

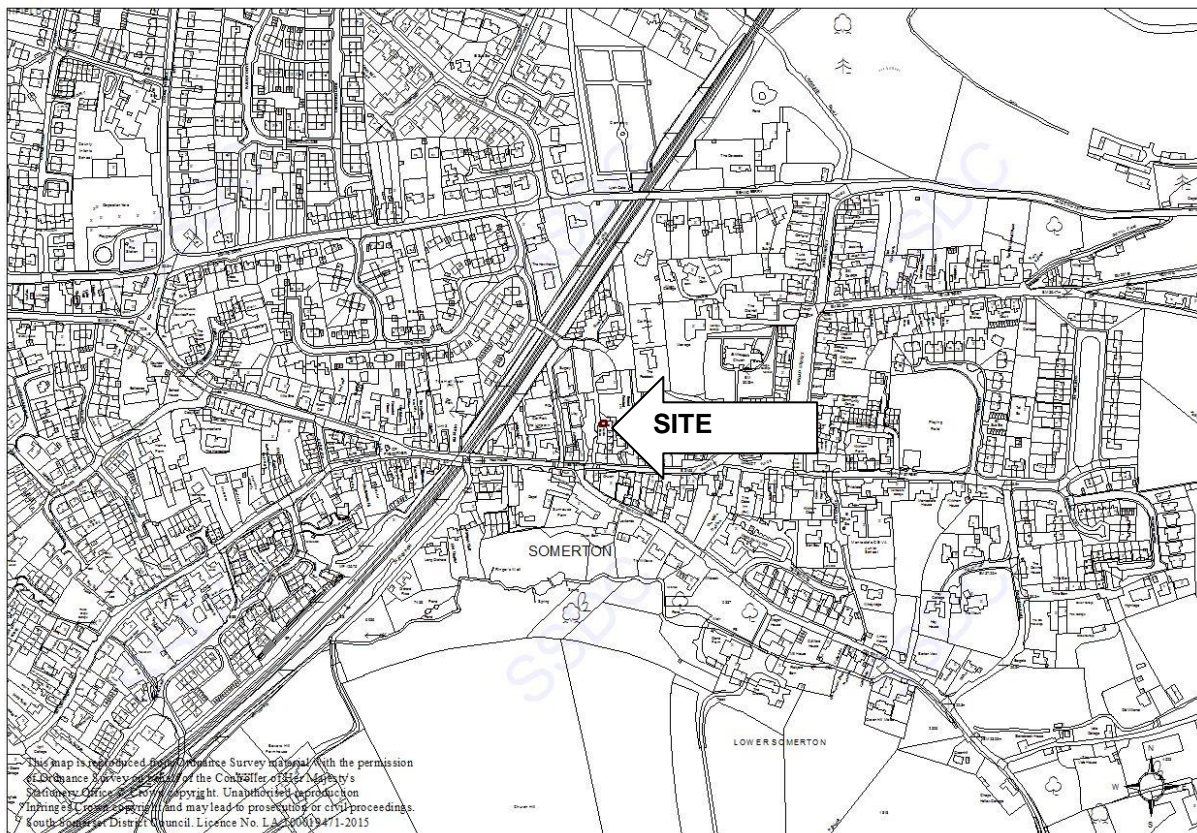
## Officer Report On Planning Application: 15/05004/FUL

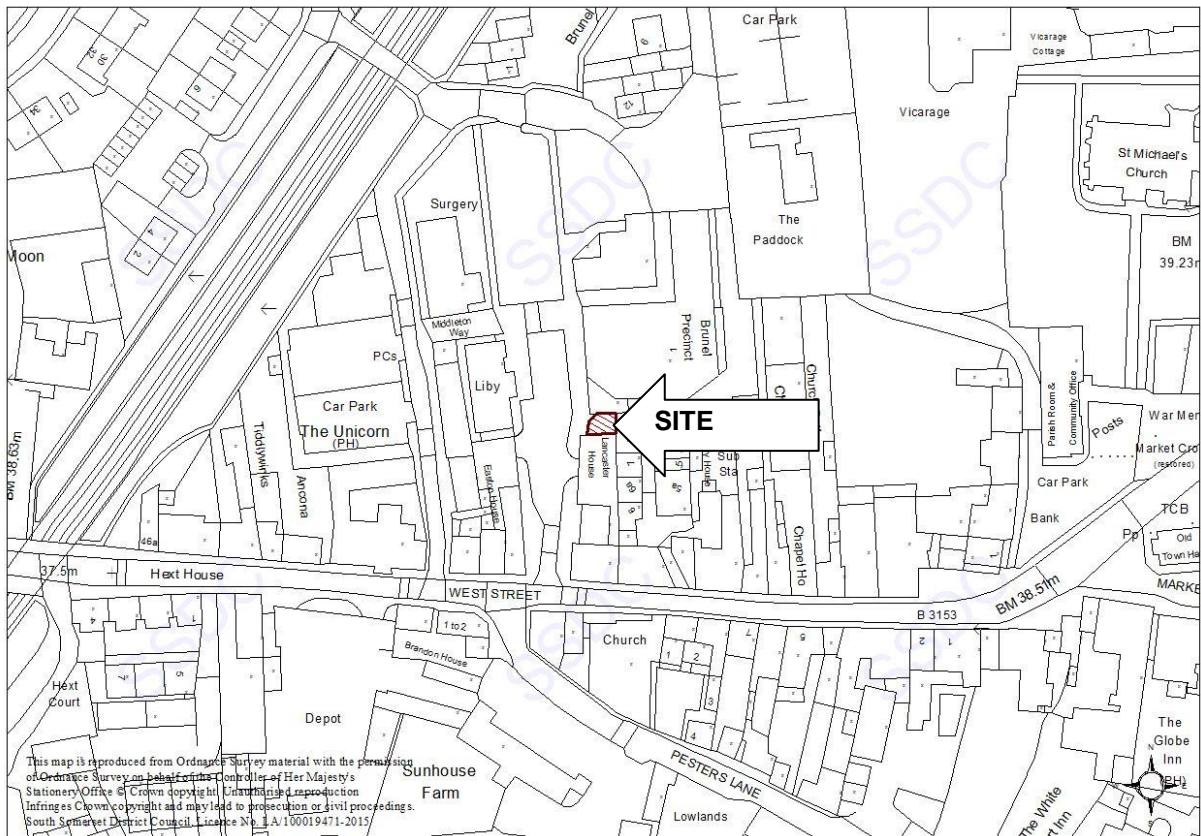
<b>Proposal :</b>	Erection of a new retail unit (between Williams supermarket and Lancaster House) (GR 348911/128554)
<b>Site Address:</b>	Proposed Retail Unit, Brunel Shopping Centre, West Street, Somerton.
<b>Parish:</b>	Somerton
<b>WESSEX Ward (SSDC Members)</b>	Cllr Stephen Page Cllr Dean Ruddle
<b>Recommending Case Officer:</b>	Nicholas Head Tel: (01935) 462167 Email: nick.head@southsomerset.gov.uk
<b>Target date :</b>	8th January 2016
<b>Applicant :</b>	The Ruddle Group Ltd
<b>Agent: (no agent if blank)</b>	Joanna Fryer, The Town And Country Planning Practice Ltd, Home Orchard, Littleton, Somerton TA11 6NR
<b>Application Type :</b>	Minor Retail less than 1,000 sq.m or 1ha

### REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The application is referred to Committee as a Ward Member is a director of the applicant company.

### SITE DESCRIPTION AND PROPOSAL





The site is located centrally within the town centre of Somerton, adjoining the Brunel Shopping Centre on its western side. It falls within the Conservation Area and the Primary Shopping area. The site currently is an open paved area, partially covered by a steel staircase leading up to the access to the flats above the supermarket. Immediately south of the site, separated by a raised stone planter, as a car private car park. The portion of the building immediately to the east of the site contains a ground floor shop with first floor (loft) storage space.

Permission is sought for the erection of a 25 sq m shop, and new external staircase to replace the access stairs to the upper storey flats.

## HISTORY

No relevant recent history on this site, although there is an extensive history to the adjacent supermarket and shopping centre site.

## POLICY

The South Somerset Local Plan (2006 - 2028) was adopted on the 5th March 2015. In accordance with Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the adopted local plan now forms part of the development plan. As such, decisions on the award of planning permission should be made in accordance with this development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Legislation and national policy are clear that the starting point for decision-making is the development plan, where development that accords with an up-to-date local plan should be approved, and proposed development that conflicts should be refused, unless other material considerations indicate otherwise.

## **Policies of the South Somerset Local Plan (2006 - 2028)**

SD1	Sustainable Development
SS1	Settlement Strategy
EP9	Retail Hierarchy
EP11	Location of Main Town Centre Uses (The Sequential Approach)
EP12	Floorspace Threshold for Impact Assessments
TA5	Transport Impact of New Development
TA6	Parking Standards
EQ2	General Development
EQ3	Historic Environment

## **National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012):**

1. Building a strong, competitive economy
2. Ensuring the vitality of town centres
3. Supporting a prosperous rural economy
4. Promoting sustainable transport
7. Requiring good design
8. Promoting healthy communities
12. Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

**National Planning Practice Guidance** - Department of Communities and Local Government, 2014.

## **Policy-related Material Considerations**

Somerset County Council Parking Strategy, March 2012 and September 2013.  
Somerset County Council Highways Standing Advice, June 2013.

South Somerset Sustainable Community Strategy (2008-2026)

## **CONSULTATIONS**

**Somerton Town Council:** Support

**Highways Authority:** Standing Advice Applies.

**SSDC Highways Consultant:** *No significant highways issues for such a small-scale retail unit. Proposal unlikely to generate a need for significant additional car parking, and any parking requirements are likely to be met by the existing town centre public car parking provision.*

**SSDC Conservation Officer:** No objection.

**SSDC Environmental Protection Officer:** No observations.

**SSDC Economic Development Officer:** No comment received.

**County Archaeologist:** No objections.

**Natural England:** No comments.

## **REPRESENTATIONS**

One letter of representation was received, from a person stating the wall between the site and the private parking area is not in the ownership of the applicant.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Principle of Development**

Policy EP11 of the Local Plan seeks to protect and enhance the vitality and viability of the town centre. The site falls within the defined town centre, and the defined Primary Shopping Area, and is therefore an appropriate place for additional retail floorspace, subject to compliance with other policies and material considerations.

Proposals in such localities are required to be of a scale appropriate to the size and function of the town centre and suitable to help to sustain and enhance the vitality and viability of the centre. Parking should be considered in the context of the town centre.

The principle of small-scale new retail floorspace is accepted.

### **Visual Impact**

The context of the new extension is the existing shopping centre, which is a modern stone building with tiled roof. The proposal would create a contrasting, flat-roof cube of an extension, over the current paved pedestrian area. The elevations to north and east are glazed, the southern elevation, broken by the new staircase up to the flat entrance, is to be finished in natural timber applied in vertical strips.

The proposal is set against buildings of no particular design distinction, even using faux pitched-roof sections over part of the supermarket section. The applicant remarks that it is the intention to create a more 'honest' distinctive modern addition to the existing complex, and it is accepted that, subject to appropriate finishes and materials, this approach does make a positive contribution to the setting, representing something new which nevertheless blends with the existing.

The proposal would replace the existing metal staircase arrangement, which wastes the space beneath it, and contributes poorly to the appearance of the complex as a whole.

The proposal is considered to be visually acceptable, enhancing the general setting and the conservation area.

### **Pedestrian Access**

Although the new structure will narrow the available space for pedestrians moving through the shopping centre, it is considered that adequate space would remain to allow free flow of pedestrians.

### **Listed Buildings**

There are listed buildings along West Street. However, these front the street and are partially screened from the site by other structures. It is not considered that their setting would not be negatively affected by this proposal.

## **Impact on Residential Amenity**

The building does not directly relate in any way to the existing nearby flats, other than to provide an amended stairway to the access door. It is not considered that there is any amenity harm represented by the proposal.

## **Parking**

The proposal would increase the existing floorspace in the centre by 25 sq m. In the context of the existing shopping centre, and the town centre as a whole, this is an insignificant change. It is not considered that it could be regarded as changing shopping or movement patterns within the town centre, or dramatically increase parking demand, as any retail activity in the shop would be against the background of a complex existing pattern of shopping throughout the town centre. The Somerset Parking Strategy suggests a ratio of 1 parking bay per 20 sq m for food retail uses. However, there is no obligatory minimum stipulated. Under the circumstances, it is considered that there is adequate parking available within the town centre as a whole, and particularly within the immediate vicinity of the shopping centre. Given that the use of the premises would be part of larger shopping trips in the town centre, it is not considered that the lack of one additional parking bay would indicate a refusal of the application.

## **Highway Safety**

The proposed shop would exist, as state above, in the context of a large, vibrant existing shopping complex. It is not considered that the additional 25 sq m would in any way affect the existing traffic flows, or harm the safety of the various access points to the parking areas from the public highway.

## **Letter of Representation**

It appears that there is a dispute over ownership of the land at the southern edge of the site. Satisfactory evidence has been presented by the applicant to indicate that they reasonably believe the land to be in their ownership. If there is a dispute, this is not a material planning consideration, but the requirement to consider the procedural issue has been met.

## **Conclusion**

The proposal seeks to make use of under-utilised space within the existing shopping precinct to create an additional 25 sq m of retail floorspace. Such development would enhance the vitality of the shopping centre and the town centre generally. No amenity or highway safety harm has been identified. The design is considered acceptable in the context of the conservation area and the general setting. The proposal is recommended for approval.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

Grant permission.

The proposal, by reason of its scale, design and materials, respects the character and appearance of the setting, and causes no demonstrable harm to residential amenity. The addition of this small single unit of retail accommodation would enhance the vitality of the existing shopping centre and the town centre, and cause no harm to highway safety. In these respects, the proposal accords with the aims of the NPPF and Policies SD1, EQ2, EQ3, TA5 and TA6 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

**SUBJECT TO THE FOLLOWING:**

01. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To accord with the provisions of section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

02. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: the drawings ref. DRSO-GA numbers 001, 201 and 202.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

03. No development hereby permitted shall be commenced unless particulars of the following have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority:

- a) details of the materials (including the provision of samples where appropriate) to be used for external walls, including design details of timber cladding;
- b) full design details and material and external finish to be used for all windows and external doors;
- c) design and materials details of the railings/bannisters to the staircase on the south elevation of the building;
- d) details (including dimensions and materials) of the sign boards shown on the submitted elevation drawing ref. DRSO-GA202.

Reason: To safeguard the character and appearance of the area and to accord with the NPPF and Policies EQ2 and EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

04. The subject land including any building thereon shall be used for retail (A1) use and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in any use class of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking and re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

Reason: To safeguard the vitality of the shopping area and the character of the setting, in accordance with the aims of the NPPF and Policies SD1, EQ2 and EQ3 of the South Somerset Local Plan.

**Informatives:**

01. The applicant's attention is drawn to the possible need to apply for separate advertisement consent for the signage attached to the proposed building. Details to be submitted prior to commencement will enable final checking as to whether these signs would have deemed consent, or need consent under the The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007.
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