

**Item 03**

**Application No. IP/20/00440/FPI3**

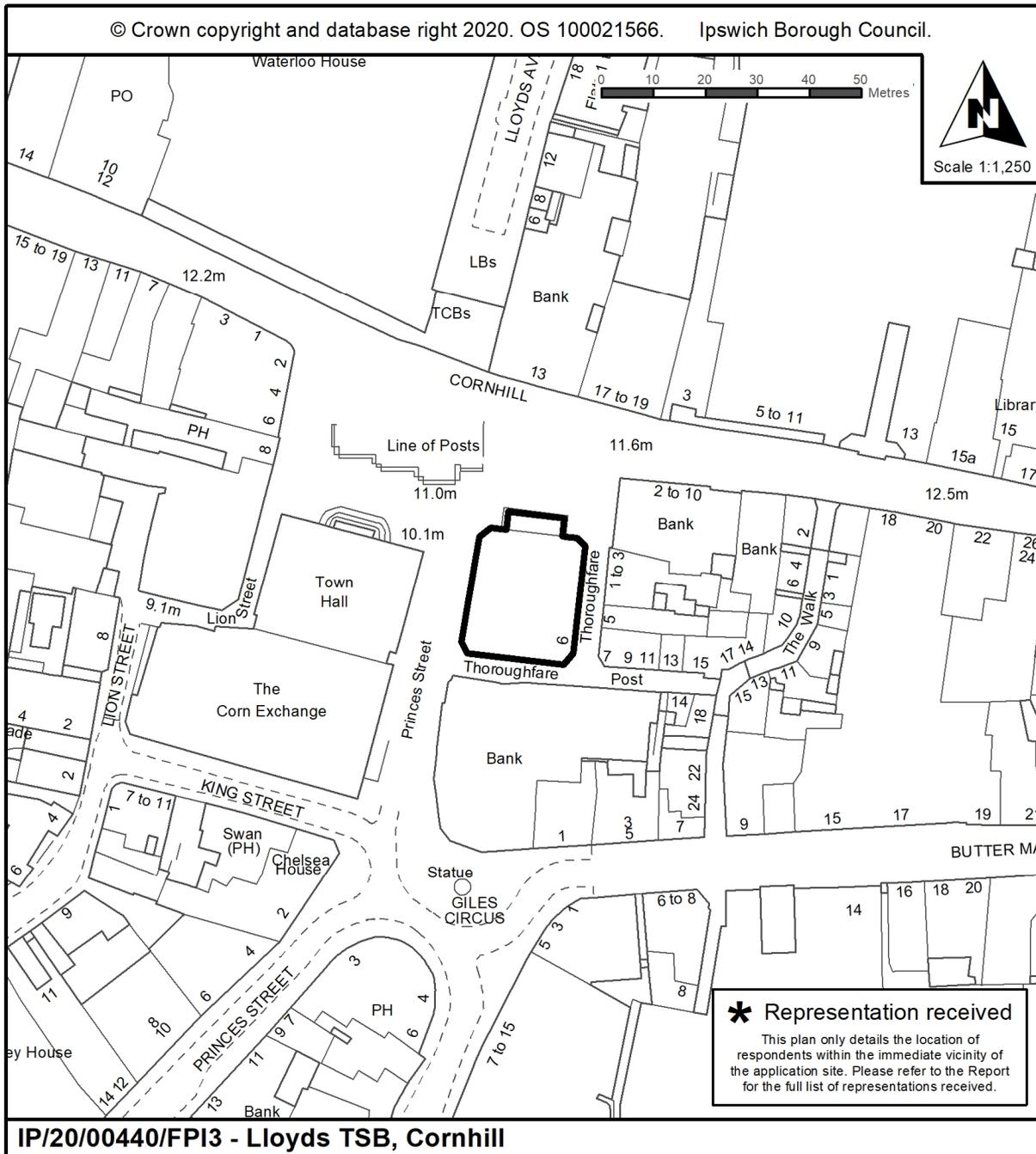
**Ward:** ALEXANDRA

**Proposal:** Change of use from Class A2 (financial services), A1 (retail) and B1 (offices) to Class A1 (retail), A2 (financial services), A3 (restaurant), A4 (drinking establishment) and D1 (Community facility).

**Address:** Lloyds TSB, Cornhill,

**Applicant:** Ipswich Borough Council

**Agent:** Nicholas Jacob Architects



## **Recommendation**

### **Grant planning permission upon condition that (briefly): -**

1. Prior to first use of the buildings, details of service and delivery vehicle access and details for the storage and presentation of refuse/recycling bins will need to be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

#### **Informatives:**

1. Ipswich Borough Council supports the use of automatic sprinkler systems.
2. Planning permission and listed building consent is likely to be required for any external extraction equipment and/or air conditioning units, and alterations/signage.

**The application is presented to Planning and Development Committee as Ipswich Borough Council is both the applicant and landowner.**

## **1. Proposal**

- 1.1 The application relates to the Grade II listed former Lloyds TSB building (and former Post Office) building at No.1 Cornhill, which is arranged over three floors in a prominent position in the heart of Ipswich town centre. The application seeks permission to extend the range of uses from A2 (financial services), A1 (retail) and B1(offices) - to A1 (retail), A2 (financial services), A3 (restaurant), A4 (drinking establishment) and D1 (Community facility).
- 1.2 The existing breakdown of uses is as follows:
  - Lower ground level, 6 Thoroughfare (417m<sup>2</sup>) – Shop (A1)
  - Ground and upper ground level (401m<sup>2</sup>) – Bank (A2)
  - First floor (366m<sup>2</sup>) – Offices (B1a)
- 1.3 This application is for change of use only and does not propose any physical changes to the building. Any physical alterations or additions to the building would be subject to separate planning and listed building applications.
- 1.4 In terms of planning constraints, the application site is located within the Ipswich Central Conservation Area and the Central Shopping Area.
- 1.5 The application has been submitted with the following supporting documents:
  - Planning Statement
  - Heritage Statement

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 The building was commissioned by the Borough Council in the late 1870s and the original purpose was the main Post Office, with separate accommodation

in the southern half of the building. These two parts are now integrated as a single building. The lower ground floor and basement is separately accessed and is addressed as no.6 Thoroughfare. The building became a bank in the 1990s, but following restructuring of Lloyds TSB, has been vacant and redundant since 2016. The upper floor has been used by various office organisations and the lower ground and basement was in use as a retail unit (The Wharf) until relatively recently.

2.2 The listing description of this grade II building describes it as follows:

*A late C19 stone fronted building with grey gault brick at the rear, built in an Italianate palazzo style, with splayed corners and a parapet with a modillion cornice. A central feature rises above the parapet with a Royal coat of arms and female figures. The end bays of the facade are marked by pairs of arched pavilions rising above an ornamental parapet. 2 storeys and a lower ground storey on Princes street which forms an ashlar base to the building. 5 window range on the front, one window range on each splayed corner and 8 window range on Princess Street, double-hung sashes without glazing bars. The 1st storey windows are set in semi-circular recessed arches with keystones with human heads, between paired Ionic pilasters. On the ground storey a Roman Doric portico projects on the front with paired columns on pedestals, a modillion cornice and a low parapet with female standing figures representing Industry, Electricity, Steam and Commerce. It is approached by a flight of stone steps. The 1st storey windows on Princes Street have architraves and cornices and a pediment rises above the end 3 windows on the south end. The ground storey windows are set between rusticated pilasters and have enriched architraves and aprons and keystones with human heads. At the south end there are paired pedimented doorways.*

### 3. **Consultations**

IBC Environmental Health – No objection to the proposed development

IBC Conservation Officer – No comments on the proposed changes.

Suffolk County Highways - No objections, however it is recommended that any future planning applications granted should include details of how service and delivery vehicles are to access the site; and details of the area for the storage and presentation for collection of refuse/recycling bins.

Representations

None received.

### 4. **Policy**

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

National Planning Practice Guidance

Local Planning Policy

## *Core Strategy and Policies DPD (2017)*

CS2 (The Location and Nature of Development); DM5 (Design and Character); DM8 (Heritage Assets and Conservation); DM18 (Car and Cycle Parking); DM20 (The Central Shopping Area); DM26 (Protection of Amenity).

### Other planning guidance

Suffolk Guidance for Parking – Technical Guidance (2019)  
Cycling Strategy SPD (2016)

### Other Legislation

Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 provides that, when a local planning authority considers whether to grant planning permission for development that affects a listed building or its setting, it must have “special regard” to the desirability of preserving the building, its setting and any special architectural or historic features; and special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area.

## **5. Planning Assessment**

- 5.1 The main issues to be considered relate to the principle of development, impact on amenity and highway matters.

### Principle of Development

- 5.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicates that planning policies and decisions should provide facilities and services the community needs and at the same time, Local Planning Authorities should allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead. The range of these uses is generally acknowledged to be confined to retail and associated supporting uses.
- 5.3 The Council's vision for Ipswich Town centre combines elements of the Core Strategy and the Ipswich Central visions for a 'Waterfront Town centre' and includes, amongst other things, focusing new development in the town centre; improving the shopping offer; and creating a place that is outgoing and welcoming, vibrant and dynamic. Changes of use are generally considered acceptable within this location of the Town Centre provided they comply with the Council's policy on town centre uses within the Central Shopping Area, which in this case is policy DM20. The policy seeks to promote and enhance the central shopping area to support the town's vitality and viability
- 5.4 The proposed change of use of this site to expand the existing uses of A2 (financial services), A1 (retail) and B1(offices) applies to the entire building, and will allow A3 (restaurant) and/or A4 (drinking establishment) and D1 (Community facility) to be used in a flexible combination of iterations across the

space. It is acknowledged that A3 and A4 uses are unlikely to occupy entire floors, whereas a D1 use e.g. an arts space, could occupy the entire building.

- 5.5 The building sits within the primary shopping area where, under normal circumstances, policy DM20 restricts non-A1 retail uses to 15% within any individual identified frontage. However, this particular building was not included in the retail frontage survey, and it remains in the secondary shopping zone. It appears that this was on the basis that there were short-medium term plans to repurpose this building, following consultations with the Council.
- 5.6 Therefore, it is appropriate to adopt a flexible approach to how this building could be used. A noteworthy factor is the long-term vacancy of the site and its undoubted ability to significantly contribute to the wider aims of the Town Centre Master Plan (2012), namely, helping to “complete” the Cornhill redevelopment by supporting an active use of a currently redundant building. Of all the town’s vacant buildings, this property is arguably the most important, and the clear preference is for building to be found an end use as soon as possible, given its prominence, status and local significance.
- 5.7 The variety of uses presented as part of the proposal (e.g. A3, A4 and D1) will help to achieve the aim of; *“promotion of a “café culture” by permitting more food and drink uses in the heart of the town centre and promote the development of a safe and family-friendly night-time economy”*. At the same time, the proposal specifically excludes those uses (notably hot food take-away), which are not seen to contribute to this aim at this prime location.
- 5.8 There are also references to this aim in the reasoned justification of Policy DM20 such as:
- *“The Council’s Town Centre Master Plan identifies the need to permit more food and drink uses in the Central Shopping Area to disperse these activities and public spaces throughout the centre.”* (9.116)
  - *“In these areas (secondary shopping zones), the focus remains on A1 retailing, but a greater diversity of uses is permitted.”* (9.115)
  - *“Mixed-use development will be supported in the Central Shopping Area only where a ground floor use in accordance with policy DM20 is provided. This reflects government policy to encourage diversification and mixed uses and can help to create a vibrant centre including outside shopping hours. Main town centre uses as defined in the NPPF will only be permitted within the Central Shopping Area where specified criteria are met as set out in policy DM20.”* (9.119)
- 5.9 Furthermore, and given the long vacancy of this building, an active use will assist in reversing any physical decline in the building or any anti-social behaviour that results from the lack of occupation.

- 5.10 The proposed hours of operation would be confirmed once tenants are secured but would be consistent with those of surrounding retail and other uses and ensure that the development could supplement visitor trips to the Town Centre.
- 5.11 The proposed uses would all provide employment opportunities, although at this stage it is not possible to be definitive in this regard. Nevertheless, it is evident that the proposals would represent a net employment gain in the town centre.
- 5.12 It is considered that the proposed change of use is acceptable, as all of the proposed uses would result in the building being in some form of economic and/or community use, which would be compatible with the surrounding built form and uses, and present an active use that would help deter any anti-social behaviour in or around this currently vacant heritage asset. These factors all lay in favour of the proposals.

#### Highway matters

- 5.13 The application site is centrally located in the Ipswich Town Centre, within a pedestrianised zone, and as such, is well served by public transport. It therefore follows that the scheme should not be required to meet standard parking provision quotas, such as would apply to more peripheral sites. The Suffolk County Highways Authority Suffolk Guidance for Parking (2019) provides the following parking guidance for urban areas:

*'In urban areas such as the centre of major towns where:*

- housing density is high*
- there is good provision of public transport*
- local services such as shops, healthcare and education are nearby*
- there are high quality facilities for walking and cycling*
- on-street parking is generally restricted by legal orders relaxation of the parking standards... may, with the agreement of the Highway and Planning Authorities be acceptable. Such developments must be designed to provide exceptional standards of sustainable transport.'*

- 5.14 The Highways Authority made comments on the application requesting details of how service and delivery vehicles are to access the site for the storage and presentation for collection of refuse/recycling bins. These will be required by condition where appropriate.

#### Impact on Amenity

- 5.15 The closest residential properties are a limited number of sites located on upper floors in Westgate Street, Tavern Street and other surrounding town centre locations. Due to the background noise levels in the town centre from existing commercial premises, as well as the limited residential uses in this part of the town centre, it is not anticipated that the proposed uses would have a harmful

amenity impact on these residential properties to warrant a refusal of planning permission.

- 5.16 Opening hours have not been submitted with this proposal. Given the wide scope of potential uses and the location in an environment that would benefit from evening activity without causing harm to residential occupants, as well as the elimination from the proposal of potentially harmful after-hours uses such as hot food take-aways, the imposition of any conditions limiting hours will not be required.
- 5.17 Comments were received from Environmental Protection not objecting to the proposal by reason of noise impact. The proposed changes of use do not, at this stage, include any external equipment, and so the proposal can be deemed acceptable in terms of potential noise impact. The provision of external extraction equipment or air conditioning units would require planning permission and listed building consent in their own right, and an informative can be included to any planning permission.

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 The proposal to introduce a wider range of available uses for this site, to include A3 (restaurant), A4 (drinking establishment) and D1 (Community facility) as well as retaining the existing uses of A2 (financial services), A1 (retail) and B1 (offices) is considered to be acceptable and compliant with policy, particularly in light of the fact that this site sits outside of the retail frontage zones. The building is uniquely placed in relation to the wider Cornhill redevelopment and would help to achieve the aims and objectives of both policy DM20 and the Town Centre Master Plan. The site does not form part of an identified frontage and therefore the proposal is acceptable, having regard to adopted policies CS2, DM5, DM18, DM20, DM26. The proposal also meets with the wider aims of the National Planning Policy Framework in providing sustainable development and support in bringing a heritage asset into use.