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| APPLICATION NUMBER: | LW/07/1057 | ITEM NUMBER: | 5 |
| APPLICANTS NAME(S): | Lewes District Council Housing Strategy | PARISH / WARD: | Lewes / Lewes Priory |
| PROPOSAL: | Local Authority Application (Reg 4) for Change of use from public conveniences to create a dwelling | | |
| SITE ADDRESS: | The Lodge, Mountfield Road, Lewes, East Sussex, BN7 2XA | | |
| GRID REF: | TQ 4109 | | |

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1. SITE DESCRIPTION / PROPOSAL

1.1 Planning permission is being sought for the change of use of the public toilets located off Mountfield Road into a self-contained ground floor flat. The building was originally built as a single dwelling house and was converted into public toilets on the ground floor and flat above over 15 years ago.

1.2 The proposed alterations to the ground floor will provide a self-contained one bedroom flat with disabled accessible entrance, doorways and bathroom. An interconnecting doorway to the entrance hall of the first floor flat will be introduced so that the ground and first floor accommodation could be used as one dwelling when circumstances require. Alterations to the elevations will be minimal with the original steel framed windows replaced with new small pane steel framed Crittall windows to match the existing.

2. RELEVANT POLICIES

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

LDLP: – RE10 – Community Infrastructure

3. PLANNING HISTORY

None.

4. REPRESENTATIONS FROM STANDARD CONSULTEES

ESCC Highways – No objection to the proposal.

Main Town Or Parish Council – No reply at time of preparing report. Any comments received will be reported in the supplemental report.

5. REPRESENTATIONS FROM LOCAL RESIDENTS

5.1 Two neighbour objections – loss of amenities to children and people with disabilities in an area of recreation, loss of much needed toilet facilities.

5.2 Friends of Lewes - object strongly to this change of use due to the need for toilet facilities in the area. This is part of Lewes that is much frequented for sport, leisure and tourism but there is no toilet accommodation in the immediate area, the nearest convenience is in Station Road which is not accessible to disabled people. Urge that this building is reinstated to provide its original function as a public toilet.

5.3 Lewes Priory Trust – objects to the application, would prejudice future promotion of interest in the town and tourism, and future works at the Priory.

6. PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

6.1 It is considered that the main issue with regard to the determination of the application is the loss of the existing toilets, which were closed to the public in September 2006.

6.2 The toilets were closed as a result of the completion of the Best Value Review of local facilities conducted in 2002/03. The review concluded that the Council should examine the usage of all public conveniences within the district and seek to identify any that were underused and explore alternative uses. As a result Community Services examined water usage as a means of gauging patronage of each site. Water meters, linked to infra red sensors, were installed at all public conveniences and water usage was linked directly to number of visitors to each site.

6.3 The building was originally converted to toilet facilities to serve the sports facilities in the area. Since that time there has been an expansion in the facilities in the immediate vicinity, especially Lewes FC, Lewes Priory CC, Lewes Bowling Club, which all have their own facilities including toilets that are made available to visitors. There are also two alternative public conveniences within a close distance in Pinwell Lane and Southover Grange, the latter has facilities for people with disabilities.

6.4 Therefore in line with the conclusions of the Best Value Review, the decision to close the toilets was taken in view of their low use and the improved facilities locally. The decision to seek permission to use the premises as residential accommodation was based upon the current usage of the first floor of the premises as homeless accommodation and the need expressed by the Housing Strategy Manager for further accommodation of a similar nature.

6.5 The site is located outside of the defined planning boundary. However, due to the location of the building and the nature of the surrounding development the building reads as being part of the town and its urban setting. It is not considered that approval in this instance would undermine the adopted Local Plan policies or their objectives to protect the countryside from unacceptable development. As expressed by the Housing Strategy Manager, the change of use would help to meet an identified need for housing of this type.

6.6 In terms of visual impact the alterations to the building are minimal and would not have any impact on the surroundings or nearby occupiers. In fact, the alternative use of the building to residential accommodation would enhance the buildings appearance and that of its surroundings.

7. RECOMMENDATION

7.1 On balance it is considered that this proposal would result in an appropriate alternative use for the building, providing housing for people on temporary tenancies. Whilst the loss of the conveniences is regretted, this

decision is the result of the Best Value Review and the assessment of their use, which was low, together with improved facilities locally and nearby alternative facilities.

7.2 It is therefore recommended that the Committee, acting on behalf of Lewes District Council for the purposes of Regulation 4 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations 1992, resolve to grant planning permission.

The application is subject to the following condition:

1. The development hereby approved shall be finished in external materials to match those used in the existing building.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory development in keeping with the locality 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> |
|---------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| Design & Access Statement | 30 August 2007 | |
| Location Plan | 8 August 2007 | PS/1018/01 |
| Block Plans | 8 August 2007 | PS/1018/01 |
| Existing Elevations | 8 August 2007 | PS/1018/01 |
| Existing Floor Plans | 8 August 2007 | PS/1018/01 |
| Proposed Elevations | 8 August 2007 | PS/1018/01 |
| Proposed Floor Plans | 8 August 2007 | PS/1018/01 |

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 and RE10 of the Lewes District Local Plan.