

<b>APPLICATION NUMBER:</b>	LW/07/0026	<b>ITEM NUMBER:</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>APPLICANTS NAME(S):</b>	Altyre Securities	<b>PARISH / WARD:</b>	Lewes / Lewes Priory
<b>PROPOSAL:</b>	Planning Application for Demolition of warehouse building (part of former Roche complex), erection of B1 (office) floorspace, fourteen residential units, additional on-site parking and ancillary landscaping		
<b>SITE ADDRESS:</b>	Former Roche Building, Bell Lane, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 1LG		
<b>GRID REF:</b>	TQ 4009		



## 1. SITE DESCRIPTION / PROPOSAL

1.1 The site is the former Roche building in Bell Lane. The site has been occupied by Roche since the early 1980's following the erection of the existing office and warehouse buildings specifically for their business. Roche have recently moved to a new purpose built headquarters building in Burgess Hill due to the physical restrictions of this site and those of the surrounding road network.

1.2 The current proposal is to retain the existing office accommodation on the site (3759sq.m), to replace the existing warehouse accommodation (2063sq.m) with new office accommodation (1664sq.m) and provide 14 self contained residential units. This would result in a net loss of approximately 400sq.m (7%) of commercial floorspace on the site.

1.3 The new office floorspace would be accommodated within an extension to the existing office building on the east and north of the site, with the proposed residential accommodation provided within a new block located on the western side of the site overlooking the park. The accommodation will consist of 1x3 bed maisonette, 4x2 bed flats and 9x3 bed flats. Car parking will be provided to meet the current ESCC Parking Standards.

## 2. RELEVANT POLICIES

**LDLP: – ST03 – Design, Form and Setting of Development**

**LDLP: – RES05 – Unidentified Residential sites**

**LDLP: – E01 – Planning for Employment**

## 3. PLANNING HISTORY

**LW/06/1029** - Addition of staircase and platform lift enclosure plus various works to west and south elevations - **Approved**

**LW/06/1028** - Use of the second floor of the existing building for B1(a) purposes by a firm not occupying any other part/all of the building - **Approved**

**LW/02/1424** - Roof extension for additional office space and provision of parking - **Approved**

**LW/77/1545** - Outline proposal for phased demolition of existing and redevelopment to provide offices, parking and ancillary areas. (Approved by County Council.) - **Approved**

## 4. REPRESENTATIONS FROM STANDARD CONSULTEES

**Main Town Or Parish Council** – Members welcomed this redevelopment opportunity.

**Environmental Health** – No objection, agrees with the advice from the EA and recommends conditions.

**Design & Conservation Officer** – The alterations to this scheme answer the objections raised by the Architects Advisory Panel. It is in my view, and subject to materials and details, suitable for approval.

**ESCC Highways** – Following a safety audit of the proposed improvements required by the Highway Authority the Authority is now in a position to accept the development proposals with the proposed traffic mitigation measures including a staff travel plan, improvements at the prison crossroads and financial contributions towards improved cycling facilities in the town and signal improvements, and subject to conditions.

**Environment Agency** – Following discussion with the applicants the Agency has removed its objection to the proposal subject to conditions to deal with potential contamination and protection of existing water supply.

**East Sussex County Archaeologist** – No objection subject to a condition on archaeological investigation.

**Southern Water Plc** – No objection to foul drainage proposals, surface water drainage should be assessed by Council officers.

**Sussex Police - C.P.D.A.** – There are no major concerns with this proposal, with residential properties being protected by being above ground level and also overlooking the adjacent play area.

## **5. REPRESENTATIONS FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS**

5.1 Architects Advisory Panel (comments on original scheme) – A number of issues were raised over the proximity of the commercial and residential units and the impact they have on each other. It was also suggested that the amount of car parking and the treatment of the site gave the impression of a residential accommodation site within a car parking/commercial area. The concrete and tarmac feel of the existing car park has not been adequately addressed. This requires softening through a landscaping scheme. The car parking figures given are considered to be high and need to be checked.

5.2 The view of the site from Southover roundabout is suggested as a missed architectural opportunity, despite modification having already been made to the design in light of this being a key view.

5.3 The treatment of colour is considered to require more thought as currently the scheme has the appearance of being colour coded on an elevational basis.

5.4 The residential units are considered too complicated in design and do not relate well to the existing Roche building which is to be retained. Security is an issue with potential unauthorised access to the undercroft parking.

5.5 Friends of Lewes - whilst we did not comment on the application when it was first made we hope to have an opportunity to comment upon any revisions. Hope some provision is to be made for affordable housing as there is a need for larger sized affordable dwellings.

5.6 Five neighbour letters of objection have been received, four from two addresses. The scheme has been objected to on the following - overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of employment land, visual intrusion, detrimental impact on landscape, increased noise and disturbance, height is excessive, out of character with area, increased traffic.

5.7 One letter received asking for improved cycle provision/facilities.

## **6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS**

6.1 In considering this mixed use scheme it is considered that the key issues are impact on employment, traffic, impact on amenity, and design and impact on its surroundings.

### **Employment Issues**

6.2 The site currently provides 2063 sq.m of warehousing and 3759sq.m of offices. It is proposed to demolish the warehouse floorspace and to construct an additional 1664sq.m of office floorspace. This would result in a net loss of 400sq.m of employment floorspace on the site. The current buildings were constructed on the site to meet the specific requirements of the previous occupier, Roche. The office accommodation is not difficult to market in itself. However due to the site constraints and restrictive road network in the vicinity of the site the warehousing floorspace has been more difficult to find alternative occupiers for, and it is this floorspace that would be lost.

6.3 Local plan policy seeks to ensure that B1, B2 and B8 floorspace is safeguarded unless the continued use would result in issues of amenity amongst other criteria set out in Policy E1. In this instance it is considered that the previous warehouse use on the site did result in difficulties on the local highway network especially with large articulated vehicles trying to service the site, often resulting in such lorries parking on the pavement close to the bend, causing obstruction to both pedestrians and other road users, and generally reducing safety. The restrictive nature of the site is also a factor in the viability of retaining such floorspace on the site.

6.4 The core use of the site, for office accommodation, will not alter and will be enhanced by the construction of a further 1664sq.m of floorspace to respect the layout and form of the existing office building. On balance, despite the net loss of 400sq.m of employment floorspace (7% of original floorspace), it is considered that the proposed development maintains a viable employment use on this difficult site complying with the objectives of the Local Plan Policy.

## **Highways Issues**

6.5 The site will provide 132 car parking spaces, 50 secure cycle spaces for the commercial element and at least 10 spaces for the residential occupiers. This level of provision meets the requirements of the ESCC highway standards. The majority of the car parking will be located at lower ground floor level, with some located at ground floor level.

6.6 The applicants have submitted a detailed Transport Assessment and have indicated they would be willing to enter into a legal agreement to provide the necessary financial contributions to fund any required highway improvements etc. and to produce a staff travel plan.

6.7 The Highway Authority has negotiated improvements to the submitted scheme to deal with their concerns. Originally improvements were sought for the prison crossroads. However in view of the minimal space available here the Highway Authority have indicated that they would be willing to accept the quantified financial cost of providing signal improvements at this junction (£15k) to improve the Lewes 20mph Zone, although revised road markings and minor kerb realignment will still be carried out at this junction. The 20mph Zone is being designed to allow cyclists to safely mix with other motor vehicles without additional requirement for specific cycle infrastructure. This will ultimately allow more people to travel in a more sustainable manner and to reduce congestion.

6.8 The Authority therefore has no objection to the proposed scheme, subject to securing through a legal agreement, a staff travel plan, and financial contributions of £14,350 (residential contribution) and £15,000 (20mph Zone). It is considered that the removal of the warehousing element from the site and the subsequent removal of the large HGV's negotiating the local road network will improve the general amenity and road safety in the area.

## **Impact on Residential Amenity**

6.9 There are two areas of the development that could potentially impact on residential amenity. The first relates to the office extension of the eastern part of the site adjacent to the flats in St Pancras Gardens. The flats currently have a back to back distance with the existing building of 13.2m. This will remain at first floor level and will gradually increase to 17.2m at first floor level and 23m at the upper floor. Additional windows will be introduced on this elevation together with some external terraces. Whilst these distances are considered acceptable it is considered necessary to impose a condition requiring the details and construction of privacy screens to these terraces/balconies to prevent overlooking, and the means of ensuring there is no overlooking from the new office windows, in order to protect privacy.

6.10 The other area relates to the south west corner of the development and the new residential blocks. These flats have external terrace amenity areas on the south elevation which face onto the rear of properties in Juggs Close. The distance from the balconies to these houses is approximately 30m with a

gap of 24m to the rear garden boundary. These houses back onto Bell Lane and have a steep bank planted with deciduous trees which serve as an effective screen, even in the winter. It is therefore considered that this gap, screen and change in level are sufficient to ensure that residential amenity or privacy would not be compromised.

## **Design and Impact on Surroundings**

6.11 The site is not located within the Conservation Area but can be viewed from the Area and from important open spaces to the north. The main bulk of the existing Roche building is located to the east of the site, behind properties in Southover Road. The single storey pitch roofed warehouse element is adjacent to the northern boundary of the site together with the main covered car park.

6.12 The main office building will remain largely unchanged, with a previous consent for its extension being implemented as part of this proposal. The majority of the additional office accommodation will be constructed to the north of the existing office building. The site of the warehousing will be replaced with a new car parking area with new office accommodation above. This area has been kept low to allow views north from the Southover roundabout towards the cemetery. This flat roofed area will be covered in a sedum/green roof.

6.13 The western part of the site, adjacent to the park, will accommodate the new residential units on four levels, together with some new office floorspace on the courtyard side of the block. The existing access point to the site will remain, the majority of the courtyard will be landscaped with both hard and soft landscaping, with access to the main car park using the existing slip road the lower ground floor level.

6.14 The general form and massing of the buildings imitates the existing Roche offices, with a deliberate step approach in the profile of the blocks while the lower central element linking the two main areas of floorspace maintains visual continuity across the site and safeguards important vistas through the site to areas beyond. The stepped approach respects the existing built form and also addresses the change in level along Bell Lane up to Southover High Street.

6.15 The overall design is considered to be easily legible to users and visitors, with clearly defined entrances for visitors to the commercial and residential elements, defined car and cycle parking for visitors, residential occupiers and employees. The overall appearance of the residential blocks has been simplified to improve the relationship to the retained buildings.

6.16 The proposed palette of materials has been simplified and includes through-coloured render, cedar boarding, modular aluminium powder coated windows, galvanised metal 'brise soleil', hardwood slatted balconies, grey ply membrane roof over the main blocks with green living roof over the lower link building. The design of the residential blocks, and the layout of the main

entrance courtyard has been redesigned to put more emphasis on the pedestrian and not the motor vehicle.

6.17 The design has been amended in light of the comments received from the AAP and the Design & Conservation Officer. It is considered that the amended scheme fully addresses the comments raised, and has resulted in an improved design, respecting its location and surroundings. The success of the scheme will depend on the details, many of which will be made the subject of conditions, especially in relation to the facing and surfacing materials.

6.18 It is considered that the simple, contemporary appearance of the new development complements the existing Roche office block and enhances the overall appearance of the site. The design respects the constraints of the site, especially the existing buildings and the topography, and its surroundings including the park and the nearby residential properties.

## **7. RECOMMENDATION**

7.1 Despite resulting in a loss of 7% (400sq.m) of the original employment floorspace, this mixed use scheme is considered acceptable. The loss of the warehouse floorspace, whilst regrettable, will improve highway conditions locally. The compensation of increasing the office accommodation on the site is considered to enhance the commercial/employment use of the site and this, in turn, will support the town's economy. The creation of a mixed use scheme, by including residential units on the site, improves the vitality of the site and its general security, and enhances the immediate environment. It is therefore considered that planning permission should be granted subject to conditions and subject to a legal agreement to secure financial contributions towards highways works, recycling, and recreation space, and the submission of a travel plan.

### **The application is subject to the following conditions:**

1. Construction work shall be restricted to the hours of 0800 to 1800 Monday to Fridays and 0830 to 1300 on Saturdays and works shall not be carried out at any time on Sundays or Bank/Statutory Holidays.

Reason: In the interest of residential amenities of the neighbours having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

2. Before the development hereby approved is commenced on site, details and samples of all external materials including facing and roofing materials, fenestration and balconies shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and carried out in accordance with that consent.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development in keeping with the locality having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

3. Before the development hereby approved is commenced on site, details/samples of all surfacing materials shall be submitted to and approved in

writing by the Local Planning Authority and carried out in accordance with that consent.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development in keeping with the locality having regard to [Policy ST3](#) of the Lewes District Local Plan.

4. All materials resulting from the demolition shall be removed prior to the commencement of works of redevelopment unless their reuse as part of the development scheme has been agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In order to protect the visual amenity and character of the area having regard to [Policy ST3](#) of the Lewes District Local Plan.

5. No development shall take place within the area indicated (this would be the area of archaeological interest) until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has/have secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological works in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and carried out in accordance with that approval.

Reason: To facilitate the recording of finds of archaeological interest having regard to [Policy H11](#) of the Lewes District Local Plan.

6. No development approved by this planning permission shall be commenced until:

a) A desktop study has been carried out which shall include the identification of previous site uses, potential contaminants that might be reasonably be expected given those uses and other relevant information. And using this information a diagrammatical representation (Conceptual Model) for the site of all potential contaminant sources, pathways and receptors has been produced.

b) A site investigation has been designed for the site using the information obtained from the desktop study and any diagrammatical representations (Conceptual Model). This should be submitted to, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to that investigation being carried out on the site. The investigation must be comprehensive enough to enable:

- A risk assessment to be undertaken relating to groundwater and surface waters associated on and off site that may be affected, and
- Refinement of the Conceptual Model, and
- The development of a method Statement detailing the remediation requirements.

c) The site investigation has been undertaken in accordance with details approved by the Local Planning Authority and a risk assessment has been undertaken.

d) A Method Statement detailing the remediation requirements, including measures to minimise the impact on ground and surface waters using the



information obtained from the Site Investigation has been submitted to the Local Planning Authority. This will need to be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to that remediation being carried out on the site and the development of the site shall be carried out in accordance with the approved method statement.

Reason: In the interests of health & safety of the future occupiers of the site having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

7. If during development, contamination not previously identified, is found to be present at the site then no further development (unless otherwise agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority) shall be carried out until the developer has submitted, and obtained written approval from the Local Planning Authority, for an addendum to the Method Statement. This addendum to the Method Statement must detail how this unsuspected contamination shall be dealt with and from the date of approval the addendum(s) shall form part of the Method Statement.

Reason: In the interest of health & safety of the future occupiers of the site having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

8. Piling or any other foundation designs using penetrative methods will not be permitted other than with the express written consent of the Local Planning Authority which may be given for those parts of the site where it has been demonstrated that there is no resultant unacceptable risk to groundwater.

Reason: To ensure that the development complies with approved details in the interests of protecting controlled waters having regard to Policy ST14 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

9. Development shall not begin until details of foul and surface water drainage arrangements have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved drainage works shall be implemented in accordance with the details and prior to the occupation of the development.

Reason: To secure a satisfactory standard of development having regard to Policies ST3 and ST14 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

10. The land indicated on the approved plans for the parking and turning of vehicles, and the parking/storage of cycles for the development hereby permitted shall be laid out prior to the first occupation/use of the development and thereafter kept available for that purpose only.

Reason: To ensure adequate off-street parking provision and to ensure highway safety having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

11. Development shall not be occupied until reconstruction of the access has been completed in accordance with the approved plans, in compliance with ESCC Highways specifications, and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

12. Before the development hereby permitted is commenced wheel washing equipment shall be provided within the site and used to clean the wheels of all vehicles accessing and egressing from the site to prevent contamination and damage to surrounding roads.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

13. A turning space shall be provided outside the limits of the highway and thereafter permanently retained.

Reason: In the interests of highway safety having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

14. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied or used until the means of providing privacy screenings to the new balconies/terraces and new windows on the east elevation of the office blocks have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall be implemented in accordance with that approval and retained on the site permanently.

Reason: In the interests of protecting residential amenity and privacy having regard to Policy ST3 of the Lewes District Local Plan.

**This decision is based on the following submitted plans/documents:**

<u>PLAN TYPE</u>	<u>DATE RECEIVED</u>	<u>REFERENCE</u>
Location Plan	5 January 2007	02-290.01
Location Plan	5 January 2007	2193/P11 A
Block Plans	22 January 2007	2193/P26
Survey	5 January 2007	2193/P13
Sections	5 January 2007	2193/P23
Levels	5 January 2007	2193/P24
Existing Floor Plans	5 January 2007	2193/P25
Design & Access Statement	5 January 2007	
Proposed Floor Plans	22 March 2007	2193/P14 A
Proposed Floor Plans	22 March 2007	2193/P15 B
Proposed Floor Plans	22 March 2007	2193/P16 A
Proposed Floor Plans	22 March 2007	2193/P17 A

Proposed Floor Plans	22 March 2007	2193/P18 A
Roof Plans	22 March 2007	2193/P19 A
Existing Elevations	22 March 2007	2193/P20 A
Proposed Elevations	22 March 2007	2193/P20 A
Existing Elevations	22 March 2007	2193/P21 A
Proposed Elevations	22 March 2007	2193/P21 A
Existing Elevations	22 March 2007	2193/P22 A
Proposed Elevations	22 March 2007	2193/P22 A
Sections	22 March 2007	2193/P22 A

**Summary of reasons for decision and any relevant development plan policies/proposal:**

It is considered that the proposal meets the aims and objectives of Local Plan Policy and respects the character of the location, complying with Policies ST3, E1 and RES5 of the Lewes District Local Plan.