

**P/13/0986/CU**

**PARK GATE**

MR STUART HARE

AGENT: NEWTON SCOTT

CHANGE OF USE FROM RETAIL (BUTCHERS) TO LETTINGS AGENT

4 MIDDLE ROAD - UNIT 2 - PARK GATE SOUTHAMPTON HAMPSHIRE SO31 7GH

***Report By***

Richard Wright x2356

***Site Description***

The application site comprises Unit 4B Middle Road, commercial premises located on the eastern side of the street which forms the principal part of the designated Park Gate Local Centre. The unit is understood to have last been in use as a butchers shop.

Unit 4B is one of three such outlets occupying the ground floor space within what was previously known as 4 Middle Road. Lying adjacent in that building is a bakery to one side and a funeral directors on the other. A community care provider occupies the office space at first floor level over all three ground floor units. Service access to the rear is shared with the bakery.

***Description of Proposal***

Permission is sought for the change of use of the unit from retail (use class A1) to a letting agent (use class A2).

***Policies***

The following policies apply to this application:

**Approved Fareham Borough Core Strategy**

CS3 - Vitality and Viability of Centres

CS5 - Transport Strategy and Infrastructure

CS17 - High Quality Design

**Fareham Borough Local Plan Review**

S7 - Non-Retail Uses in the District and Local Centres

***Relevant Planning History***

The following planning history is relevant:

**P/13/0531/CU**

**CHANGE OF USE FROM RETAIL (BUTCHERS) TO A5 (HOT FOOD TAKEAWAY)**

APPROVE

17/10/2013

***Representations***

One letter has been received objecting to the application on the following grounds:

-There are already ten estate agency shops/offices in Park Gate therefore no call for another

-Park Gate needs more diversity not more of the same, in order to attract more shoppers to the existing businesses

## ***Consultations***

Director of Planning & Environment (Highways) - No objection

Director of Planning & Environment (Strategic Planning) -

In view of the previous application for the Change of Use of the Butchers Shop to a Hot Food Takeaway (P/13/0531/CU) a condition was placed of the granting of permission that the premises be used for no other purpose other than A5. This was "In the interests of the vitality, viability and character of the Park Gate Local Centre; in order to protect the amenities of occupiers of nearby residential properties; in accordance with Policies S7 & S12 of the Fareham Borough Local Plan Review."

Policy S7 does not allow for a change to a non-retail use. The previous application was granted with the view that it would only be the second A5 use in the Park Gate Local Centre area. However, with the current application the proposal is for a change of use to A2 which the policy notes has historically had a negative effect on the retail character of Park Gate Local Centre. Moreover the presence of 10 other Estate Agents within the Local Centre would suggest that the approval of the proposed change of use would "extend or consolidate existing non-retail uses so that they would dominate the character of the area" That said, the policy wording does not isolate any particular type of non-retail use. Furthermore the uses class order allows for the change of use from A5 to A1, A2 and A3 (up to 150m<sup>2</sup> for up to 2yrs) without the need for planning permission.

Emerging Policy DS1 is met through the unit being vacant and marketed for at least 11 months. In line with emerging policy the period of vacancy takes precedence and it is undeniable that a vacancy for this length of time has a negative effect on the vitality of the Local Centre. In view of this we would support the proposal as it would bring into use a vacant unit and would add to the vitality of the centre in accordance with Policy CS3 and contribute to the provision of employment space in accordance with CS1.

It is however important to note that our support is based on the current mix of uses and that any further change of use from retail to non-retail use will constitute a cumulative negative impact on the character of Park Gate Local centre.

Currently Park Gate local centre accommodates 57 units, 21 of which (over 36%) are in retail use. 10 out of 28 units located on Middle Road are in A1 use. There is currently one A5 unit within the centre and three A3 units situated on Middle Road. The most represented group within the centre is professional services (A2) accounting for 38.5% of all units (22 units). The most recent retail data indicates 3 vacant units, resulting in 5.2% vacancy rate.

## ***Planning Considerations - Key Issues***

A previous application was granted planning permission on the 17th October 2013 for the change of use of the unit from A1 (Retail) to A5 (Hot Food). That permission was not implemented and this application has been submitted to change the unit from A1 to A2 (Financial & professional Services).

### **i) Traffic and amenity implications**

The application site is located within Park Gate Local Centre, a vibrant local centre with a mixture of retail and non-retail uses. The proposed business will be operating within normal office hours and is therefore unlikely to raise concerns over noise and disturbance arising from the proposed use adversely affecting residents. Similarly it is not considered that there

would be a discernible increase in vehicle movements to and from the site compared to its previous use as a butchers to affect highway safety or convenience.

ii) Character, vitality and viability of Park Gate Local Centre and principle of change of use from retail to letting agent

Saved Policy S7 of the Fareham Borough Local Plan Review states that "in Middle Road, Park Gate the change of use of any shop to a non-retail use at ground floor level will not be permitted". The Local Plan Review explains that "so many changes of use to offices have already taken place that any further loss of retail use would cause the local centre to lose its shopping character" (para 10.43). The Director of Planning & Environment (Strategic Planning) has commented on this application by saying that a vacant unit does not contribute towards vitality or viability of the centre and in this instance the premises are understood to have been empty for the last eleven months. The centre performs well and should not be harmed by the introduction of a further letting agents (class A2).

Limited weight can be afforded to Draft Policy DS1 of the Draft Local Plan Part 2: Development Sites & Policies Plan which, although not formally adopted as part of the Borough's development plan, gives an indication of the emerging planning policy position. Draft Policy TC1 states that changes of use in centres from Use Class A1 will only be permitted where it would 1) not result in an unacceptable continuous group of non-retail uses on the same side of the street, and 2) the unit would retain an active shop windows display. In this instance the application site is one unit fronting Middle Road amongst a row of ground floor units on its eastern side between Bridge Road and St Margaret Mary Catholic Church, and comprising three A1 retail uses (florists, card/gift shop and Co-Op), two A2 professional services uses and two mixed retail/cafe uses (the bakery and Panini's cafe). The introduction of a letting agent into that row of units is not considered unacceptable in regards its impact on the character and in turn vitality and viability of the centre.

Furthermore the recent permitted change from A1 retail to A5 hot food takeaway would have resulted in the unit only being open during the evening period. The proposed change to that of a letting agent would result in the unit being open during the daytime which in turn would further enhance the vitality and viability of the centre.

Having given consideration to the current and emerging planning policy stance, as well as other material planning issues, Officers consider that, on balance, the benefit of bringing this vacant unit back into use as a letting agent and the contribution this would make to the continued vitality and viability of the Park Gate Local Centre justifies the setting aside of the policy considerations of Saved Policy S7 insofar as it conflicts with this proposal.

### ***Recommendation***

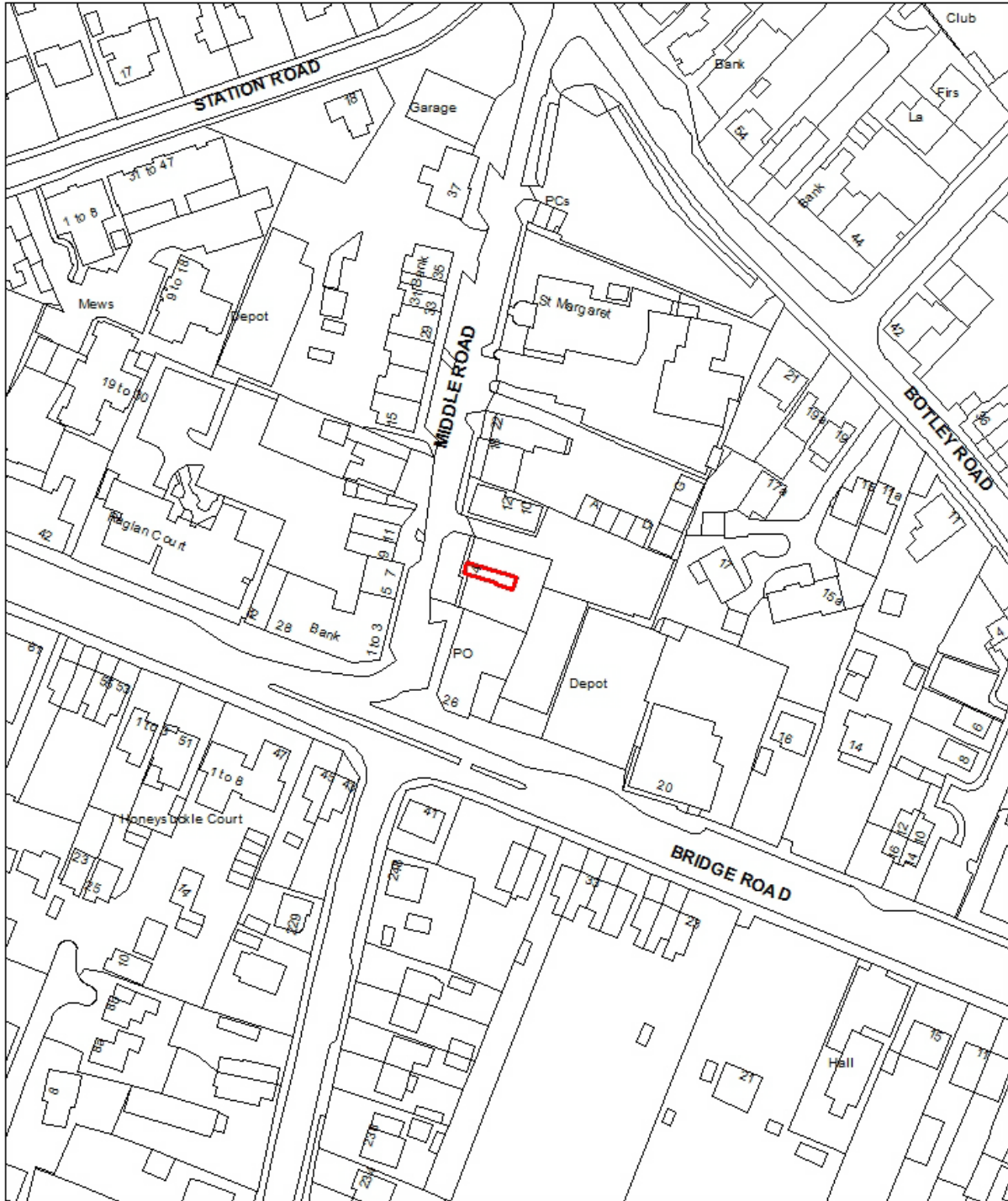
PERMISSION:

### ***Background Papers***

P/13/0531/CU

# FAREHAM

## BOROUGH COUNCIL



Unit 2  
4 Middle Road  
Scale 1:1250

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