

Planning, Design and Access Statement.

90 Parrock Road, Echo Square, Gravesend, DA12 1QF.

Proposed change of use from Use Class E to Sui Generis Use.

Introduction

The property comprises a lock up shop unit that is part of a two storey building comprising a shop on the ground floor and flat above. The shop is located on the eastern side of the roundabout where Parrock Road meets Old Road East.

To the rear of the shop is a fenced courtyard which can be accessed from a driveway running between other shops in this small parade. The applicant will have fire escape access only to this yard.

Proposed shop

The existing layout of the shop is retained on the whole with some minor changes by way of lightweight stud partitions to create treatment rooms, storage and a staff room. The open shop area is retained at the front, the area seen when looking through the shop window front outside.

The shop is proposed to be used by Utopia Beauty Rooms who offer a wide range of holistic and wellbeing treatments for male and female clients these include facials, body massage, manicure and pedicure treatments, lash lifting and tinting and waxing treatments.

The applicant's business has grown from its beginnings over 12 years ago from a one person business to now employing 7 staff and having a regular and valued client base. The business expansion is the reason for the proposed re-location to Echo Square from the current business premises at 3a Cross Lane West, Gravesend.

The business has won client experience awards every year since 2017.

Shop Waste

There is an existing waste storage area within the walkway between the shops on this side of the roundabout. The applicant will arrange a commercial collection of the waste.

Planning

Gravesham's Local Plan Core Strategy adopted in 2014 and Local Plan Policies Map 2014 is the main planning policy document with a limited number of policies from the Gravesham Local Plan First Review 2014 still applying.

Gravesham is one of 14 Local Authorities that signed up to a Kent County Council initiative called The Vision for Kent which seeks to grow the economy for Kent, to be open for business with a growing and successful economy and jobs for all.

The Core Strategy identifies Gravesham as having the smallest economy in Kent. The heavy manufacturing base has been hit hard and since the Core Strategy was adopted in 2014, much of the riverside heavy industry such as AEI cables, cement manufacture has closed down. The Core Strategy identifies the need to improve the skills of local people, provide a greater variety of jobs, maximize economic regeneration.

Strategic Objective SO3 states the need to ensure the right amount, size and type of employment is provided in Gravesend and Northfleet to diversify and strengthen the local economy.

Objective SO11 seek to retain and improve existing services and facilities and ensure the provision of sufficient facilities to meet needs arising from new development.

Policy CS08: Retail, Leisure and the Hierarchy of Centres-

5.2.24 The Council will seek to reinforce a sustainable network and hierarchy of centres by maintaining the sub-regional role of Gravesend Town Centre; protecting and enhancing existing local centres, as shown on the Policies Map, and creating additional local centres to meet local retail needs generated by new development on Key Sites. In support of this the Council will:

- apply a sequential approach to the location of main town centre uses;
- require an impact assessment of larger retail and leisure development;
- support development of a scale and type appropriate to the position of the centres in the hierarchy and their character;
- safeguard the retail character and function of existing and new centres by resisting development that would adversely affect their vitality and viability, and protect lone village shops; and
- **encourage the provision of a mix of units including opportunities for small shops and independent traders in all centres.**

The small shopping parade at Echo Square is not mentioned as a Local Centre.

A report titled Gravesham Retail and Commercial Leisure prepared as part of the Regulation 18 Stage 2 Consultation in October 2020 stated:

Support is also accorded existing neighbourhood and village centres below the town centre in the hierarchy, whilst policy also seeks to protect lone village shops. Development of a scale, type and character appropriate to the position of centres below the town centre in the hierarchy is also supported, along with the creation of new centres/enhancement of existing as identified in area policies CS03 – CS06.

A survey of the units at Echo Square in 2020 in the above report identified thirteen Class E uses and 3 Sui Generis uses. Within Class E there is a varied retail mix including kitchen showroom, hairdresser, café, florist, computer sales, wedding outfits (now vacant), a vacant shop, sewing shop, another hairdresser, accountants, small supermarket, accountant, antique sales and office supplies.

We consider that the holistic wellbeing and beauty treatment as a use that attracts new and regular clients to this parade will benefit all the other shop owners here by bring new customers to the parade.

The NPPF updated in 2021 states under Paragraphs 38-59 that a local planning authority should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decisions makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.

Under paragraphs 81 of 6, Building a strong, competitive economy,

Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is

particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.

As stated this application is submitted on behalf of a successful, award winning and growing local business employing 7 skilled people currently and with plans for further growth being developed.

In conclusion, there are no local planning policies to prevent this change of use which should be approach positively by the planning authority and the presumption should be to approve this application under the NPPF 2021 which supersedes all Gravesham Plan Policies.

Design

The changes proposed are internal alterations which do not affect the exterior appearance.

Access

The shop is accessed via the front entrance door. There is a step up to the entrance door. Altering this to be provide a ramped access would affect the public path restricting the path width and would have implications for the used of the path by the public in general. It's also not a viable alteration for this business which has the relocation costs to finance.

The property is in a busy main road location with parking available in the car park at the junction with Whitehill Road and Sun Lane. There are also on street parking spaces in the side roads such as Park Avenue and Sun Lane.

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