

HONITON
(Honiton St Pauls)

07/2113/COU

Target Date: 21.09.2007.

Applicant: Edward Jones Ltd

Location: 15 Lace Walk, Honiton

Proposal: Change of use from class A1 shop to use class A2 financial and professional services.

CONSULTATIONS

County Highway Authority

Does not wish to comment

Economic Development Officer

I regard the retail units that form the link between the High Street and the Lace Walk Car Park in Honiton as a secondary retail area that usefully complements the vitality and interest of the town centre. The retailing of financial services from number 15 Lace Walk would seem to me to be entirely consistent with this pattern of development.

TOWN/PARISH COUNCIL

From the information available we recommend refusal. The property is in the main Town Centre shopping area and it would be preferable to retain this as a retail outlet.

WARD MEMBER(S)

The initial comments of the Ward Member (Councillor Mrs Vivienne Ash) are:

“Change of use to A2 will have an adverse effect on this important central precinct. It would also set an undesirable precedent for the loss of other shops in Lace Walk. It should be looked at within the LDF to recognise it as the primary shopping area that it is”.

In the event that this application should come to Development Control Committee I would reserve my position until further I am in the possession of all relevant facts and arguments for and against.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

App. No:	Proposal	Decision	Date
96/P1560	Change of use to wine bar/coffee/light snacks	Approved	13.11.96

PLANNING POLICIES

Devon County Structure Plan (2001-2016)

Policy C06 - Quality of New Development
Policy C07 - Historic Settlements and Buildings
Policy SH1 - Shopping Facilities (Sequential Approach)

East Devon Local Plan (1995-2011)

Policy SH1 - Town Centre Shopping Areas

Policy S4 - Development Within Built Up Area Boundaries

Policy EN11 - Preservation and Enhancement of Conservation Areas

SITE LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

The site refers to a retail unit that forms part of the pedestrianised Lace Walk Shopping Centre on the northern side of Honiton High Street, most of which is within the designated conservation area.

The shop is joined to Brittainia Building Society which projects to the south. Opposite the site is a clothes store and the shopping precinct includes a Marks and Spencer and a Co-Op.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The proposal seeks a change of use from class A1 (shops) to A2 (financial and professional services).

CONSIDERATIONS AND ASSESSMENT

The applicants had originally applied for a change of use at 17 New Street for a change of use from A1 (shop) to A2 (financial and professional services). This was refused by a decision notice dated 3rd August 2006 and on appeal was subsequently dismissed on the grounds of the impact it would have on the Primary Shopping Frontage.

The applicants have attempted to overcome these reasons for refusal by finding premises that are not located in the Primary Shopping Frontage. This application is located in a 'Town Centre Shopping Area'.

The main issues with the application therefore concern the proposals impact on the shopping character, visual amenity, vitality or viability of the town centre.

The premises are currently in use as an independent record store, which is an A1 use, having reverted from its previous A3 use (Restaurants and Cafes), and the proposal involves a change to a financial consultancy which provides financial /investment advice. No details of any proposed external alterations to the premises have been submitted with the application; it is therefore taken that the proposal relates to the change of use alone. It could therefore be assumed that the proposal would not affect the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

The premises lie within the Town Centre Shopping Area and none of the properties within Lace Walk, the vast majority of which are A1 uses, occupy the primary shopping frontage within the town centre.

The application therefore falls under consideration of the provisions of Policy SH1 relating to Town Centre Shopping Areas, which allows for the change of use of retail premises to non-retail uses provided that certain criteria are met, including that the proposal would not undermine the shopping character, visual amenity, vitality or viability of the town centre and that the proposed use would not give rise to any adverse effect upon amenity or highway safety.

In this regard, the proposed use may be regarded as comparatively passive use which would have little impact upon highway safety or amenity issues. It could be argued that an A2 use would contribute to the diversity, and therefore the vitality, of town centre uses. Further, the Economic Development Officer has stated that he regards the retail units that form the link between the High Street and the Lace Walk Car Park in Honiton as a secondary retail area that usefully complements the vitality and interest of the town centre. The retailing of financial services from the premises would seem to be entirely consistent with this pattern of development.

It would therefore appear that the proposal would not demonstrably harm the vitality or viability of the town centre.

It is considered that the proposal would not set an undesirable precedent for the loss of other shops in Lace Walk, since it should be noted that each application is decided on its own merits.

CONCLUSIONS

The proposal is located within the Town Centre Shopping Area of Honiton. Within these areas, outside Primary Shopping Frontages, A2 (financial and professional services) uses which contribute to the diversity and vitality of centres will generally be permitted. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with policy.

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE

Reasons for approval:

1. The proposal complies with Devon Structure Plan 2001-2016, policies C06, C07 and SH1.
2. The proposal complies with the East Devon Local Plan, policies SH1, S4 and EN11.
3. The proposal does not harm the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
4. The proposal would not harm the vitality and viability of Honiton Town Centre.