

Application Number: 24/10746 Full Planning Permission
Site: BARCLAYS BANK, 6-8 HIGH STREET, RINGWOOD,
BH24 1BZ
Development: Change of use from financial services (Use Class E(c)i) to the
provision of education (Use Class F1); rooflights; balustrade to
terrace; fenestration alterations
Applicant: UKG Ltd
Agent: Studio Arkell
Target Date: 17/10/2024
Case Officer: John Fanning
Officer Recommendation: Grant Subject to Conditions
**Reason for Referral
to Committee:** Town Council contrary view

1 SUMMARY OF THE MAIN ISSUES

The key issues are:

- 1) Principle of development
- 2) Character and heritage impact
- 3) Amenity and access

2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a former bank in Ringwood town centre, with the property currently being vacant. It lies within the defined built-up area within Ringwood and forms part of the Ringwood Conservation Area. There are a number of listed buildings within the vicinity of the site, including a Grade II listed building immediately adjacent to the premises to the west. The site forms part of the identified High Street and is within the designated Primary Shopping Frontage.

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application proposes a number of physical amendments to the building, including the installation of rooflight windows to the front and rear and a barrier around the roof to the rear. The physical alterations seek to facilitate a change in use of the premises from the previous use of the site as a bank (Class E) to a use as a training centre (Class F1). An indicative occupier for the proposed use has been identified as a language school. A reception area and classroom space would be provided at ground and first floor level, with ancillary office space at second floor level.

The application was submitted in conjunction with an advertisement consent application for alterations to the signage, which has been considered separately under application reference 24/10747.

4 PLANNING HISTORY

Proposal	Decision Date	Decision Description
24/10747 Fascia sign to front elevation (Application for Advertisement Consent)		Pending
23/10453 Removal of signage, CCTV cameras and alarms; night face plate and existing ATM machine to be removed and replaced with glass; existing letterbox to be sealed internally	19/07/2023	Granted Subject to Conditions

5 PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Local Plan 2016-2036 Part 1: Planning Strategy

Policy ECON1: Employment land and development
Policy ECON2: Retention of employment sites and consideration of alternative uses
Policy ECON5: Retail development and other main town centre uses
Policy ECON6: Primary, secondary and local shopping frontages
Policy ENV3: Design quality and local distinctiveness
Policy STR3: The strategy for locating new development
Policy STR4: The settlement hierarchy
Policy STR6: Sustainable economic growth

Local Plan Part 2: Sites and Development Management 2014

DM1: Heritage and Conservation

Supplementary Planning Guidance And Documents

SPD - Parking Standards
SPG - Ringwood - A Conservation Area Appraisal
SPD - Ringwood Local Distinctiveness

Neighbourhood Plan

Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan

Policy R2: Maintaining a Successful and Prosperous Town Centre
Policy R4: Shops and Parades within and outside defined centres

National Planning Policy Framework

National Planning Policy Guidance

6 PARISH / TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS

Ringwood Town Council: Recommend refusal.

The Committee considered the application for change of use to be contrary to Policy 2 clause C of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan (RNP), in that it 'will result in the loss of an active retail, commercial, business or service use of a ground floor frontage'. Even if it is not contrary to Policy, the proposed use is out of keeping and considered inappropriate for this prominent location on the high street, which is an essential core of the primary shopping area (as designated in the RNP) because it is not an active use of the ground floor. With regard to the proposed rooflights, Members objected to the one at the front of the building as this is out of keeping with the style of the other windows, the façade of the building and given that it is in the Conservation Area.

7 COUNCILLOR COMMENTS

No comments received

8 CONSULTEE COMMENTS

Conservation Officer - Objection to the installation of the rooflight on the front elevation which would be an incongruous additional within the context of the conservation area, where rooflight windows are typically positioned at a lower level or to the rear.

9 REPRESENTATIONS RECEIVED

The following is a summary of the representations received.

For: 9

- Proposed use will bring business to the town centre
- Language school is a useful local facility
- Users will utilise nearby public transport and parking facilities
- Important for viability of high street to keep premises occupied

Against: 1 (from the Ringwood Society)

- Concern about quality of fascia signage
- Special consideration should be given the heritage designation of the site and relevant local and national policies within the defined high street and conservation area setting

10 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Principle of development

The site falls within the defined town centre and within the Primary Shopping Frontage of Ringwood. Policy ECON6 gives specific guidance for uses appropriate within Primary Shopping Frontages, with ECON6(i) identifying that within the ground floor of Primary Shopping Frontages, a change of use which results in the loss of retail (Class A1) and financial and professional services (Class A2) uses will only be supported where it will not create a concentration of non-shopping uses and result in an unacceptable change in the retail character of the shopping frontage as a whole.

For clarity, the Use Classes have been amended since that policy was written, with Class A1 and Class A2 no longer existing and now being part of a wider Class E Use Class which covers a wider range of retail, food and drink, service and commercial uses.

Policy R2 of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan also seeks to retain the commercial viability of the town centre, with Policy R2(C) in particular noting that a change of use which results in the loss of an active retail, commercial, business or service use of a ground floor frontage will be supported in the case that the proposed ground floor use falls with the NPPF definition of a 'main town centre use', the proposed use would maintain an active and publicly accessible ground floor use, the use would not undermine the character and diversity of the town centre, and the proposed use and associated works would not harm the historic interest or character of the conservation area and listed buildings.

For context, the NPPF defines a 'main town centre use' as retail, leisure, entertainment and recreation, offices and arts/cultures/tourism uses.

With regard to Policy ECON6, there are a range of Class E uses within the parts of the Primary Shopping Frontage that are adjacent to and close to the application site, including restaurants, estate agents, banks, hairdressers and retail uses. There is also a betting office, which is a sui generis use. Within this context, and given the amendments to the Use Classes Order, it is not considered that the proposed development would result in an inappropriate concentration of non-Class E uses within this part of the Primary Shopping Frontage. Furthermore, the premises would retain its existing frontage onto the street scene. As such, it is considered that the proposal would be in compliance with the requirements of Policy ECON6.

With regard to Policy R2, it is noted that with regard to R2(C) this relates to the 'loss of an active retail, commercial, business or service use'. In this case, it is noted that the premises is currently vacant and has been for a number of months (though no specific evidence has been presented in relation to marketing or viability of the site). Whilst the proposal would result in the loss of a Class E premises, it would maintain the existing commercial frontage onto the street and is not considered to result in the loss of an active frontage. Furthermore, whilst Policy R2 seeks to provide support for certain specific forms of development, it does not preclude alternative forms of development such as that proposed. Therefore, it is not considered that the proposal would be contrary to the provisions of Policy R2 of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan.

The proposal does not fall within the NPPF definition of a 'main town centre use'. However, it is considered that the impact of the use, in terms of its interaction with the street frontage would not be dissimilar to, for example, an office use and would also act as a wider facility for the local community. Section 5.15 of the Ringwood Neighbourhood Plan identifies that the 'capacity and quality of community uses' are an important aspect of the function of the town centre, of which it is considered that the proposal could form a part.

The proposal would represent part of a wider suite of services within the town centre and would potentially attract users to utilise the other town centre facilities within the area, broadly supporting the viability of the surrounding High Street.

The proposal indicatively would support 9 full time equivalent employees, along with 3 classrooms, each serving 10-15 students (and additional associated waiting areas). Staff and students would potentially utilise the local facilities and services of the town centre while accessing the premises, acting both as a service for local residents to access within the centre and providing additional footfall within the surrounding High Street. While the loss of the existing commercial use would result in a reduction in the total Class E uses within the street scene, it is not considered that the loss would result in a harmful depletion in the range of services being offered. Indeed, the proposal would provide a unique service which would have the potential to attract users to utilise the wider High Street services.

Overall, with reference to the matters discussed above, it is considered that the development would broadly accord with the goals and objectives of Policies ECON6 and R2 with regard to maintaining a viable and active frontage within the Ringwood Town Centre. On this basis, it is considered that the principle of the proposed development is acceptable and consistent with policy.

Notwithstanding the above, this assessment is subject to the development successfully integrating into the town centre in terms of the associated impacts of the development. These matters are considered in more detail below.

Character and heritage impact

Section 66(1) of the Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas applies. It requires that special regard shall be had to the desirability of preserving a Listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Section 72 of the Act states that special attention should be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Local Plan Part 2 Policy DM1 states that development proposals should conserve and seek to enhance the historic environment and heritage assets, with particular regard to local character, setting, management and the historic significance and context of heritage assets. This includes a balancing exercise between impact on Heritage Assets against public benefits, which is also referred to in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Paragraph 205 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

Paragraph 208 of the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

The proposal includes a number of internal alterations which do not, in themselves, require permission associated with the proposed change of use.

Alterations to signage have also been proposed, but these have been addressed separately under application reference 24/10747.

In terms of physical alterations, the application proposes additional rooflight windows, to both front and rear elevations. The front of the site faces onto the main commercial frontage, while the rear of the site faces onto a service yard area serving the surrounding commercial uses. The Council's Conservation Officer has been consulted on the proposal and raised concerns with the visual impact of the new rooflight window to the front elevation, noting that rooflights are not typical roof features on frontage elevations in this part of the Conservation Area.

The property currently has two dormer windows on the front elevation, partially screened by an existing parapet wall feature running across the front of the property. Given this design feature, the view of the roof is largely screened within the immediate context of the application site. There are some longer distance views of the site from Christchurch Road to the south-east, from where the roof of the building would be visible. However, the screening provided by the existing parapet wall and the layout with neighbouring buildings, means that there would only be limited visibility of the proposed rooflight from the public realm.

It should be noted that the part of the roof form where the rooflight is proposed would be substantially less visible within the surrounding Conservation Area than the roof forms of neighbouring buildings. Therefore, notwithstanding the objections raised in terms of the visual impact on the Conservation Area and the setting of the nearby listed buildings, the visual impact of the front facing rooflight window would be extremely minor.

The layout to the rear onto the service yard is less sensitive in appearance than the frontage. Nevertheless, the proposed alterations to the rear are very modest in nature and preserve the appearance of the building within the wider Conservation Area. As such, it is considered that the alterations are acceptable subject to suitable details of materials being secured as part of the proposal.

Overall, notwithstanding the specialist advice of the Council's Conservation Officer, the visual impact of the proposed rooflight window on the building's front elevation would to a large degree be screened by the existing form of the building. The specific quality and detailing of the window could also be secured by an appropriately worded condition. Therefore, notwithstanding the historic sensitivity of the site, it is considered that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the Ringwood Conservation Area or the setting of the nearby listed buildings.

Amenity and access

The application proposes to employ 8 full time members of staff and 3 part-time members (for a total of 9 full time equivalent employees), with proposed opening hours of 08:00-21:00 Mon-Fri, 08:00-17:00 Sat and no time on Sunday or bank holidays.

The agent has advised that the proposed occupier is looking to operate the premises as a language school, with up to 50 students at any given time.

The site does not have any on-site parking capacity. Notwithstanding this, the site is situated within the identified Ringwood Town Centre, with a number of nearby public car parks situated to the north and south of the site, along with other public transport facilities serving the town centre. With regard to section 4.8 and 15 of the Council's Parking Standards SPD, the site is highly accessible by different modes of transport. In addition, it is noted that the development must also be considered within the context of the commercial uses of the premises which does not benefit from any existing on-site parking capacity. On this basis, it is considered that the lack of on-site parking to serve the proposed use would be appropriate in this sustainable location.

The surrounding area is largely commercial in nature. In this context, it is not considered the proposed use would generate levels of noise and activity that would be harmful to the amenity of neighbouring premises.

However, it is noted that the Class F1 Use Class involves a variety of other uses which may have differing impacts (for example, art gallery, museum, library). Broadly speaking, it is considered that the site's town centre location represents an appropriate location for such uses. Notwithstanding this, the amenity and transport implications of some uses may differ from the proposed development, but provided the use operates during the proposed hours of operation, it is not considered the proposal would be harmful to the amenities of adjacent properties. Accordingly, it is considered appropriate to restrict the hours of use to those proposed to ensure the impact of any change can be appropriately considered.

11 OTHER MATTERS

N/A

12 CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

For the reasons outlined above, with regard to Policy ECON6 and R2 it is considered that the proposed use is appropriate in the context of the town centre location and

would not result in a harmful impact with regard to the provision of a mixed and balanced active commercial frontage within the surrounding high street.

Careful consideration has been given to the impacts of the development with regard to Policy DM1 and the provisions of chapter 16 of the NPPF. For the reasons outlined above, it is considered that suitable conditions can control the visual impact of the development and ensure that the special features of the host building and the contribution that the site makes to the conservation area and the setting of adjacent listed buildings is preserved.

On this basis, the application is recommended for conditional approval.

13 RECOMMENDATION

Grant Subject to Conditions

Proposed Conditions:

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

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

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

(Design and Access Statement)

Drg No: 24016.HER01.100.R01 (Location plan)

Drg No: 24015.HER01.101.R01 (Existing floor plan)

Drg No: 24016.HER01.102.R01 (Existing floor and roof plan)

Drg No: 24016.HER01.103.R01 (Existing elevation)

Drg No: 24016.HER01.104.R02 (Existing elevation)

Drg No: 24016.HER01.105.R01 (Proposed floor plan)

Drg No: 24016.HER01.106.R02 (Proposed floor and roof plan)

Drg No: 24016.HER01.107.R01 (Proposed elevation)

Drg No: 24016.HER01.108.R02 (Proposed elevation)

Drg No: 24016.HER01.109.R04 (Proposed site plan)

Drg No: 24016.HER01.110.R02 (Proposed elevation)

Drg No: 24016.HER01.111.R01 (Proposed signage)

Reason: To ensure satisfactory provision of the development.

3. Before development commences, the following details shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

- a) Samples or exact details of the balustrade materials to be used to the rear
- b) Exact details of the installation, fitting and materials of the proposed rooflight windows

The development shall only be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure an acceptable appearance of the development in accordance with Policy ENV3 of the Local Plan 2016-2036 Part One: Planning Strategy for the New Forest District outside of the National Park and Policy DM1 of the Local Plan for the New Forest District outside the National Park. (Part 2: Sites and Development Management).

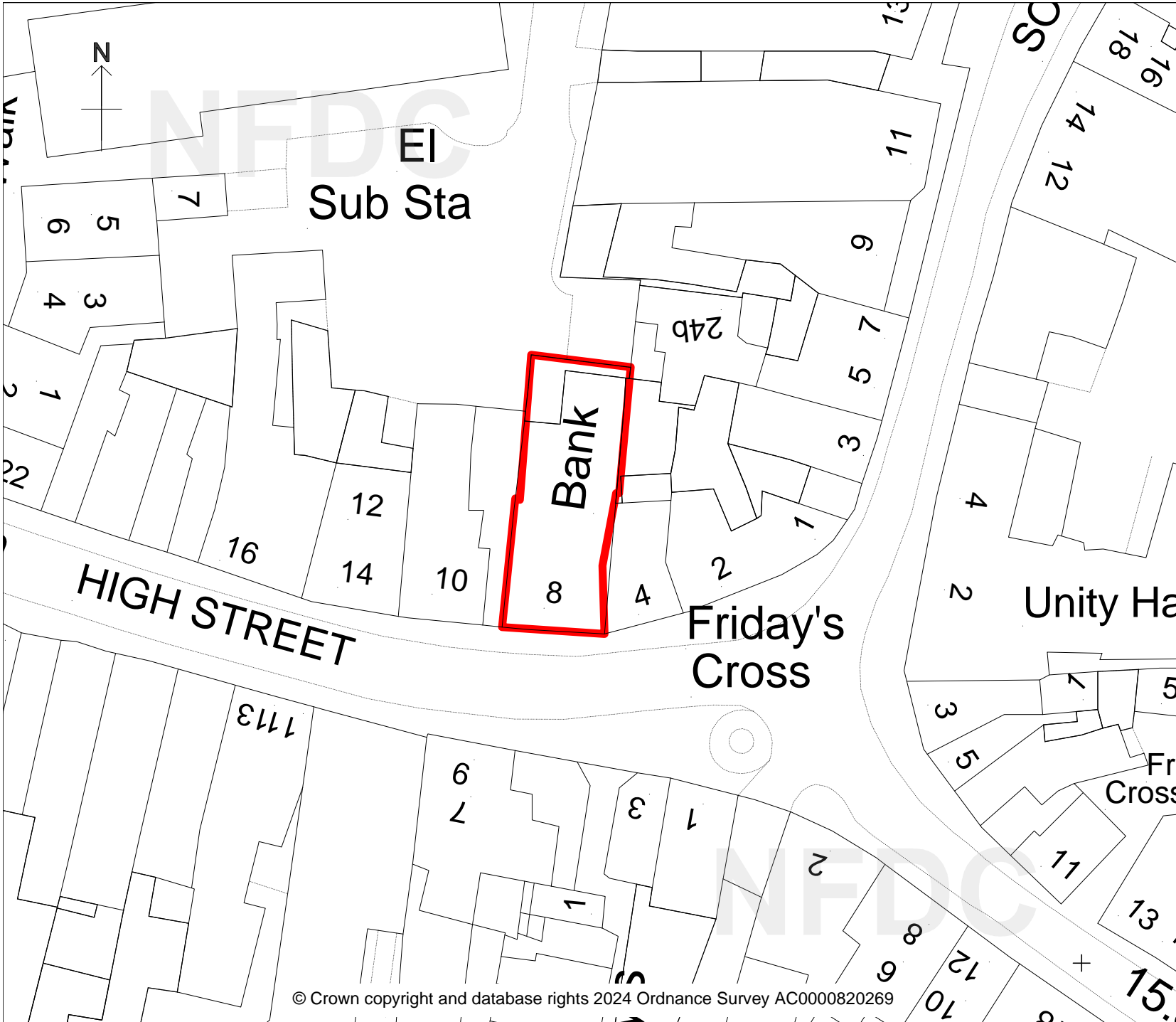
4. No activity shall take place on the site in connection with the approved use other than between the hours of 08:00 and 21:00 Monday to Fridays and 08:00 and 17:00 Saturday and at no time on Sundays or recognised public holidays.

Reason: To control the nature of the use in the interest of the amenity of adjoining premises.

Further Information:

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New Forest
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PLANNING COMMITTEE

December 2024

Barclays Bank
6-8 High Street
Ringwood
24/10746

Scale 1:500

N.B. If printing this plan from the internet, it will not be to scale.