

Section 62A Applications Team  
The Planning Inspectorate  
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Temple Quay House  
2 The Square  
Temple Quay  
Bristol  
BS1 6PN

Our ref: PR002675

Date: 21<sup>st</sup> February 2025

**Sent via e-mail**

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Town and Country Planning Act 1990**

**7 Redcatch Road, Bristol BS4 2EP**

**Change of ground floor from Class E to 1 no. residential flat, including removal of shopfront, partial demolition of rear extension, and erection of a ground floor rear extension**

I write on behalf of my clients, Amanda and Robert Clifford, to apply for the change of use of the ground floor retail unit to a self-contained flat, including the removal of the existing shopfront, and the erection of a rear extension following the partial demolition of an existing rear extension. The appellant has chosen to take the Section 62A route and submit the proposal directly to the Planning Inspectorate. Notice of this intention was given on the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2025. I can confirm that the development would be liable for CIL. I attach the following documents as part of this application:

- Application forms and certificates;
- Drawing no. 868-101 – existing ground floor plan;
- Drawing no. 868-102 - existing first floor plan;
- Drawing no. 868-103 – existing elevations;
- Drawing no. 868-104 – existing sections;
- Drawing no. 868-105 – proposed ground floor plan;

- Drawing no. 868-106 – proposed first floor plan;
- Drawing no. 868-107 – proposed elevations;
- Drawing no. 868-108 – proposed sections;
- Drawing no. 868-109 – proposed sections;
- Drawing no. 868-110 – site location plan;
- Drawing no. 868-111 – proposed block plan;
- Drawing no. 868-112 – illustrative ground floor plan for a Class M prior approval;
- Energy statement;
- BNG exemption statement.

### **Site and planning history**

The site comprises a mid-terraced property on Redcatch Road, with a retail unit at ground floor level, and a residential flat at first floor level. There is access from the rear garden through to Ryde Road, via a service lane to the rear of the Broadwalk Shopping Centre. It forms part of a Victorian terrace (3-21 Redcatch Road) which branches off from the A37 Wells Road. Nos 3-11 comprise retail units at ground floor level (though no. 9 is currently vacant) with residential flats at first floor level. No 13 was converted to wholly residential under prior approval (ref: 21/06697/COU), and the shopfront replaced with domestic fenestration (planning permission 21/03891/F). The remainder of the terrace is wholly residential.

The site is secondary shopping frontage within the Wells Road/Broadwalk town centre, within Flood Zones 1, is not in a conservation area, there are no Tree Preservation Orders on the site, and the building is not listed.

There are inbound and outbound bus stops within a short distance (30-40 metres) to the east on Wells Road, with 10 services per hour towards the city centre, and through to the northern fringes of the city, and the same number of service per hour operating out towards the southern fringes of the city, and through to Bath, Wells and the wider Somerset area. As noted above, the site falls within the Broadwalk/Wells Road designated town centre, and has easy access to a wide range of services and facilities.

There is no relevant planning history for the site.

## Proposal

My clients propose the change of use of the ground floor retail unit to a one-bed, self-contained flat. To facilitate the change of use, the existing shopfront would be replaced with new stone work and a new window. The existing ground floor rear extension would be partially demolished, and replaced with an L-shaped extension built around the retained two-storey outrigger. This would comprise two elements; a small infill section to the side of the outrigger, with a mono-pitched roof and new velux rooflight, and a flat-roofed extension to the rear of the outrigger.

The dwelling would provide one bedspace and 64sqm of internal floorspace. Externally, refuse, recycling and secure cycle storage is proposed to the rear garden.

## Planning analysis

### *Principle*

The site falls within the South Bristol Regeneration Area, and is covered by Policy BCS1, which states that higher densities and the efficient use of underused land will be encouraged within this area, as part of a housing requirement of 8,000 additional homes.

Consistent with the NPPF, Core Strategy Policy BCS20 'Effective and Efficient Use of Land' states that opportunities will be sought to use land more efficiently across the city and that imaginative design solutions will be encouraged at all sites to ensure optimum efficiency in the use of land is achieved. Higher densities of development will be sought in or close to centres and along or close to main public transport routes. For residential development a minimum indicative net density of 50 dwellings per hectare will be sought. Net densities below 50 dwellings per hectare (dph) should only occur where it is essential to safeguard the special interest and character of the area.

Paragraph 4.20.1 of the supporting text states that the policy aims to ensure that all development uses land in the most efficient way possible.

The proposal would make a more efficient use of 287sqm of land in an accessible location, which is not of high environmental value, and double the existing density from 62.5 to 125dph, achieving compliance with the 50dph requirement, and a density commensurate with the town centre location. Consequently, the proposal would comply with the NPPF, and Policy BCS20.

With regards to the loss of the retail unit, DM8 addresses applications within secondary shopping frontages, and notes that they support the overall function of the centres by allowing for a greater diversity of uses. The emphasis remains on active uses at ground floor level but the policy allows for further opportunities for development of uses such as cafés and financial services where they are complementary to the centre's role.

It is acknowledged that there would be conflict with DM8, however the site benefits from Class MA permitted development rights for the potential change of use to residential under prior approval, and this is a genuine fallback position that constitutes a strong material consideration. No. 13 Redcatch Road has been similarly converted under Class MA (with the Council concluding that the proposal raised no issues in respect of transport impacts, contamination, flood risk, noise or natural light). In this context, there is no reason to doubt that, were the applicants to pursue this route, prior approval would be given.

The current application is accompanied by an alternative proposed ground floor plan, which shows how a studio flat could be provided at ground floor level, within the existing floorspace, with 67sqm of internal floorspace (in excess of the 37sqm requirement for a one-bedspace flat, and the 50sqm requirement for a one-bed, two-bedspace flat) and a 23sqm living/sleeping space at the front of the unit, which would be served by the shopfront windows in terms of natural light. The only rooms not served by windows would be the kitchen and shower rooms (which are non-habitable rooms), and the storage areas to the rear (none of which would be large enough to be classed as bedrooms).

The resulting flat would be fully-compliant with prior approval, but would result in effectively dead storage space to the rear, and so the applicants considered it more appropriate to apply for planning permission for the additional works that would result in a more functional and satisfactory planning unit than could be created under Class MA. In this context, the genuine fallback position, which is clearly more than theoretical, provides justification to outweigh the conflict with DM8.

### *Housing mix*

Policy BCS18 requires all new residential development to maintain, provide or contribute to a mix of housing tenures, types and sizes to help support the creation of mixed, balanced and inclusive communities; contribute to the diversity of housing in the local area and help to redress any housing imbalance that exists; and respond to the requirements of a changing population.

The supporting text states that evidence provided in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) suggests that new developments should provide for more accommodation for smaller households. The SHMA was updated in February 2019 for the wider Bristol area. This states that single person households are expected to represent 40% of the overall household growth: an increase of 34,000 from 2016 to 2036. The proportion of single person households is therefore predicted to increase from 31.7% to 33.3%.

The 2019 SHMA states that, "whilst there is projected to be an increase of 34,000 extra single person households, only 14,600 extra dwellings have one bedroom (5,000 market homes and 9,600 affordable homes). This reflects that many single person households will continue to occupy family housing in which they already live" (para 2.20). The SHMA predicts that the need for 1-bed accommodation will increase by 16.8% over the period.

The 2021 Census data reports that, in the Knowle ward, 78.3% of dwellings were three bedroom or more, 11.3% two bedroom, and 10.4% one bedroom. This compares with city-wide figures of 55.4%, 28.4% and 16.2% respectively. The proposal would therefore contribute towards the identified need for smaller units suited for single people without exacerbating any local imbalance, and the aims of BCS18 would be met.

### *Design*

Policy BCS21 states that new development should contribute positively to an area's character and identity, whilst policy DM30 states that extensions will be expected to respect the siting, scale, form, proportions, materials, details and the overall design of the host building and broader streetscene. In a similar vein, policy DM26 requires development to respect the local pattern and characteristics, and to respond to the height, scale, massing, shape, form and proportions of existing buildings. Finally, policy DM27 requires development to respect the layout and form of existing development.

The rear extensions are relatively low-key, not visible from the public realm, and typical of this style of property, and accordingly raise no concerns. With regards to the changes to the shopfront, the existing shopfront appears to be non-original, with an additional door having been inserted to create access to the first floor flat, and roller shutters having been installed. It is proposed to infill the shopfront with stone to match the first floor, and to provide two new entrance doors, with a new window centred between the doors. Both the window and the entrance doors would have Bath stone surrounds to match the first floor fenestration. Given that the LPA has approved

a similar approach at 13 Redcatch Road under the current local plan, there can be no reasonable objection to these works.

#### *Residential amenity of neighbours*

Both adjoining properties are in commercial use at ground floor level, and so there would be no impacts on residential amenity stemming from the proposed extensions. Notwithstanding, the flat-roofed extension would be on the same footprint as the existing buildings and so would not impact on the adjoining rear elevation window to 5 Redcatch Road on the horizontal axis. The proposal would result in additional height on the boundary, though the proposed flat roof would ensure that the extension would not breach the 45-degree line on the vertical axis.

#### *Amenity of future occupants*

As noted earlier in this covering letter, the proposed flat would exceed National Space Standards, and it would be provided a rear garden, shared with the first floor flat. All rooms would have good access to natural light, with both the bedroom and living room area opening out on to the private, south-facing terrace.

#### *Sustainability and climate change*

Policy BCS14 requires proposals to demonstrate a 20% reduction in CO2 emissions from residual energy use, against a projected annual energy demand baseline based on the 2006 Building Regulations Part L standards. However, the Core Strategy is out-of-date, and the 2006 Part L standards have now been superseded by the 2021 edition including 2023 amendments. For existing buildings, Part L now requires improvements to the building's energy performance, such as upgrading insulation, installing more efficient heating systems, and reducing air leakage. Given the revised requirements and the status of the Core Strategy, it is therefore considered more appropriate for sustainability measures to be addressed at the Building Regulations stage.

Notwithstanding, the Energy Statement confirms that the development will achieve a 26% reduction in carbon dioxide emissions, through building fabric and the provision of an Air Source Heat Pump.

#### *Highway safety and parking*

The Council's Waste Guidance states that dwelling houses requires a refuse bin, two dry recycling boxes (44ltr & 55ltr), kitchen waste bin (29ltr) and cardboard sack (90ltrs). The rear garden would

continue to be utilised for refuse and recycling storage, with a purpose-built store erected to accommodate the requisite number of containers. The site has rear access through to Ryde Road, to allow containers to be taken out on to the road on collection days.

Secure and covered cycle storage for 2no. bicycles is proposed within the rear garden, exceeding the requirements of policy DM23. The dwelling would be within a town-centre location and easy walking distance of bus stops (less than 1 minutes' walk away), offering regular services into Bristol City Centre, the southern edges of the city, and beyond. As such, and given that the existing use would generate more vehicle movements (customers and staff) than a one-bed flat, the principle of a car-free development in this location can be supported.

### *BNG*

The Environment Act 2021 introduces the mandatory "biodiversity net gain" (BNG) requirement for new housing and commercial development in England, subject to any exemptions that may apply. The exemptions that apply to the BNG requirements are habitats below a 'de minimis' threshold of 25 metres squared; or five metres for linear habitats like hedgerows.

As the proposed building works relate to the partial demolition and rebuilding within the existing footprint, the proposal would affect only sealed and developed surfaces, and no existing habitat, and would therefore be exempt from the BNG requirement. If the Inspector considers that the NPPF§187d requirement to provide net gains for biodiversity applies to the application site, then the provision of bird and/or bat boxes could be secured by condition.

### **Planning balance and conclusion**

In the context of the Council not meeting the most recent Housing Delivery Test, having a 2.2-2.4 year housing supply and paragraph 11d of the NPPF currently being engaged, the proposal offers: social benefits through the provision of additional housing in a sustainable location, in accordance with BCS1; economic benefits through construction jobs and increased spending in the locality; and environmental benefits through the more efficient use of land to provide increased accommodation, and the provision of an energy-efficient flat.

The only element of the scheme that would weigh against the proposal is conflict with DM8, and the loss of retail within a secondary shopping frontage. However, given the fallback position of Class MA permitted development rights via the prior approval process, this harm would not

significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of additional housing which, in the context of a 2.2-2.4 year housing supply, is a significant benefit.

The fee of £578 will be paid directly to the Planning Inspectorate on request. If you have any further queries, then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

**Stokes Morgan Planning Ltd**