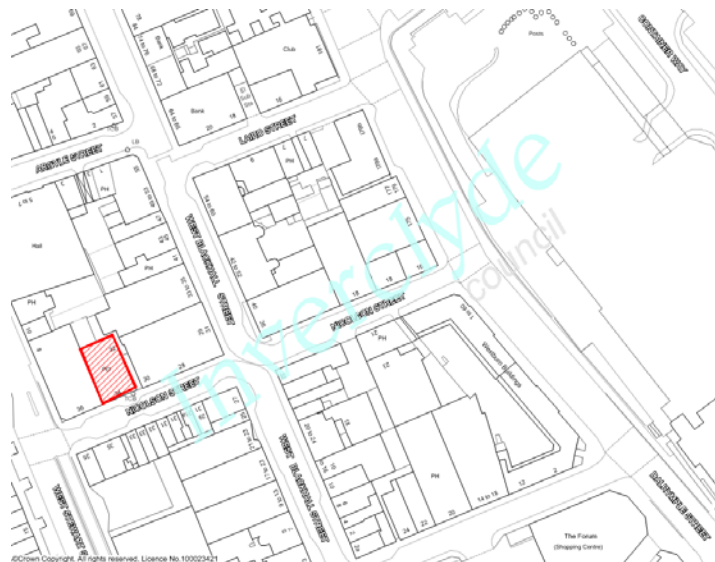

Report To:	The Planning Board	Date:	7th November 2012
Report By:	Head of Regeneration and Planning	Report No:	12/0283/IC Plan 11/12
			Local Application Development
Contact Officer:	David Ashman	Contact No:	01475 712416
Subject:	Change of use from class 1 retail to class 11 assembly and leisure at Former Post Office, 34 Nicolson Street, Greenock		

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is the former post office on the ground floor of a 3 storey building in Nicolson Street, close to the corner with West Stewart Street, Greenock. The unit is currently vacant.



PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought for a change of use of the former post office to a Class 11 (assembly and leisure) use. Specifically, the change of use would facilitate the introduction of activities for young people under the “i-youth zone” project which has three principal aims. Firstly, evening and weekend diversionary activities including working with partner organisations to deliver training on issues such as drug and alcohol misuse. Secondly, the encouragement of voluntary activities such as entry into the Youth Achievement Awards or Duke of Edinburgh Awards schemes. Finally, youth work training to build the capacity of the local community to sustain the “i-youth zone” project once the Big Lottery funding ceases. No alterations to the external appearance of the building are proposed by this application.

LOCAL PLAN POLICIES

Local Plan Policy R1- Designated Centres

The following Centres are designated:

1. Town Centres, as defined on the Proposals Map:

- (a) Greenock, subdivided into a 'Central Shopping Area' and 'Outer Mixed/Commercial Area';
- (b) Port Glasgow;
- (c) Gourock; and

2. Local Centres, as defined or indicated on the Proposals Map:

- (a) Kilmacolm (defined);
- (b) Dubbs Road, Port Glasgow (defined);
- (c) Sinclair Street, Greenock;
- (d) Belville Street, Greenock;
- (e) Lynedoch Street, Greenock;
- (f) Barrs Cottage (Inverkip Road/ Dunlop Street), Greenock;
- (g) Ravenscraig (Cumberland Walk), Greenock;
- (h) Cardwell Road, Gourock (defined);
- (i) Main Street, Inverkip;
- (j) Ardgowan Road, Wemyss Bay;
- (k) By Station/Pier, Wemyss Bay.

Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority, will seek to assist urban regeneration and sustainable travel patterns. This will be achieved by encouraging each Centre to serve its own retail and service catchments without detriment to other Centres and to the overall roles of Greenock, Port Glasgow and Gourock as the principal Centres serving the Authority.

Local Plan Policy R2 - Support for Designated Centres

The designated Centres identified in Policy R1 will be protected, enhanced and developed, where resources allow, through a range of initiatives aimed at achieving the following:

- (a) encouraging a diversity of retail, leisure, civic, public administration, office, residential and other uses, of the type which the Council, as Planning Authority, considers to be appropriate to the development of the individual Centres, in order to support their vitality and viability, particularly through mixed use developments and through the use of upper floors of commercial premises;
- (b) identifying and promoting opportunities for new development and for the redevelopment and reuse of existing premises, both within and on the edge of the defined Centres;
- (c) improving the quality of the urban environment through implementing programmes for the improvement of individual properties, the streetscape and open spaces;
- (d) improving accessibility and integration of services by bus, train, ferry and taxi;
- (e) improving accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists through the provision of safe and convenient facilities and routes both into and within the town centres;
- (f) managing provision of freight access and of car, motorcycle and cycle parking for residents, visitors, workers and shoppers in accordance with an approved strategy;

- (g) managing traffic flows to minimise congestion and pollution and to give priority to the disabled, pedestrians, cyclists, public transport and service vehicles; and
- (h) developing Town Centre Action Plans in partnership with other agencies.

Local Plan Policy R3 - Town Centre Uses

The following town centre uses will be directed towards the Central Shopping Area of Greenock, the other two Town Centres (Port Glasgow and Gourock) and the Local Centres:

- (a) Use Class 1 (Shops)
- (b) Use Class 2 (Financial, Professional and other Services);
- (c) Use Class 3 (Food and Drink);
- (d) Use Class 11 (Assembly and Leisure); and
- (e) Related uses such as public houses, hot food take-aways, theatres, amusement arcades and offices for taxis for public hire.

Outside these designated Centres, the above uses will be permitted in principle in the Outer Mixed/Commercial Area around the Central Shopping Area of Greenock Town Centre, according to the specification in Policy R5. Applications for any of the uses listed will be considered subject to the criteria outlined in Policy R10. Proposals for other uses in designated Centres will be considered on their merit.

Local Plan Policy R4 - Greenock Central Shopping Area

In order to support the retail function of Greenock Town Centre's Central Shopping Area, Inverclyde Council, as Planning Authority will:

- (a) identify this area as the preferred location for retail investment in Greenock; and
- (b) seek to protect the core retail function of the Primary Shopping Area by ensuring that no more than 25% of the length of ground floor frontage of each of the six defined segments identified on the Greenock Town Centre Inset (H) of the Proposals Map is utilised for non-Class 1 (Shops) uses.

Local Plan Policy R10 - Assessing Development Proposals for Town Centre Uses

Any proposal for a development of one or more of the town centre uses identified in Policy R3, or for any other commercial use within a defined centre, will be required to satisfy the criteria listed below:

- (a) for developments on the edge of, or outside, the designated Centres, and retail developments on the edge of, or outside, Greenock's Central Shopping Area, the applicant should have adopted a sequential approach to site selection, including consideration of sites identified under Policy R6;
- (b) the applicant having demonstrated that there is a capacity for the development in terms of expenditure compared to turnover in the appropriate catchment area, or a qualitative deficiency in existing provision;
- (c) the proposal should not have a detrimental effect, including cumulatively, on the vitality and viability of existing Centres;
- (d) the size and format of the development is appropriate to the Centre for which it is proposed;
- (e) the proposed development should be accessible by a choice of means of transport from its forecast catchment, make provision for improved infrastructure where deemed necessary,

not result in unacceptable changes in travel patterns and, where required, be supported by the production of a Transport Assessment;

- (f) the proposed development should be to a high standard of design and its scale, siting and relationship to the surrounding townscape and land uses should make a positive contribution to the quality of the urban environment;
- (g) the proposal should not have a detrimental effect on residential amenity or on the amenity and effective operation of existing businesses;
- (h) the proposal should be consistent with other relevant national, Structure Plan and Local Plan policies and guidelines, including any Town Centre Strategy or other relevant initiative which may have been instigated, the Council's Roads Development Guide, 1995 and any other standards; and
- (i) in Greenock Town Centre the proposed development should be consistent with Policies R4 and R5.

Where the proposal includes either a convenience retail development of over 1,000 square metres gross; comparison retail development of over 2,000 square metres gross; or Use Class 11 (Assembly & Leisure) developments that will attract a large number of users, it should be accompanied by a statement of justification addressing the above criteria and the criteria set out in the Structure Plan and NPPG8. At the Council's discretion, applications for development within designated Centres or small-scale development of town centre uses outwith the designated Centres may be exempted from the requirement to be justified against criteria (a)-(d).

CONSULTATIONS

Head of Safer and Inclusive Communities - Advisory notes suggested in respect of controls on external lighting and times and methods of working to minimise noise disruption from the site.

Head of Environmental and Commercial Services - No objections.

PUBLICITY

The application was advertised in the Greenock Telegraph on 21st September 2012 as a Schedule 3 (bad neighbour) development.

SITE NOTICES

The nature of the proposal did not require a site notice.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

No representations have been received.

ASSESSMENT

The material considerations in determination of this application are the Local Plan and the consultee responses.

The application site is within Greenock Town Centre, as defined by the Local Plan under policy R1, hence the proposed use of the premises accords in principle with policy R3 which specifically supports class 11 uses in Greenock town centre. As the proposal would contribute to the diversity of uses within the Town Centre and would bring into re-use a vacant building, it also accords with

the relevant criteria ((a) and (b) respectively) of policy R2. The proposal does, nevertheless, require to be assessed against the relevant criteria of policy R10 (c,e,g,h and i). Criteria a,b,d and f are not applicable.



In this respect, bringing a vacant unit back into use will help boost the vitality and viability of the Town Centre (criterion (c)); the site is close to public transport routes, including the bus station, to encourage sustainable travel (criterion (e)); as activities are to be concentrated within the building it is not regarded as potentially detrimental to residential amenity or a source of disruption to businesses (criterion (g)); it accords with the other relevant policies and guidance and, I note, there is no objection to the proposal from the Head of Environmental and Commercial Services (criterion (h)); and it is consistent with the aims of policy R4, being located within the central shopping area (criterion (i)).

I am therefore satisfied that the proposal accords with the Local Plan.

On day to day operational matters, I note the comments of the Head of Safer and Inclusive Communities which can, accordingly, be addressed by advisory notes on the granting of planning permission. There are no other material considerations suggesting that planning permission should not be granted.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be granted.

Stuart Jamieson
Head of Regeneration and Planning

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application form and plan.
2. Applicant's supporting information.
3. Inverclyde Local Plan.
4. Consultee replies.



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