

**Ashley House, Ashley Road, Epsom, Surrey, KT18 5AZF**

Conversion and extension of existing office building with additional floor of accommodation above the southern wing and the erection of a new single storey extension on the northern elevation to provide 8x2 bed and 4x1 bed residential flats together with a revised parking layout and external amenity space (as amended).

<b>Ward:</b>	<b>Town</b>
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	<b>John Mumford</b>

**1 Plans and Representations**

- 1.1 The Council now holds this information electronically. Please click on the following link to access the plans and representations relating to this application via the Council's website, which is provided by way of background information to the report. Please note that the link is current at the time of publication, and will not be updated.

Link: <http://eplanning.epsom-ewell.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=O1LQC3GYKBX00>

**2 Summary**

- 2.1 This application proposes the conversion and extension of the existing Grade 2\* Listed Building previously in office use to provide a total of 12 residential flats together with revised parking layout and external amenity space.
- 2.2 The application is a major application and is accordingly referred to this committee for determination together with the associated 15/01533/LBA.
- 2.3 The application is recommended for approval.

**3 Site description**

- 3.1 The application site comprises the 3 storey Ashley House and the adjoining 2 storey annex to the south. The property is a Grade 2\* listed building and is situated within the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area. The property was originally built as a single residential dwelling and more recently it was in B1 office use but apart from a short-term let of a small part of the building it has been vacant since November 2011. There is no garden left for Ashley House and its annexe. All the land around its small curtilage is tarmac for car parking.
- 3.1 Ashley House is set well back from its frontage on the west side of Ashley Road which is part of the one-way gyratory system. Wrapping around the western and northern boundaries to the site are the Ashley Centre facades including some office space and to the south is the service egress ramp from the Ashley Centre and beyond that is Finachem House that is in mixed office and student residential use.

- 3.1 The previous planning permission and listed building consent for an additional storey to the Ashley House annexe building for office use and new 3 storey glazed link between annex and main building (applications 06/01274/FUL and 06/01275/LBA) was never implemented apart from some minor internal alterations.

#### **4 Proposal**

- 4.1 This application seeks planning permission for the conversion and extension of the existing office building with an additional floor of accommodation above the southern wing and the erection of a new portico on the northern elevation to provide 8x2 bed and 4x1 bed residential flats together with a revised parking layout and external amenity space.
- 4.2 The existing vehicular access from Ashley Road and egress onto the service road egress serving the Ashley Shopping centre would be retained. This is an amendment to the scheme as originally submitted which had proposed access/egress only from the service road which was objected to by Surrey County Council on highway safety grounds. A total of 14 car parking spaces would be provided to the front of the property with a resin bound gravel surface. The existing boundary frontage trees would be retained and supplemented by others behind the retained boundary railings and soft landscaping in front of the building. The rear tarmacked car park would be landscaped into shared private gardens and reference is made in the heritage assessment report to new trees being planted beside the Ashley Centre's loading bay access road although these are not shown on the submitted plans.
- 4.3 The current application has arisen in response to pre-application discussions with both Historic England and council officers. The proposed development has been amended since originally submitted in the light of comments received from Historic England and includes the following alterations to the main Ashley House:
- Laying out the basement for bike and other storage;
  - Retention of the ground floor virtually unaltered to create 2 flats thereby enabling the front door, entrance hall and passage to the garden to be kept open for all residents. It would also allow the principal staircase to be used to access all of the upper floors;
  - The existing single storey extension on the northern elevation would be removed and rebuilt recessed slightly behind the principal façade;
  - The first floor would be converted into 2 flats with rooms largely restored to their original appearance;
  - The second floor would be converted into 2 flats with the living room in Flat 4 retaining its original form and that in Flat 5 being restored.
- 4.4 The following alterations to the Annexe are proposed:
- Removal of the single storey corridor link to Ashley House;
  - Provision of a new staircase off the main entrance to allow for 2 flats on each floor;
  - Provision of a new second floor as a mansard.

4.5 The application is supported by the following documents:

- Planning Supporting Statement
- Heritage Statement and appendices
- Design and Access Statement
- Affordable housing viability report

## 5 Comments from third parties

5.1 The application was advertised by means of letters of notification to 31 neighbouring properties, a site notice and a notice in the local press. No representations have been received.

## 6 Consultations

6.1 Historic England – Converting the building will inevitably entail some harm to its significance. However, we are satisfied that this has now been minimised, as is required under the terms of the NPPF (Para 129) and that any remaining harm is justified by securing the building’s future through a sympathetic conversion to residential use (Para 132). We are therefore content that the application might be approved in its current form.

6.2 Surrey County Council – No objections subject to the imposition of a standard condition requiring the provision of the parking/turning areas prior to occupation.

## 7 Relevant planning history

Application number	Decision date	Application detail	Decision
06/01274/FUL/ 06/01275/LBA	26.04.2007	Erection of additional storey to Ashley House	Granted
15/01533/LBA		Conversion and extension of existing office building with additional floor of accommodation above southern wing and erection of new single storey extension on northern elevation to provide 8x2 bed and 4x1 bed residential flats together with revised parking layout and external amenity space (as amended).	Under Consideration

## 8 Planning Policy

National Policy Planning Framework (NPPF) 2012

Core Strategy 2007

Policy CS1

Sustainable development

Policy CS5	The built environment
Policy CS6	Sustainability in new developments
Policy CS7	Housing Provision
Policy CS8	Broad location of housing development
Policy CS11	Employment provision
Policy CS12	Developer contributions to community infrastructure
Policy CS16	Managing transport and travel

Epsom Town Centre Area Action Plan (Plan E) 2011

Policy E1	Town Centre boundary
Policy E2	Housing capacity in the town centre
Policy E5	Town Centre employment provision

Development Management Policies 2015

Policy DM5	Trees and landscape
Policy DM8	Heritage Assets
Policy DM9	Townscape character and local distinctiveness
Policy DM10	Design requirements for new developments
Policy DM11	Housing density
Policy DM12	Housing standards
Policy DM13	Building heights
Policy DM22	Housing mix
Policy DM35	Transport and new development
Policy DM36	Sustainable Transport for new development
Policy DM37	Parking standards

Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area Character Appraisal and Management Proposals 2008

## **9 Planning considerations**

### Principle of use

- 9.1 The application site is located within the defined Epsom Town Centre and Plan E Policy E5 resists the loss of existing employment floorspace unless it can be demonstrated that the premises are no longer fit for purpose as town centre office stock and that there has been an active marketing exercise lasting at least 12 months prior to alternative uses being considered. Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy also resists the loss of employment land in the town centre.
- 9.2 The applicant has provided evidence to support the case that in spite of continuous marketing attempts since 2011, it has not been possible to secure an occupier for office use as it does not meet the expectations of modern day office space. A traditional business or office use is less suited to the individual small rooms that are in the existing building and a purpose built modern office building is more able to provide reception areas and meeting rooms required by occupiers.

- 9.3 The principle of the change of use of the premises to residential is supported through Paragraph 51 of the NPPF which states: "Local planning authorities should identify and bring back into residential use empty housing and buildings in line with local housing and empty homes strategies and, where appropriate, acquire properties under compulsory purchase powers. They should normally approve planning applications for change to residential use and any associated development from commercial buildings (currently in the B use classes) where there is an identified need for additional housing in that area, provided that there are not strong economic reasons why such development would be inappropriate." This is the rationale behind the Government recently making permanent the permitted change of use from office to residential except where a Listed Building is involved.
- 9.4 It is accepted that the appropriate alternative use for the application site is residential and that this would be in accordance with Policies E1 and E2 of Plan E and Policy CS8 of the Core Strategy. It is also significant that Historic England consider conversion to residential use to be the only realistic option for securing the future of this heritage asset.

#### Impact on visual amenity

- 9.5 Ashley House is a Grade II\* listed building of the late Georgian period and despite previous conversion to other uses, it retains an interior of exceptional quality. Whether many of the elaborate interior finishes are part of the original architectural intention, or part of an extensive historic redecoration, they make a notable contribution to the special qualities of the designated heritage asset.
- 9.6 The high quality of the architecture and its prominence in the Epsom Town Centre Conservation Area make it a major contributor to the character and appearance of the conservation area. Notwithstanding this the former landscape setting of Ashley House has been entirely lost and the listed building is now crowded on two sides by overwhelming new development and the annexe attached to the southern elevation. The designated heritage asset now stands isolated on a small 'island' of hard-standing used for car parking purposes. The spatial and landscaped qualities of the listed building are clearly lost beyond recall, with the present constraints of the site rendering reinstatement impossible. While it is usually unacceptable for hard-surfaced car parking areas to abut the principle elevation of a listed building, the spatial constraints of the site and the surrounding context result in it being acceptable in this case. The replacement of the existing tarmac surface with resin bonded gravel modestly enhances the setting of Ashley House and suitable boundary treatments can be secured by condition.
- 9.7 The cramped and overshadowed space remaining to the rear of the listed building is of very limited use and the proposed treatment enhances the present appearance while resulting in some amenity benefit to future occupants.

- 9.8 Demolition of the linking corridor between Ashley House and the annexe together with the associated making good is welcomed, as better separation is achieved between the listed building and the modern element. The existing pitched roof of the annexe being replaced with a new mansard roof containing a second floor with 2 apartments within the roof space. The new roof extension would undoubtedly have a greater massing than the existing roof form and whilst this additional bulk increases the building's prominence in the street scene and how it relates to Ashley House, it would nevertheless succeed in retaining its subservience to the main house. It would comply with the Council's height policy and set against the background of the surrounding buildings, this aspect of the development is visually acceptable. It is noted that Historic England raise no objection to the roof extension subject to its detailing to be agreed by condition.
- 9.9 The removal of the existing small structure to the north which has no formal elevational treatment and replacement with a new single storey addition with windows and a door creates interest and legibility to the building. This is appropriate to the character and appearance of the buildings and does not harm the significance of the heritage asset.
- 9.10 In summary it is considered that the proposal secures the future of the designated heritage asset in a sustainable use similar to that originally intended and would result in improvements to the visual amenities of the area, including its setting within the conservation area.
- 9.11 The proposed conversion of the buildings would provide a total of 12 apartments consisting of 8x2 bedroom apartments and 4x1 bedroom apartments. The proposed apartments have been orientated to make the most of the south, east and west aspect of the building with living spaces located around the large windows facing these aspects. The accommodation has been arranged to take full advantage of the existing features of the house including high ceilings, large spaces and generous windows which would provide sufficient light to the rooms. One of the principal rooms on the ground floor would be retained as a common room for residents and visitors to the building.
- 9.12 The confines of the site inevitably means that the distance of some 10m between the office building to the west, which overlooks the rear of the annexe, and the rear facing windows of the flats is less than would be normally considered necessary to safeguard privacy and overlooking. It is noted that the 21m distance usually required relates to direct facing habitable room windows. Similarly, the level of and utility value of the external amenity space in the form of private shared garden space between the rear elevation and the Ashley Centre edifice is less than would be considered necessary for the scale of development. There is no scope to improve upon these fixed constraints and obscure glazing is proposed in certain locations where facing window distances between the main building and the Annexe could result in loss of privacy. It is considered that satisfactory living conditions would be provided for the proposed residents that comply with the external and internal space standards set out under Policy DM12.

- 9.13 There will be no detrimental impact on amenities of neighbouring occupiers, essentially as there is limited change proposed to the existing building and also due to the nature of surrounding uses.

#### Parking and Access

- 9.14 The provision of 14 car parking spaces to the front of the property exceeds the council's minimum parking standards of 0.75 spaces per unit which requires a total of 9 spaces. It is considered that in this town centre location the level of car parking is adequate for accommodating the needs of residents and visitors. Secure cycle storage would be provided in the basement.

#### Landscaping

- 9.15 Additional landscaping is proposed to the front car park area which is a welcome and needed addition to soften the hard appearance of this highly visible area. There is concern about the available space for achieving adequate landscaping and provision for large underground tree pits with a structural soil system or underground cellular system would be necessary. There is also concern that vehicles could impact the tree trunks and that the edging is too close to reduce the risk of the trees damaging the structure in the future. BS 5837 advises a 500-700mm separation to avoid root damage. It would be preferable for the trees to be grown in 1m wide beds as a minimum and the addition of ground cover or low hedge shrubs could reduce vehicular damage. Officers believe that these requirements can be covered by appropriate planning conditions as attached.

#### Refuse

- 9.16 Refuse storage areas are proposed adjacent to the northern and southern boundaries of the site accessible to collection from the public highway.

#### Sustainability

- 9.17 Policy CS6 requires that development should result in a sustainable environment and reduce, or have a neutral impact upon pollution and climate change. The applicant has submitted within the Design and Access Statement an intention to investigate sustainable methods of energy efficiency and materials. This can be covered by planning condition.

### Affordable Housing

9.18 The proposal would normally be required to contribute 2.4 affordable units under the terms of Policy CS9. The applicant in the submitted Planning Support Statement refers to 'in the special circumstances of this application and the need to sensitively convert the existing listed building which in itself will incur significant costs, it is both impractical and unviable to provide affordable housing on site.' The applicant was asked to submit an Affordable Housing Viability report to justify their position that the proposed development should not require any further financial contributions which fall outside of the remit of CIL. The applicant's viability report was subsequently independently reviewed by the council's own appointed consultants who agreed that because of the nature of this particular site the proposals are unable to support affordable housing.

### Community Infrastructure Levy

9.19 The proposed residential development would be liable for CIL.

## **10 Conclusion**

10.1 The conversion of the listed building into residential flats is considered to secure the long term retention of the building in a viable use, secure visual amenity improvements and make an important contribution to further housing units in Epsom Town Centre.

## **11 Recommendation**

11.1 Planning permission is granted subject to the following conditions:

### **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(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 (1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.**

**(2) Prior to the commencement of development, details and samples shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority of the materials to be used for the external surfaces of the development including all making good works, demonstrating that the finishing materials match those of the existing building/structure in size, colour, texture, profile, finish, bonding and pointing. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**

**Reason: To safeguard the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building / In the interest of the character and appearance of the conservation area in accordance with Policy CS5 of the Core**



**Strategy (2007) and Policies DM8, DM9 and DM10 of the Development Management Policies 2015.**

- (3) **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: Drawing Numbers P101Rev E, P102 Rev E, P110 Rev D, P111 Rev D, P112 Rev D, P113 Rev B, D110 Rev C, D111 Rev C, D112 Rev C, D113 Rev B**

**Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans to comply with Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy (2007).**

- (4) **The development hereby approved shall not be occupied until space has been laid out within the site in accordance with the approved plans P101 Rev E and P110 Rev D for vehicles and cycles to park and turning areas provided to enable vehicles to enter and leave the site in forward gear. The parking and turning areas shall be permanently retained exclusively for their designated purpose.**

**Reason: To ensure that the development does not prejudice highway safety or cause inconvenience to other highway users in accordance with Policy CS16 of the Core Strategy (2007) and Policies DM35 and DM37 of the Development Management Policies 2015.**

- (5) **Details of windows in the north elevation of the annexe and south elevation of Ashley House of the development hereby permitted that are to be glazed with obscure glass of no less than obscurity level 3 and permanently fixed shut, unless the parts of the window/s which can be opened are more than 1.7 metres above the floor of the room in which the window is installed shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority prior to first occupation.**

**Reason: To safeguard the privacy of the occupants in accordance with Policy DM10 of the Development Management Policies 2015.**

- (6) **No development shall take place until full details, of both hard and soft landscape proposals, including a schedule of landscape maintenance for a minimum period of 5 years, have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved landscape scheme (with the exception of planting, seeding and turfing) shall be implemented prior to the occupation of the development hereby approved and thereafter retained.**

**Reason: To ensure the provision, establishment and maintenance of an appropriate landscape scheme in the interests of the visual amenities of the locality in accordance with Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy (2007) and Policies DM5 and DM9 of the Development Management Policies 2015.**

- (7) **No development shall take place until details of all boundary treatment have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The approved scheme shall be implemented prior to the first occupation of the development or phased as agreed in writing by the**

local planning authority. The approved scheme shall thereafter be retained.

**Reason:** To secure a satisfactory appearance in the interests of the visual amenities and character of the locality in accordance with Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy (2007) and Policies DM9 and DM10 of the Development Management Policies 2015.

- (8) No development shall take place until an Arboricultural Method Statement (detailing all aspects of construction and staging of works) and a Tree Protection Plan in accordance with British Standard 5837:2012 (or later revision) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the agreed details and no equipment, machinery or materials shall be brought onto the site for the purposes of the development until fencing has been erected in accordance with the Tree Protection Plan. Within any area fenced in accordance with this condition, nothing shall be stored, placed or disposed of above or below ground, the ground level shall not be altered, no excavations shall be made, nor shall any fires be lit, without the prior written consent of the local planning authority. The fencing shall be maintained in accordance with the approved details, until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been moved from the site.

**Reason:** To protect the trees on site which are to be retained in the interests of the visual amenities of the locality in accordance with Policy CS5 of the Core Strategy (2007) and Policies DM5 and DM9 of the Development Management Policies 2015.

- (9) Prior to the commencement of the development, details of sustainability measures shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall demonstrate how the development would be efficient in the use of energy, water and materials including means of providing the energy requirements of the development from renewable technologies. The development shall be carried out in strict accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the building, shall be maintained as such thereafter and no change shall take place without the prior written consent of the local planning authority.

**Reason:** To ensure that measures to make the development sustainable and efficient in the use of energy, water and materials are included in the development in accordance with Policy CS6 of the Core Strategy.

- (10) Works related to the construction of the development hereby permitted, including works of demolition or preparation prior to building operations shall not take place other than between the hours of 08.00 to 18.00 hours Mondays to Fridays; 08.00 to 13.00 hours Saturdays; with no work on Saturday afternoons (after 13.00 hours), Sundays, Bank Holidays or Public Holidays.

**Reason:** In order to safeguard the amenities of the occupiers of neighbouring properties in accordance with Policy DM10 of the Development Management Policies 2015.

**Informatives:**

- (1) The Council confirms that in assessing this planning application it has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way, in line with the requirements of paragraph 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.
- (2) If you need any advice regarding Building Regulations please do not hesitate to contact Epsom & Ewell Borough Council Building Control on 01372 732000 or [contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk](mailto:contactus@epsom-ewell.gov.uk).