

PLANNING SERVICES COMMITTEE - 20 February 2003 Item R11 Referred Item

TITLE : 02/00943/FUL
**USE OF PART OF PREMISES AS DAY CENTRE PROVIDING
SERVICES TO PEOPLE WITH MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS
RUMSEY HOUSE LOCKS HILL ROCHFORD**

APPLICANT: RETHINK

ZONING: BUSINESS USE B1

PARISH: ROCHFORD PARISH COUNCIL

WARD: ROCHFORD

In accordance with the agreed procedure this item is reported to this meeting for consideration.

This application was included in Weekly List no. 662 requiring notification of referrals to the Head of Planning Services by 1.00pm on Tuesday 18th February 2003, with any applications being referred to this Meeting of the Committee. The item was referred by Cllr H L A Glynn

The item which was referred is appended as it appeared in the Weekly List together with a plan.

11.1 Rochford Parish Council – No objection.

11.2 This application involves change of use of part of the existing building to be used as a day centre with minor alterations proposed.

11.3

The unit is to be used by the organisation 'Re-Think' previously known as the National Schizophrenia Fellowship as a 'drop-in centre': use class sui generis (a use of its own). However, a 'drop-in' counselling service can be considered as an A2 use (financial and Professional services) or a D1 use. A condition is recommended to control any subsequent change of use.

11.4 The centre will serve the locality providing a service for people with mental health needs. The limited external alterations proposed include the replacement of a solid door with a glazed one and a disabled ramp to the entrance. There will be no change in the appearance and character of the conservation area.

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11.5

The area is designated for B1 (light industrial) use in the local plan and such a use includes offices. Policy EB2 restricts development to B1 (light industrial) or B8 (storage and distribution) use classes. Policy EB4 also restricts uses within designated sites. This touches on avoidance of congestion and traffic hazard and states that retailing will not normally be permitted. Policy PU4 relates to the provision of community facilities. In assessing applications for such facilities, regard will be had for: the accessibility of sites to public transport; the availability of suitable access and parking space; the avoidance of undue disturbance affecting residential area; other relevant policies in the local plan.

11.6

The proposal seeks a use of importance to the community and will not result in an increase in traffic movement and located close to the centre of Rochford is well related to other community and mixed uses. It is also well related to public transport. Part use of the existing building is not considered to have any detrimental effect for the designated uses identified in the local plan. An earlier extant permission (00/0359/COU) was granted consent for a temporary period on the adjacent site at Cottis House for use as a drop-in centre by the same organisation but that consent has not been taken up and being a temporary consent expires on the 31st December 2003.

11.7

The application includes a letter describing the aims and objectives of the proposed 'drop in' day centre that is intended to provide a service for people who live in the community. Those people making use of the centre must be enrolled as members. The use provides a social and recreation outlet to meet others to chat over a cup of tea, informally seek support from staff and obtain affordable food and refreshments. A pool table, table tennis, board games, playing cards are popular recreational activities. The service has very good links with the Adult Community College. The centre is expected to be open seven days a week with indicative opening hours shown on a leaflet showing existing services elsewhere: Monday to Thursday 9am-8pm latest, Friday 9am – 10pm latest, Saturday 9 am – 6pm latest, Sunday 10am – 5.30pm.

11.8

To conclude, the proposal is a departure from Policy B1 but is considered acceptable in terms of Policy PU4 (the provision of community facilities), but contrary to Policy EB2 (the provision of office accommodation). On the one hand despite the concerns raised by objectors, the proposal will provide a community facility in a location that is close to public transport links and will not give rise to a serious loss of amenity to residents or to the existing occupiers of Cottis House. On the other it will lead to a loss of office accommodation in the Rochford Area. Further advice from the Government encourages mixed use developments especially in locations well served by public transport and the Government encourages Authorities to adopt policies in their local plans. The decision on whether or not the proposal is acceptable is finely balanced. However, the applicants are willing to accept a temporary permission. If allowed on this basis an assessment could be made in a few years time as to whether or not the remains a need for such office accommodation and the situation can be reassessed at that stage, though as discussed in the report, the proposal is considered acceptable on this basis.

11.9

Four householder notification letters have been received objecting to the proposal:

- Prime Commercial/ business location would be undermined
- Detrimental to the Conservation Area

11.10

- The times of use, early morning, late at night, seven days a week
- Over concentration of mental health uses in Rochford District concerned about personal safety and the effect on the general feel of the area
- Human rights of neighbours will be affected.

County Surveyor (highways) – De Minimis. County Planner (Environmental Services) – No strategic comments to make. County Planner (Historic Conservation) – No objections Housing, Health and Community Care – Advisory comments concerned with installation of the internal lift and control of nuisances.

APPROVE

- 1 Prior to the development hereby permitted being occupied, details of the proposed lift system and associated plant shall be submitted to and agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority. Such works as agreed shall be installed and shall be retained in the approved form.
- 2 SC25 PD Restricted - Uses
- 3 The use of the site hereby permitted, shall not open to users of the day centre outside the hours of 9.00am to 6.30pm daily except that it may remain open until 10.00pm on no more than 5 days in any consecutive 14 days.
- 4 SC43 Amplification Prohibited
- 5 SC48 Temporary Uses

Relevant Development Plan Policies and Proposals:

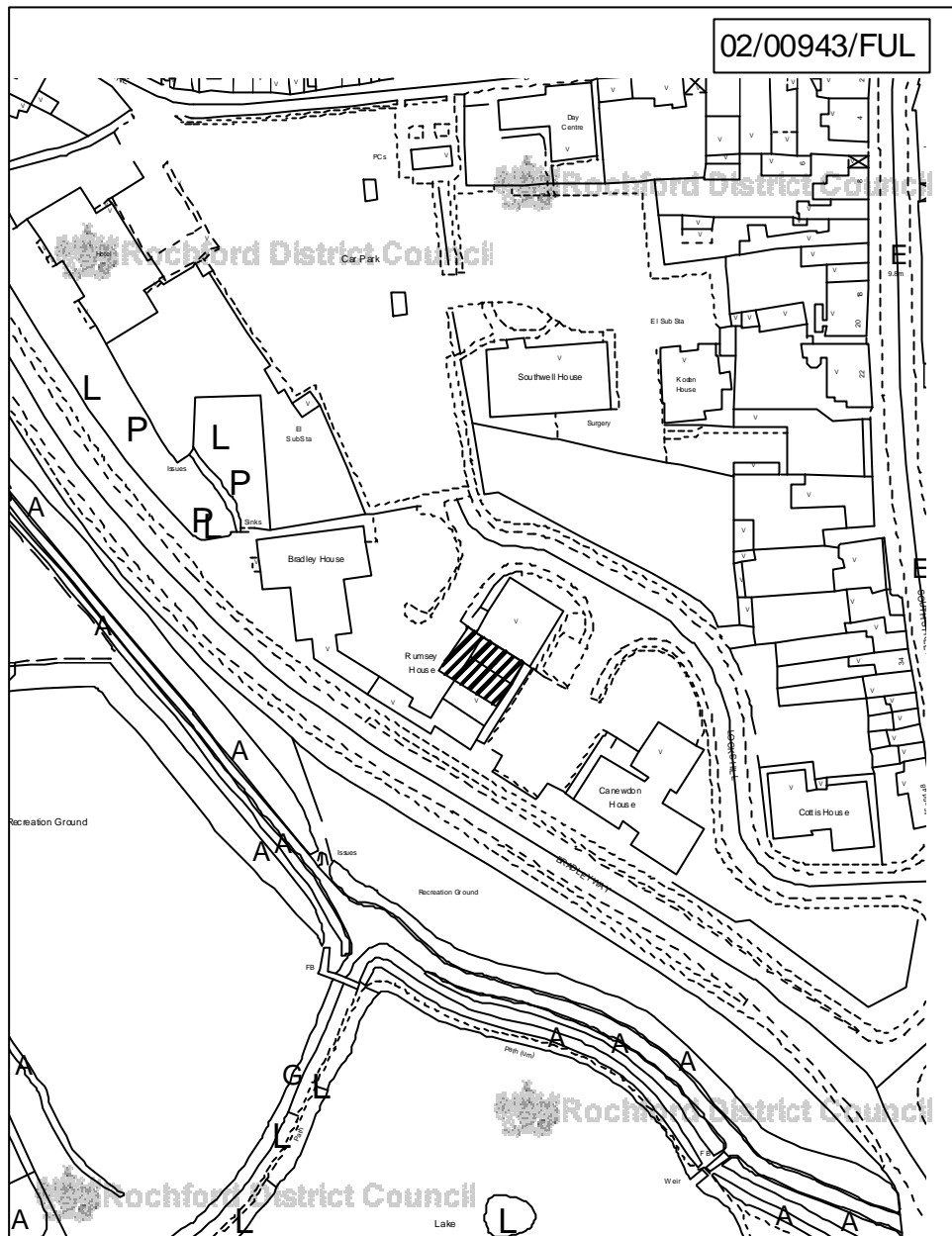
EB2, EB4, PU4 of the Rochford District Local Plan First Review



Shaun Scrutton
Head of Planning Services

The local Ward Member(s) for the above application are Cllr. Mrs L Barber Cllr. Mrs M S Vince Cllr. R A Amner

For further information please contact Lee Walton on (01702) 546366.



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