
Report To:	The Planning Board	Date:	4th March 2009
Report By:	Head of Planning and Housing	Report No:	08/0220/IC Plan 03/09
Contact Officer:	Guy Phillips	Contact No:	01475 712422
Subject:	Change of use of Class 1 shop to a Class 1 shop and 12 flats at 69 - 71 West Blackhall Street Greenock PA15 1XE		

SITE DESCRIPTION

The site comprises the three storey, former What Everyone Wants shop at 69-71 West Blackhall Street, Greenock.

PROPOSAL

In March 2007, planning permission was granted for a redevelopment of the shop and its rear service yard comprising the retention of a shop at ground floor level, a conversion to 4 flats on the two storeys above and a new build block of 14 units in the rear service yard fronting West Stewart Street.

The proposal under consideration in this report concerns the conversion of the former shop only. It is proposed to retain the ground floor in retail use and to convert the first and second floors to provide twelve, one and two bedroomed flats for housing association use (an increase of 8 units over that approved in 2007). The increase in flat numbers arises from a rear wing of the shop, previously proposed to be removed, being retained and converted.

External alterations proposed comprise replacement windows, a powder coated aluminium shopfront and rendering to the rear elevation.

No off street parking is proposed.

LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

Local Plan Policy R1- Designated Centres

The following Centres are designated:

1. Town Centres, as defined on the Proposals Map:

- (a) Greenock, subdivided into a 'Central Shopping Area' and 'Outer Mixed/Commercial Area';
- (b) Port Glasgow ;
- (c) Gourock ; and

2. Local Centres, as defined or indicated on the Proposals Map:

- (a) Kilmacolm (defined);
- (b) Dubbs Road, Port Glasgow (defined);
- (c) Sinclair Street, Greenock;
- (d) Belville Street, Greenock;
- (e) Lynedoch Street, Greenock;
- (f) Barrs Cottage (Inverkip Road/ Dunlop Street), Greenock;
- (g) Ravenscraig (Cumberland Walk), Greenock;
- (h) Cardwell Road, Gourock (defined);
- (i) Main Street, Inverkip
- (j) Ardgowan Road, Wemyss Bay
- (k) By Station/Pier, Wemyss Bay

Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will seek to assist urban regeneration and sustainable travel patterns. This will be achieved by encouraging each Centre to serve its own retail and service catchments without detriment to other Centres and to the overall roles of Greenock, Port Glasgow and Gourock as the principal Centres serving the Authority.

Local Plan Policy R2 - Support for Designated Centres

The designated Centres identified in Policy R1 will be protected, enhanced and developed, where resources allow, through a range of initiatives aimed at achieving the following:

- (a) encouraging a diversity of retail, leisure, civic, public administration, office, residential and other uses, of the type which the Council, as Planning Authority, considers to be appropriate to the development of the individual Centres, in order to support their vitality and viability, particularly through mixed use developments and through the use of upper floors of commercial premises;
- (b) identifying and promoting opportunities for new development and for the redevelopment and reuse of existing premises, both within and on the edge of the defined Centres;
- (c) improving the quality of the urban environment through implementing programmes for the improvement of individual properties, the streetscape and open spaces;
- (d) improving accessibility and integration of services by bus, train, ferry and taxi;
- (e) improving accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists through the provision of safe and convenient facilities and routes both into and within the town centres;
- (f) managing provision of freight access and of car, motorcycle and cycle parking for residents, visitors, workers and shoppers in accordance with an approved strategy;
- (g) managing traffic flows to minimise congestion and pollution and to give priority to the disabled, pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and service vehicles; and
- (h) developing Town Centre Action Plans in partnership with other agencies.

Local Plan Policy R3 - Town Centre Uses

The following town centre uses will be directed towards the Central Shopping Area of Greenock, the other two Town Centres (Port Glasgow and Gourock) and the Local Centres:

- (a) Use Class 1 (Shops)
- (b) Use Class 2 (Financial, Professional and other Services);
- (c) Use Class 3 (Food and Drink);
- (d) Use Class 10 (Community Uses);
- (e) Use Class 11 (Assembly and Leisure); and
- (f) Related uses such as public houses, hot food take-aways, theatres, amusement arcades and offices for taxis for public hire.

Outside these designated Centres, the above uses will be permitted in principle in the Outer Mixed/ Commercial Area around the Central Shopping Area of Greenock Town Centre, according to the specification in Policy R5. Applications for any of the uses listed will be considered subject to the criteria outlined in Policy R10. Proposals for other uses in designated Centres will be considered on their merit.

Local Plan Policy R4 - Greenock Central Shopping Area

In order to support the retail function of Greenock Town Centre's Central Shopping Area, Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority will:

- (a) identify this area as the preferred location for retail investment in Greenock; and
- (b) seek to protect the core retail function of the Primary Shopping Area by ensuring that no more than 25% of the length of ground floor frontage of each of the six defined segments identified on the Greenock Town Centre Inset (H) of the Proposals Map is utilised for non-Class 1 (Shops) uses.

The Council's PPAN No 12 provides guidance on shopfront design.

CONSULTATIONS

Head Of Safer Communities - No objections

Head of Environmental Services – Planning permission should be refused as the Council's Roads Guidelines requirement for 6 off street parking spaces has not been met.

PUBLICITY

The nature of the proposal did not require advertisement.

SITE NOTICES

The nature of the proposal did not require a site notice.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No written representations have been received.

ASSESSMENT

The material considerations in the determination of this planning application are the Development Plan, the Council's PPAN 12, the planning history of the area, the consultation responses, visual amenity and car parking.

Policy R1 of the Local Plan confirms the site's location within the Town Centre. Policy R2 seeks to protect, enhance and develop the town centre through a range of initiatives aimed at a number of objectives including: (a) encouraging a diversity of uses including retail and residential which the Council considers to be appropriate in order to support the vitality and viability of the Town Centre, particularly through the use of upper floors of commercial premises; (b) identifying and promoting opportunities for new development and for the redevelopment and reuse of existing premises; and (c) improving the quality of the urban environment through implementing programmes for the improvement of individual properties. Policy R3 directs a number of land uses towards the Town centre, including retail use, while Policy R4 identifies the town centre as the preferred location for retail investment.

There is no conflict between the principal of a retail and residential conversion and Policies R1 to R4 of the Local Plan. The red sandstone building, while not listed, has a design quality which I consider makes a positive contribution to the quality of townscape in West Blackhall Street. The building has been disused for a number of years and I consider that its proposed conversion would provide it with a sustainable future, to the benefit of the vitality, viability and quality of amenity in the Town Centre. I further note that the proposed shopfront design accords with the design guidance in PPAN12.

No off street parking is proposed, however I consider a material consideration to be a planning permission granted in 2005 for the redevelopment of the site at the nearby 112 West Blackhall Street for the erection of 2 shops and 9 flats. It also has no off street parking. The Council's Roads Development Guide suggests that 6 off street parking spaces should be provided, however this Guide dates from 1995 and does not accord with current national planning policy.

In 1997 NPPG17 introduced a new prime objective to reduce car travel and encourage a shift to travel by public transport and walking and cycling. Development is encouraged in sustainable locations where there is good public transport and where facilities can be readily accessed on foot.

The stretch of West Blackhall Street containing the application site is at the heart of Greenock Town Centre which is characterised by shops with sandstone tenements above. Existing flats do not have off street parking. The proposal under consideration is for the conversion of a building, of some quality that is in scale with the architecture of West Blackhall Street. At 112 West Blackhall Street it was recognised that to have a building of an appropriate scale to the town centre, off street parking could not be provided. In this instance where there is an opportunity to retain a traditional sandstone building I consider that it is consistent not to require off street parking. Many individuals choosing to live in the town centre do so to enjoy the benefits of proximity to goods services and a reduced need for travel. Car ownership need not be a priority and residents move in fully recognizing the limited car parking opportunities.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be granted subject to conditions

Conditions

1. That the development to which this permission relates must be begun within five years from the date of this permission.
2. Development shall not begin until samples of materials to be used on external surfaces of the building have been submitted to and approved in writing by the planning authority. Development shall thereafter be carried out using the approved materials or such alternatives as may be agreed in writing with the planning authority.

Reasons

1. To comply with Section 58 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997.
2. To ensure a continuity of materials in West Blackhall Street.

F. K WILLIAMSON
Head of Planning and Housing

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application form
2. Application plans
3. Inverclyde Local Plan
4. SPP17
5. Planning applications IC/06/434R and IC/05/167

