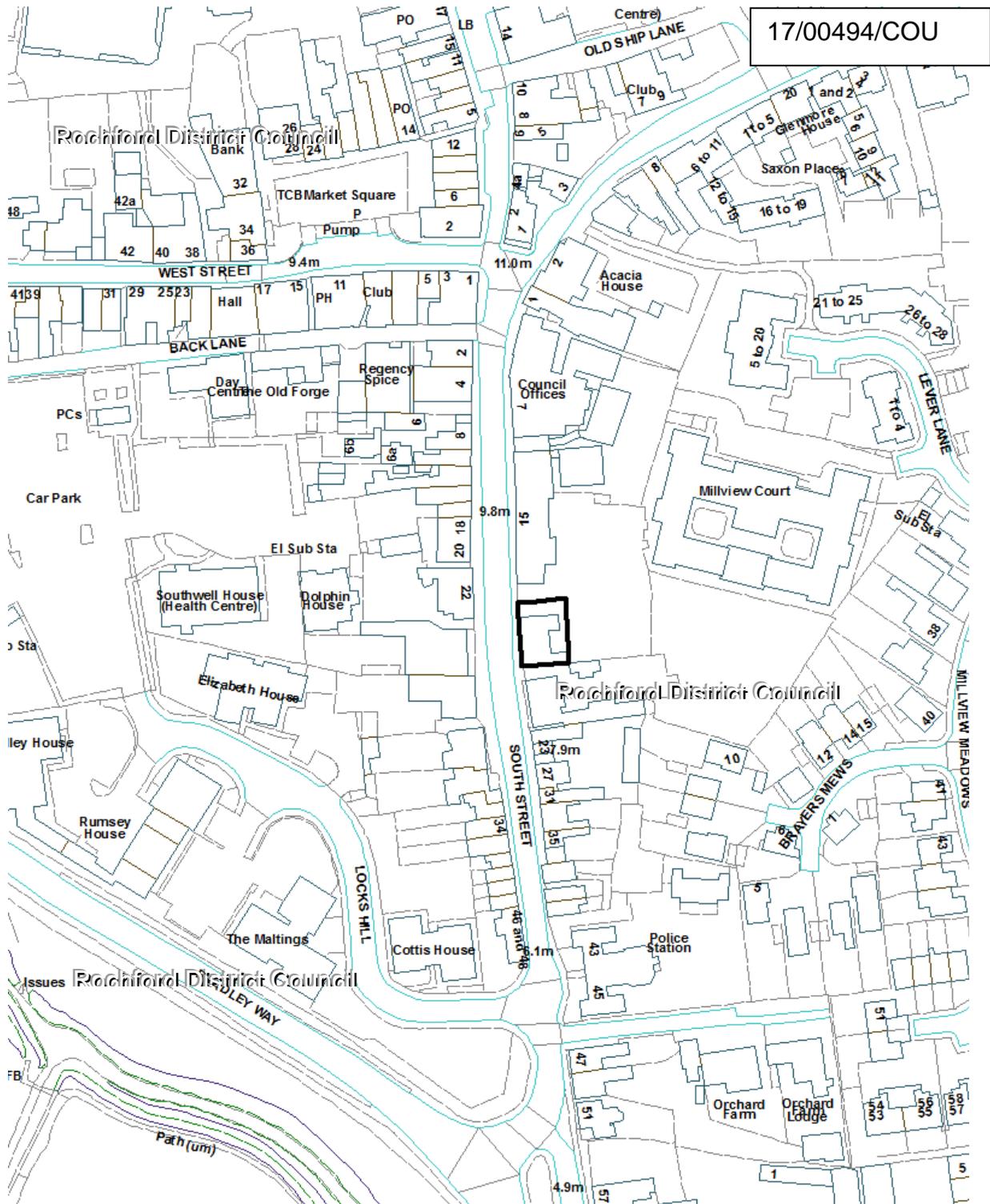
National Planning Policy Framework

For further information please contact Robert Davis (Planning Officer) on:-

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If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.



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