DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2016/0477 **Valid 21/07/2016**	**72 HIGH STREET** **BIDDULPH**	**PROPOSED CHANGE OF USE OF GROUND FLOOR RETAIL UNIT TO CHARITY DROP IN CENTRE** **(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

- The impact on the vitality and viability of the town centre and main shopping area.
- The impact on the highway network.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site is on the west side of the High Street in the town centre and comprises a vacant A1 retail unit (formerly a furniture shop). The unit together with an adjoining small A1 retail unit (a hairdressers) lie between two public houses. There are similar units to the other side of the road to the east - a mix of shops, services and take-aways. This part of the High Street is classed as a Primary Shopping Frontage in the Biddulph Town Centre Area Action Plan (AAC).

PROPOSAL

The application is for the change of use of the A1 retail unit into a "charity drop in centre". The covering letter states this would be for the Green Tree House charity. Their website states this was set up as a local community children's group in 2011 and it appears the space would be required as a "café" to "host a wide range of community support groups and lots of creative activities like crafts, sports, makergroups and gaming sessions." The layout plans show most of the unit would comprise a café (showing several tables) and kitchen, with the rest of the unit to include a small craft room, storage space and toilets. No opening hours are given. There are no "employees" as the centre would be run by volunteers.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Core Strategy Development Plan Document (Adopted 2014)

S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS1a Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
SS5b – Biddulph Strategy
TCR1 Development in the Town Centres
C1 – Creating Sustainable Communities

T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework

Section 2 (Town Centres)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

No recent applications.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 6.9.16
Neighbour consultation period ends: 25.8.16
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

None.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No objection.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The Council's Core Strategy Policy SS5b requires town centre proposals to comply with Policy STRAT1 in the AAP which states that proposals for non-retail uses in the Primary Shopping Areas should be resisted if this leads to a concentration of non-A1 uses in the area. In January 2013, approval was given (12/0171/FUL) for the change of use of a nearby unit to the other side of the road, within the primary shopping frontage, from A1 retail to A3 café. Despite the presence of number of non-retail uses in this area, this was not considered to amount to a "concentration" of non-A1 uses as there were a number of shops still present. This current application would lead to the loss of a further A1 shop unit although there would be several shops still remaining in the area.

Recent changes in planning legislation as outline in the GPDO 2015 allow the change of use of a an A1 shop into an A3 café without needing planning permission, subject to a Prior Notification application which must be determined on the basis of several impacts including the "sustainability of the key shopping area". Changes to the GPDO 2015 also allow the change of use of a shop to "flexible uses" (including cafes) for two years subject to the submission of a notification to the Council of when

the proposed use is to commence. Recent changes in planning legislation clearly aim for a more flexible and less rigid approach towards encouraging town centre vitality and viability.

I do not consider the sustainability of the key shopping area would be significantly affected and do not consider the proposed change of use of a small retail unit of around 50 sq.m would have a significant impact on the overall vitality and viability of the town centre. The unit appears to have been vacant for while. Furthermore, the proposed use, which is primarily a café open to the community and in a location which is well placed to provide the proposed benefits to the community by the charity, would compliment the town centre, particularly as there are other cafes in the area which help to add to the vitality of the town centre.

I do not consider the community café and other associated uses such as the kitchen, small craft room and computer area (which is part of the café) would have an impact on the surrounding environment in general or on residential amenity, especially considering the site location between two pubs and the impact these have on the character and amenities of this part of the High Street. There does not appear to be separate apartments above the unit or adjacent hairdressers unit. I therefore do not consider an opening hours restriction or details of kitchen extraction system condition reasonable or necessary.

There are no highways or parking concerns with the proposal due to the sustainable and central location of the site in the town centre and which is also close to a number of public car parks.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal would not harm the vitality and viability of the town centre and would not harm the character or amenities of the area or highway safety.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION :

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 14.9.16

X

Signed by: Jane Colley

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council