

Full Planning Application
at
77 - 79 Easter Road
Edinburgh
EH7 5PW

Development Quality Sub-Committee
of the Planning Committee

Proposal: Change of use from retail unit to office accommodation
Applicant: Edinburgh Voluntary Organisations' Council.
Reference No: 03/04631/FUL

1 Purpose of report

To recommend that the application be **GRANTED** subject to;

Conditions

1. The development hereby permitted shall be commenced no later than five years from the date of this consent.
2. The design and installation of any plant, machinery or equipment shall be such that any associated noise complies with NR25 when measured within any nearby living apartment, and no structure borne vibration is perceptible within any nearby living apartment.

Reasons

1. In order to accord with the statutory requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Acts.
2. In order to safeguard the amenity of neighbouring residents and other occupiers.

2 Main report

Site description

The site lies to the west of Easter Road, between the junctions with Edina Street and Brunswick Road, and comprises a double fronted, ground and basement, retail unit beneath three floors of residential flatted properties. The unit is within a parade of commercial units on a traditional tenemental street. The premises are currently vacant and are stated to have been so since March 1996. Five other retail units in this street frontage are also vacant.

Easter Road is a busy thoroughfare, with restricted on-street parking. The upper floors of the tenemental buildings are pre-dominantly residential.

The premises are neither listed nor lie within a conservation area.

Site history

There is no relevant planning history for this site.

Development

The application is for a change of use from retail to office class 2. No physical alterations to the shop front are proposed.

Applicant's Supporting Statement:

This is available in the Party Group Rooms and provides details regarding the unsuccessful marketing of the property since March 1996. It is stated that re-use of the property as an administrative centre for a charitable organisation would contribute to the amenity and vibrancy of Easter Road and would benefit the community as a whole.

Consultations

No consultations undertaken.

Representations

The application was advertised as a Departure from the Development Plan on 2 January 2004, and neighbour notification was carried out on 17 December 2003.

One letter in support of the application has been received from Councillor Kerr, who acknowledges the local plan policies on protection of retail uses, but refers to the difficulty in marketing properties in this area for retail use. Comments also refer to the number of empty and boarded up shops having a negative impact on the area.

Policy

The site is identified in the Central Edinburgh Local Plan as being within an area of Housing and Compatible Uses. The premises also form part of a Secondary Shopping Frontage and a District Shopping Centre.

Relevant Policies:

Policy S7 (PROTECTION OF SHOPPING USES) sets out criteria for assessing changes of use (within defined retail frontages) from a shop unit to a service or other non-retail use appropriate to a shopping area.

Policy ED5 (BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT - INNER HOUSING AREAS) sets out criteria for assessing business and industrial development in defined Housing and Compatible Uses policy areas.

Policy H11 (HOUSING AMENITY) establishes a presumption against new development and changes of use likely to introduce increased levels of traffic or activity to the detriment of residential amenity or to the reasonable prospects of further residential development where this is an objective of the Local Plan.

Policy S9 (PROTECTION OF SHOPPING - LOCAL NEED) seeks the retention in shopping use of existing shopping facilities for which there is a clear local need.

3 Conclusions and Recommendations

DETERMINING ISSUES

The determining issues are:

- do the proposals comply with the development plan;
- if the proposals do comply with the development plan, are there any compelling reasons for not approving them;
- if the proposals do not comply with the development plan, are there any compelling reasons for approving them.

ASSESSMENT

To address these determining issues, the Committee needs to consider whether a) the principle of an office use is acceptable, and b) the proposals will have an adverse impact on existing residential amenity.

a) The premises are located in an area of Housing and Compatible Uses, where small scale offices are encouraged. However, the premises also form part of a wider Secondary Shopping Frontage. Within these areas only 40% of the units are permitted to be in a non-retail use. At present 8 of the 14 units, which make up this frontage are in a retail use (albeit six of these are vacant). This gives a figure of 43% non-retail, which already exceeds the limit permitted. A further change of use would increase the non-retail units to 50%, contrary to policy S7.

A change of use from shop to office would under normal circumstances be resisted on the basis of the above figures. However, in this instance the unit has been marketed unsuccessfully for in excess of 7 years. It remains boarded up and this visual appearance has a detrimental impact on the character of the street and the perception of the area as a whole and the vitality of the shopping centre. Indeed five other retail units are also vacant in this frontage resulting in a large area of dead frontage. There is clearly no local need for this unit to remain in retail use. The wider area is well served by retail premises.

An office is an appropriate use to be located within a shopping street and, given the above material considerations, a departure from policy is justified as the reuse of this unit will contribute positively to the vitality of the street.

b) The proposed office use is unlikely to cause any loss of amenity to the existing residential properties. Appropriate conditions regarding sound insulation are applied.

In conclusion, whilst a change of use to office will result in a further loss of a retail use within this Secondary Shopping Frontage, a departure from policy is considered justified and there will be no impact on neighbouring amenity.

It is recommended that the Committee approves this application, subject to the conditions stated.

Alan Henderson

Alan Henderson
Head of Planning and Strategy

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Ward affected 20 -Calton

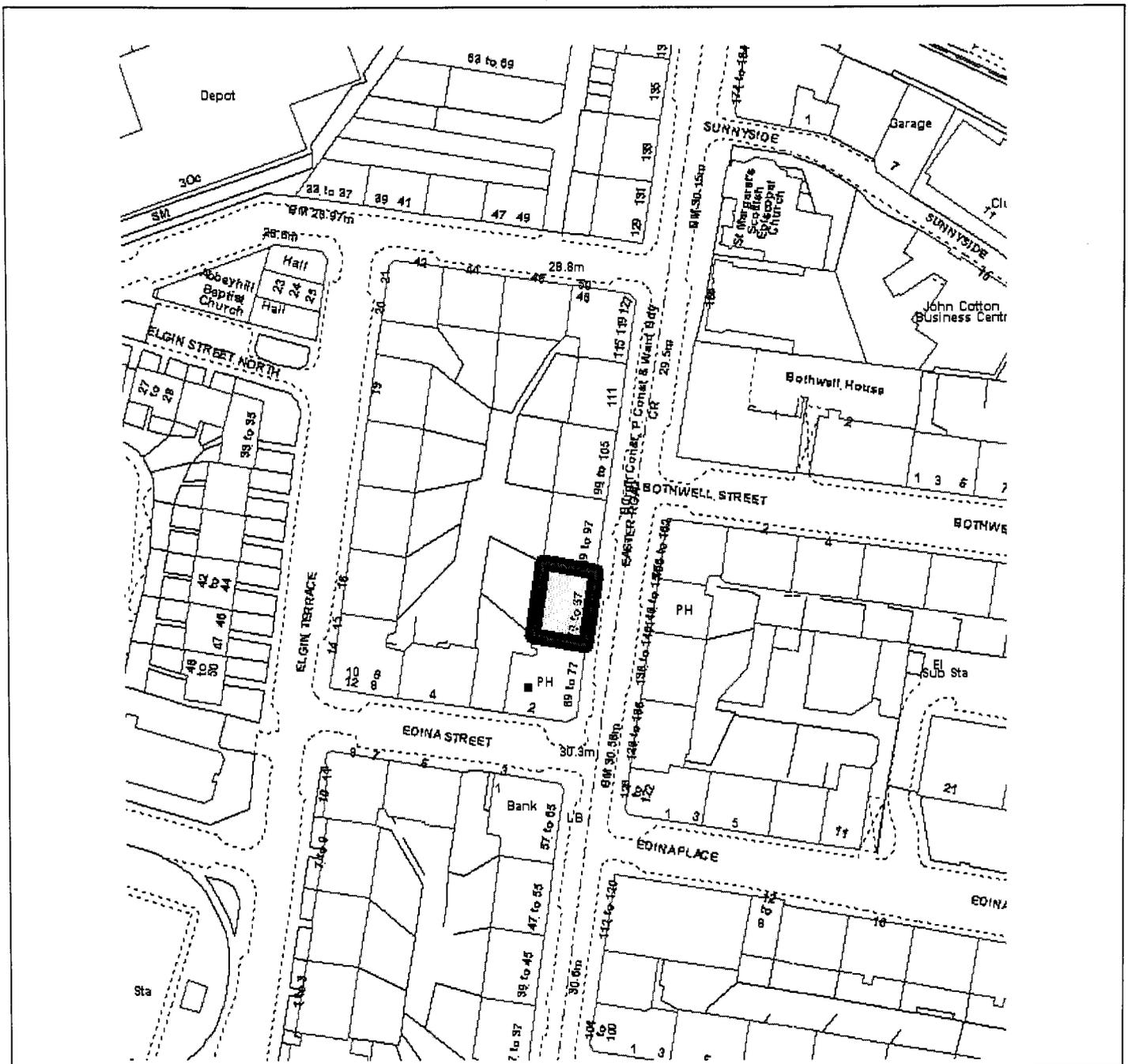
Local Plan Central Edinburgh Local Plan

**Statutory Development
Plan Provision** District Shopping Centre

File Af

Date registered 18 December 2003

**Drawing numbers/
Scheme** 01
Scheme 1



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PLANNING APPLICATION

Address	77 - 79 Easter Road, Edinburgh, EH7 5PW,
Proposal	Change of use from retail unit to office accommodation

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**THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL
THE CITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT- PLANNING & STRATEGY**