

Consultation Response from: Planning Policy Group		
Address: Ramsden House, Ramsden Street, Huddersfield, HD1 2TW		
Proposal: Change of use and alterations to offices (class B1) to form 45 studio apartments for students (class C3) and change of use of ground and first floor units to gym (class D2), flexible A1/A3/A5 use and ancillary student facilities along with associated external alterations and installation of roof top plant		
Date Responded: 09/01/2020	Responding Officer: Sarah Smith	Responding Ref:
Note: Comments on retailing and town centres policy only. The proposed development is in Huddersfield Town Centre in the Primary Shopping Area and on the primary shopping frontage, PSF 1 as designated in the Kirklees Local Plan adopted on 27th February 2019. Local Plan policies, LP14 shopping frontages, LP15 Residential uses in town centres, LP16 food and drink and the evening economy and LP17 Huddersfield Town Centre are relevant to the application. The shopping frontages policy LP14 states that 'Retail will remain the predominant use on each primary shopping frontage. Other main town centre uses will be acceptable where the frontage remains predominately in retail use taking account of: a. the number, proximity, distribution of uses other than retail and the level of vacancy of ground floor units, and the duration of vacancy; b. the location and prominence of the unit within the primary shopping frontage; c. the nature of the proposed use, including the associated level of activity, hours of operation, whether a shop front would be incorporated and whether it would complement neighbouring uses; and d. in all cases proposals including changes of use shall seek to either retain, enhance or replace to improve shop front design and layout.' Predominate retail use (A1 use class) on a primary shopping frontage is considered to be over 60% of units with the length of the frontage and the position of uses along it also being considered to ensure there is no clustering or over dominance of non retail uses. LP15 Residential uses in town centres states that residential uses (including student accommodation) within defined town centres will be supported subject to a number of criteria including: a. the protection of primary shopping areas, primary and secondary shopping frontages, and space for other main town centre uses within the defined centre. Residential proposals in these areas shall normally only be permitted on upper floors, and shall not prejudice existing established uses; c. the protection and retention of existing ground floor uses and active frontages both within and outside the primary shopping area, d. the protection of the amenity of existing residents and future occupiers of the proposed residential use in accordance with amenity and design policies within the plan, and will in particular consider matters such as privacy, noise and air quality;		

LP16 food and drink and the evening economy states that 'Proposals for food and drink, licensed entertainment uses and associated proposals will be supported, provided they are located within a defined centre, and subject to: ensuring the concentration of food and drink and licensed entertainment uses are not located in a particular centre or part of a centre, where they would result in harm to the character, function, vitality and viability of the centre, either individually or cumulatively.

Huddersfield Town Centre Policy LP17 states that 'Huddersfield Town Centre will be the principal focus for high quality comparison retail goods within the district, supported by a range of leisure, tourism, office (including high quality grade A office space), and other main town centres uses. Huddersfield town centre will also provide high quality educational facilities and opportunities for town centre living.

Primary Shopping Frontage and proposed uses

PSF1 currently consists of 13 units all of which are occupied by main town centre uses. Of those, 62% are in A1 retail use. The proposal seeks to redevelop 5 of the units and replace with 3 units as set out below

1. A1/A3 Gym reception/retail display/café area
2. A1/A3/A5 unit
3. Foyer

Taking account of the proposal the frontage would consist of 11 units and of those 55% would be in A1 retail use not taking account of the proposed use of the three units. The description of gym reception/retail display/café area does not equate to an A1/A3 use and could arguably be ancillary to the overall operation of the gym.

However, whilst with the new proposal it is slightly under the 60% threshold for A1 uses on a primary shopping frontage, one of the units proposes an A1/A3/A5 use. Permitted development allows the change of A1 to A3 (subject to prior approval) and A3 to A1 or A2. A5 use can change to A1, A2 or A3 all of which are main town centre uses and have the flexibility to be A1. New shop frontages are proposed for the new units which would retain an active street frontage.

To include the flexibility of an A3 and in particular A5 use, the applicants need to have regard to residential amenity of the proposed student accommodation as set out in policy LP15. The council's environmental health officers should be consulted in this regard.

There is no concentration or clustering of food and drink uses within this area of the town centre as such the proposed A3 and A5 use is not considered to harm the character or function of the area as set out in policy LP16.

Existing uses

Policy LP15 states that residential proposals shall not prejudice existing established uses and existing ground floor uses and active frontages should be protected and retained. Whilst the proposal retains an active frontage with the uses proposed, there are currently five units occupied by main town centre uses that would be lost. There are number of vacant units within Huddersfield's primary shopping area and the relocation of the existing uses needs to be supported.

Huddersfield Town Centre Blueprint

The Huddersfield Blueprint sets out a ten-year vision for Huddersfield Town Centre. It states that 'this part of the town centre could become a pleasant residential community. The vision for New Street South is that:

'New Street South will be leafy and green, with pleasant spots to stop and enjoy the fresh air. Long views to the open countryside will be respected from the street and a comfortable evening space, with cafes and communal area for local residents living in new housing in the area'.

The proposal therefore accords with this vision. Would there be an opportunity for the proposal to support the vision and Huddersfield Town Centre Policy LP17 criteria k in consideration of providing where appropriate urban and green infrastructure such as street trees?

Summary

The proposal is for conversion of offices to student apartments with a change of use of the ground and first floor to a gym and flexible A1/A3/A5 use and ancillary student facilities. The development would result in a net loss of three shop units on a primary shopping frontage. Therefore the proposal would reduce the number of A1 retail units along the primary shopping frontage PSF1 to below the threshold of 60% as set out in policy LP14, the flexibility of the uses proposed means that potentially it could be above the threshold if one of units is occupied by an A1 use. The new shop frontages proposed will retain an active street frontage. Consideration needs to be given to the potential A3 and A5 use and residential amenity,

The existing units are all occupied by main town centre uses and their relocation to vacant units within the primary shopping area needs to be supported.

The proposal accords with the Council's ten year vision for Huddersfield Town Centre and would there be an opportunity to support urban and green infrastructure such as street trees as highlighted in the Local Plan policy LP17.