

Supporting Statement
for

Review Hall, Websters Way
Rayleigh
Essex

change of use from class Part A1, Part B1 to class A1, B1, Sui
Generis and Associated A3.

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Outline Brief

The proposal is based on a coherent and clear development intention to contribute to the local economy and wider retail character of Rayleigh High Street. It is proposed to bring back the currently redundant unit of Review Hall into use as a high quality establishment adding vitality and interest to the retail district of Rayleigh High Street.

There is flexibility within local policy to support this change of use application in recognition of the greater benefit of the mixture of uses adding to the already diverse offer.

The owner/occupier also wishes to see Review Hall again contributing to the community and local economy as opposed to the current negative image created by the lack of occupation and activity.

Physical Context

The application site is presently a redundant ground floor commercial unit with a large asymmetrically pitched roof abutting a two storey flat roof brick building to the west, a four storey flat roofed building to the east and a single storey building partially adjoining the north elevation. To the South of the application site is a private car park to serve both occupiers and visitors of Review Hall and the occupiers of the adjacent and adjoining commercial premises.

Websters Way runs along the west side of the site and connects to Eastwood Road to the north which in turn runs into the High Street within less than 100yards.

Within less than 0.5 of a mile is the A127 main road linking London and the M25 to the west and Southend on Sea to the East.

As described previously the site is to the rear of the main shopping district and is classified as 'Secondary Retail Frontage'.

The surrounding area is off surface car parks private to the south and public to the north. The southern car park is between Review Hall and the rear servicing access to the retail premises along Eastwood Road.

The existing building is a single storey building with an asbestos cement type cladding over an asymmetrical pitched roof. The overall appearance is poor and the architectural language is more reflective of an industrial unit. There is very little active frontage aside from a pair of partially glazed front doors and the condition of the building is currently not attractive as a retail unit.

Review Hall is currently a redundant and tired unit which due to a lack of market interest as a retail premise is creating a negative image and not contributing to the broader economy and vitality of Rayleigh High Street.

Policy Background

The application for the change of use at Review Hall, Websters Way, Rayleigh from class A1/B1 to part class A1, associated B1 and A3 and Sui Generis has been considered and analysed against, national, regional and local planning policy.

Rochford District Council Local Plan has retail policies to protect retail frontage within 'Primary' and 'Secondary' Retail frontages.

In terms of the Rochford's Local Plan, Policy SAT5 'Secondary Retail frontage' has been analysed, considered and responded to as part of the application for the change of use at Review Hall.

National planning policy, in the form of PPS1 and PPS6, (Planning Policy Statement) is also a relevant and material consideration.

In considering national policy and in particular PPS 1 the application supports and helps to enable economic prosperity. The unit currently makes no contribution towards the local economy and PPS1 recognises the value environmentally and socially of economic development. Although this is on a very small scale the cumulative impact both economically and socially of the continued lack of use of this unit will be detrimental to future investment within the locality.

PPS6 reinforces the development of existing centres to promote vitality and viability to assist in the creation of a 'good environment'. A redundant unit and dead frontage do little to assist the vitality of Rayleigh Town Centre.

Local Policy SAT 5 broadly speaking seeks to ensure any proposed use compliments the Secondary Retail Frontage and strikes the right balance between retail and non-retail uses.

Policy SAT 5 also recognises the need to reflect customer preference and market changes. In particular consideration is given in individual cases for A2,A2,A3,A5, Sui Generis and B1 uses.

Non retail uses within such Secondary Retail Frontages can be considered favourable where the proposed use would be appropriate and support overall vitality and viability, not result in an over concentration of non-retail uses, not be unduly dominant and where a shopfront is either maintained or included.

The proposed re-use by Stacey's as an 'Antiques Centre' brings a nationally reputed antiques specialist into the heart of Rayleigh where the overall area can benefit from the number of additional and new visitors to Rayleigh High Street

30% of the overall area will specifically be used for retail with a B1 office associated with the retail use and a new high quality shopfront.

The new glazed shopfront is to be cut into the existing fabric of the building to open up the building and its wares to public view.

The Sui Genris use would mainly comprise of storage associated with the retail use and a monthly auction which will take place on a Monday when interest in the High Street is usually lower than at other times of the week. The added benefit aside from not conflicting with the primary retail use of Rayleigh High Street is in the form of additional income from the public surface car park to the north of the site. Average occupation of the public car park on Monday's is much less (approximately 50%) than at other times of the week and these monthly nationally reputed auctions will create additional parking revenue. Associated with the monthly auctions will be a small tea room (A3 use) serving light snacks teas and coffees to support the auction function.

On site parking will be provided for all staff and a number of visitors to cater for the day to day visits to the retail premises and as mentioned before the location is adjoining a main retail centre where public transport is readily available.

The broader benefits in terms of re-use and mixed use of Review Hall include adding to the vibrancy and diversity of Rayleigh High Street to compliment the existing retail offer, improving the local economy, employment generation commencing with between six-eight new employees to the district of Rochford and the improvement to the existing street scene and image of Websters Way.

Staceys are a well known family firm putting up for sale items of quality merchandise which in many ways represents a wholly sustainable business and arguably a very green technology in terms of recycling.

Commercial Viability

Review Hall has been unoccupied for a number of months which together with a poor overall building condition and image create a far from positive image of the local economy or for the community. The current building due to architectural language and location is extremely difficult to attract interest solely as a retail use class A1. The evidence of the past mixture of uses and the general locality facing a car park and the rear of the main retail area with their associated servicing make Review Hall an unattractive proposition for most retailers.

The proposed change of use is considered to be the most commercially viable option with the associated mixed uses, B1, Sui Generis and A3 supporting the A1 retail use to the front of the building.

The longer the unit remains empty the more costly it will become not only to the applicant but also to the broader community in terms of future investment and the physical environment.

Street Scene and Appearance

As noted earlier the existing building is deficient in retail language and overall the building is of rather poor quality with a negative image and frontage.

Although the adjoining buildings have some degree of frontage they are of little townscape merit and together with the rear servicing of Eastwood Road fall short of promoting and enhancing the 'Secondary Retail Frontage'.

As part of the proposal a new high quality shop front is to be cut into the existing building to create a new frontage and shop window to add interest and attract shoppers.

The renewal of this unit both in terms of use and appearance will start to create the image of a 'Secondary Retail Frontage' which at present is somewhat missing.

The partial change of use of this unit with a designed shop front will at least start to establish an improved street scene and provide a degree of vibrancy, activity and interest which is far more likely to see future investment and increase visitors to this destination.

Photographs of Review Hall and surrounding context.











Conclusion

The proposal has been considered following analysis of the commercial market and surrounding function and character. The application has then been developed within the national and local planning policy context.

The applicant has provided a sound and viable solution for the reuse of a vacant unit in an important area of 'Secondary Retail Frontage'. This proposal will provide a positive and active frontage to Review Hall adding to the overall economy, retail offer and environmental quality of the locality.

As noted earlier the intention is to create a high quality new frontage and retail business to add interest and diversity to the area of Rayleigh High Street.

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