

Committee Report

Application No:	DC/20/00705/COU
Case Officer	Tracy Long
Date Application Valid	7 August 2020
Applicant Site:	Chopwell Regeneration CIO Former Lloyds TSB Bank 19 - 21 Derwent Street Chopwell NE17 7HU
Ward:	Chopwell And Rowlands Gill
Proposal:	Change of use of bank and flat to mixed use community facilities (including social/meeting space, cafe and kitchen facilities and workspaces (Sui Generis)) and physical works comprising replacement of existing and installation of new doors, windows and rooflights and the creation of a ramped access (amended 17 Sept 2020).
Recommendation:	GRANT
Application Type	Change of Use

1.0 The Application:

1.1 DESCRIPTION OF THE SITE

1.2 The application site is a two storey, end of terrace property, the former Lloyds TSB Bank, at the junction of Derwent Street and South Road in Chopwell. The property is currently vacant and has been so following the closure of the bank in March 2017.

1.3 At ground floor level the property comprises the commercial area of the bank with a five bedroom flat, set over two floors above, at the first floor level and in the roof of the building. The flat is accessed from the rear of the property. The property currently has no off street car parking associated with either use.

1.4 The application site forms part of the Chopwell Local Centre, which comprises a mix of retail units, services and facilities to meet the day to day needs of the local community. However in recent years Chopwell has seen a decline in shops and services

1.5 In addition to the commercial uses, residential properties are also found within the surrounding area, comprising of converted commercial premises (for example No.'s 46/48 Derwent Street (DC/08/01273/COU) and at the former

curtain factory in the north of the village (DC/16/00865/FUL) and existing flats above commercial premises on Derwent Street. Beyond Derwent Street, there are detached, semi-detached and terrace properties on roads surrounding the site.

1.6 The site is not located within a Conservation Area, nor is the property a statutory Listed Building.

1.7 DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSAL

1.8 The application proposes to change the use of the bank and flat above to mixed use community facilities (including social/meeting space, cafe and kitchen facilities and workspaces). The submitted plans show that the ground floor would be used for social space, kitchen, toilets and cycle storage. The first floor plan shows 6 multi use rooms and toilets. The second floor in the roof of the building shows 2 creative rooms.

1.9 The submitted Design and Access Statement explains that the proposal would result in the creation of a new community resource, providing meeting and social space accessible from Derwent Street with a secondary level access to the rear. In association with the social space, a social enterprise café, with professional kitchen is to be provided. The first and second floor multi uses spaces are intended to be provided on a commercial rental basis, for a range of uses such as offices and artist studios.

1.10 A number of external alterations are also proposed to the building to allow the change of use. The proposed physical works include new windows, doors and rooflights, refurbishment of the existing external fire escape stairs, and the provision of a level access to the rear of the site.

1.11 The proposed opening hours are seven days a week including Bank Holidays 8am – 9pm.

1.12 Amended Plans

1.13 Amended plans were provided on 17 September 2020. These plans show a pedestrian dropped kerb that is proposed along the rear lane and details of the proposed cycle parking provision.

1.14 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

1.15 **DC/17/01296/FUL** – change of use of bank to 3 houses (1 x 2 bed, 1 x 3 bed and 1 x 4 bed) with a dormer extension to rear. APPROVED 24 January 2018

1.16 There are also a number of advertisement consents that have been granted in association with the bank operation.

2.0 Consultation Responses:

Northumbrian Water No comments to make on the application.

3.0 Representations:

3.1 The Council sent out neighbour notification letters to 22 surrounding properties on 25 August 2020, as well as displaying 3 site notices around the site on 27 August 2020.

3.2 Seven letters of support have been received from local residents on the following grounds :

- Will bring a vacant building back into use
- This is an important building in the village
- It will play an important part in the ongoing regeneration of the village
- It is an excellent community led initiative
- The proposal will engage the whole community
- The Chopwell Regeneration Group are doing great things
- The building could provide work for local businesses
- Once open it should provide opportunities for employment and volunteering.

4.0 Policies:

NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG	National Planning Practice Guidance
DC2	Residential Amenity
ENV3	The Built Environment - Character/Design
RCL5	District and Local Centres
CS7	Retail and Centres
CS9	Existing Communities
CS13	Transport
CS14	Wellbeing and Health

5.0 Assessment of the Proposal:

5.1 The detailed planning considerations are the principle of the proposed development, residential amenity, design and appearance, car parking and highway safety.

5.2 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

5.3 Loss of Housing

The proposal is for the conversion of the whole building to a community use. As the building currently includes a flat over the top two floors, the proposal will therefore result in the loss of a single dwelling. As the flat contains 5 bedrooms the dwelling is considered to be a family dwelling, as it contains 3 or more bedrooms.

5.4 Policy CS9 of the Council's Core Strategy and Urban Core Plan (CSUCP) which relates to existing communities, sets out that the loss of family homes should be prevented through sub division, change of use or redevelopment. The supporting text to the policy, explains that the plan aims to retain and attract families to support economic growth. To achieve this the plan seeks to prevent the loss of existing family homes which are attractive and popular.

5.5 The loss of the existing 5 bedroom flat would therefore not accord with the aims and objectives of policy CS9 of the CSUCP. The change of use would bring about public and environmental benefits in the form of bringing this prominent building back into active use, which will assist in improving the vitality and appearance of the area. In addition the proposal would also result in the provision of community facilities, which is supported by local residents. Council officers therefore consider that the benefits from the proposed community use would outweigh the loss of the existing flat. For these reasons the loss of the 5 bedroom flat to a building for community use is considered to be acceptable.

5.6 Loss of Bank Use

The property is located within a Local Centre and as such the relevant policies concerning the change of use of the building from a bank to a community hub are saved policy RCL5 of the UDP and policy CS7 of the CSUCP. Policy RCL5 sets out that within District and Local Centres, planning permission will be granted for retail and other shopping centre uses where it complies with a range of criteria. In considering changes of use from retail to other uses, particular

regard will be had to the effect the loss of retail units would have on the vitality and viability of the centre as a whole.

- 5.7 The policy relates to the loss of retail units, as the ground floor unit was / is a bank, it is therefore not in retail use and this policy is not relevant in this case. In respect of the loss of other related shopping uses (such as a Bank), the saved UDP policy is silent.
- 5.8 Policy CS7 of the Core Strategy identifies Chopwell as falling within a Local Centre; however there are no primary frontage restrictions in the location concerned. The policy states that the vitality and viability of Local Centres will be protected by encouraging a balance of retail and supporting uses which are appropriate in scale; but provides no indication of what is considered to be appropriate scale within such locations.
- 5.9 The 2015 retail centre health check report and 2017 update concluded that Chopwell is a centre at risk (underperforming but with potential to improve), noting the need for improvement in the quality of shops and the centre's environment.
- 5.10 Annual retail surveys have recorded the following:

	<i>Total Units</i>	<i>Vacant</i>	<i>Vacant %</i>
2019	19	9	47%
2018	19	8	42%
2017	19	9	47%
2016	20	8	40%
2015	21	7	33%
2014	21	7	33%

- 5.11 The application site comprises one of 19 commercial premises in the Local Centre. In 2019, nine units (including the application site) were recorded as being vacant. Surveys undertaken over the last three years conclude that nine properties were vacant in 2017 and 2019, eight properties in 2018 and eight in 2016. This demonstrates there is limited up take of existing vacant units in the Local Centre and the numbers of vacant units are gradually increasing.
- 5.12 Whilst the proposed change of use would reduce further the number of commercial properties in the Local Centre, there are currently eight other vacant commercial premises in the Local Centre which could be taken up by other commercial uses in the future.
- 5.13 Policy CS7 aims to protect the vitality and viability of Local Centres through encouraging a balance of retail and supporting uses. The loss of this individual

unit will not result in harm to the Local Centre as sufficient alternative space within the centre is available.

5.14 In addition planning permission was granted by the committee in 2018 for planning application DC/17/01296/FUL at the site, which was for a change of use of the bank to a residential use.

5.15 Furthermore the change of use would bring about public and environmental benefits in the form of bringing this prominent building back into active use, which will assist in improving the vitality and appearance of the area. In addition the proposal would also result in the provision of community facilities, which is supported by local residents. For these reasons the principle of the change of use of this building to a community use is considered to be acceptable.

5.16 RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

5.17 It is considered that the proposed change of use will not result in any harmful impact to any existing adjoining occupier to the detriment of their amenity.

5.18 It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable from a residential amenity point of view and accords with the aims and objectives of the NPPF, saved policy DC2 of the UDP and policy CS14 of the CSUCP.

5.19 DESIGN AND APPEARANCE

5.20 The proposed external alterations are considered to be acceptable in respect of their design and appearance, and would improve the appearance of the vacant building. It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable from a design point of view and accords with the aims and objectives of the NPPF, saved policy ENV3 of the UDP and policy CS15 of the CSUCP.

5.21 HIGHWAY ISSUES

5.22 Whilst there is no off street car parking proposed and there is no scope to provide any within the curtilage of the site, unrestricted on street parking opportunities are available in the vicinity of the site.

5.23 The applicant intends to create a new pedestrian access at the rear, by providing a new pedestrian gate, in the existing rear wall around the yard. This will allow level access to be provided to the site. As a result the applicant also intends to provide a new pedestrian dropped kerb along the rear lane. The new dropped kerb does not require planning permission but is shown on the submitted drawings. The dropped kerb will require approval from the Council as local highway authority.

- 5.24 There is space within the rear yard area to store bins, which can be easily wheeled out to the back lane for collection.
- 5.25 Cycle parking is to be provided at the site in the rear yard area and inside the building. Planning conditions have been recommended to agree the final details of the cycle parking provision.
- 5.26 The proposal is considered to be acceptable from a highway point of view and accords with the aims and objectives of the NPPF and policy CS13 of the CSUCP.
- 5.27 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY
- 5.28 On 1st January 2017 Gateshead Council became a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Authority. This application has been assessed against the Council's CIL charging schedule and the development is not CIL chargeable development as it is not for qualifying retail or housing related development. As such no CIL charge is liable.

6.0 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Taking all the relevant issues into account, it is therefore recommended that planning permission should be approved, as the proposal will bring a prominent building back into active use, which will assist in improving the vitality and appearance of the Local Centre. The proposal will also provide community facilities which is supported by local residents.
- 6.3 Given the above, it is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the planning conditions set out below:

7.0 Recommendation:

That permission be GRANTED subject to the following condition(s) and that the Service Director of Development, Transport and Public Protection be authorised to add, vary and amend the planning conditions as necessary:

1

The development shall be carried out in complete accordance with the approved plan(s) as detailed below -

2001 01	Site location plan
2001 07 F	Proposed floor plans
2001 08 E	Alterations plans
2001 09 D	Alterations plans
2001 10 D	Proposed elevations

2001 11 D Proposed elevations

Any material change to the approved plans will require a formal planning application to vary this condition and any non-material change to the plans will require the submission of details and the agreement in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to any non-material change being made.

Reason

In order to ensure that the development is carried out in complete accordance with the approved plans and any material and non-material alterations to the scheme are properly considered.

2

The development to which this permission relates must be commenced not later than 3 years from the date of this permission.

Reason

To comply with section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

3

Notwithstanding the details of the submitted application, a scheme for the provision of secure cycle parking facilities within the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, prior to the community use being brought into use.

Reason

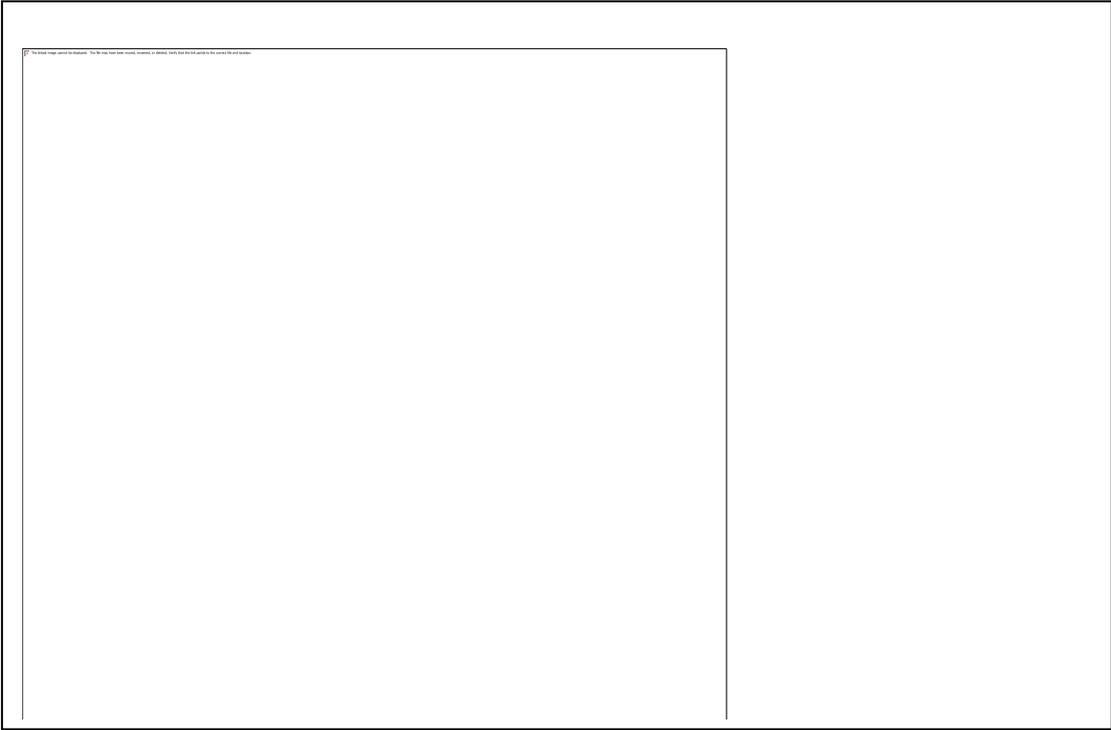
In order to ensure adequate provision for cyclists and in compliance with the Gateshead Cycling Strategy.

4

The cycle parking provision approved at condition 3 shall be provided at the site prior to the community use being brought into use.

Reason

In order to ensure adequate provision for cyclists and in compliance with the Gateshead Cycling Strategy.



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