Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING STATEMENT

THE TRAVELLERS REST
CHEADLE ROAD, LEEKBROOK

APRIL 2018

Site Address:
The Travellers Rest, Cheadle Road, Leekbrook, Staffordshire, ST13 7DR

Applicant:
Broad Oak Properties Ltd.

Proposal:
Change of use from public house to retail (A1)

Planning Statement:
Date Issued: 30th April 2018
Job Reference: RDP/2018/039

Report Prepared By:
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1. Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Broad Oak Properties Ltd. to submit a full planning application for the change of use of the Travellers Rest, Cheadle Road, Leekbrook from its current lawful use as a public house to a retail use (A1).

1.2 The existing public house encompasses a total ground floor area of 268 square metres, of which approximately 174 square metres is used as a bar / restaurant, with the remainder utilised for kitchens, toilets etc. At first floor there is self-contained managers accommodation. The application proposes to retain the current external appearance of the building and thus relates to a change of use of the building only. It is proposed that the use be changed to convenience retail (A1), encompassing a retail floor area of 174 square metres, the remainder being utilised for storage and staff facilities. The first floor residential accommodation will be retained unaltered.

1.3 The existing vehicular access at the southwesterly end of the site will be utilised to serve the retail unit, and will be widened to enable two vehicles to pass one another. Some seventeen parking spaces will also be provided, along with turning and manouvering space for delivery vehicles.

2. Site & Surroundings

2.1 The application site comprises an existing two storey public house of brick and tile construction, that is located on the southern side of the Cheadle Road. The public house is set back behind a frontage car park and beer garden, and benefits from two vehicular access points in the northeast and southwesterly corners of the site. Hardstanding encloses the public house on all sides, with a large beer garden located to the southeast.

2.2 The site is bordered to the northeast by built development, including agricultural and residential buildings, with further residential development located to the southeast, and to the north beyond the Cheadle Road. Agricultural land extends to the southwest beyond an existing private track which encloses the southwestern boundary of the site. The site as a whole lies within the defined settlement boundary of Leekbrook, and benefits from close proximity to regular public transport services connecting with Leek and Hanley.

3. Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The Development Plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD (2014) of which the following policies are considered to be relevant:

3.2 Policy SS1a of the Core Strategy states that when considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. It will always work pro-actively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Core Strategy will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:

- *Any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole;*

- *or specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

3.3 Policy SS1 of the Core Strategy relates to Development Principles and states that the Council will expect development to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, amongst others, easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community; development which maintains the distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings, and development that secures high quality, sustainable environments.

3.4 Policy SS6b of the Core Strategy states that the smaller villages will provide for appropriate development which enhances community vitality or meets a local social or economic need of the settlement and its hinterland. Community vitality will be enhanced by protecting and enabling services and facilities which are essential to sustain rural living.

3.5 Policy C1 of the Core Strategy states that in order to create sustainable communities at a local level, the District Council will, amongst others:

- *Support proposals which protect, retain or enhance existing community facilities or provide new facilities. New facilities should preferably be located within defined built-up areas where they are most accessible;*

- *Resist proposals involving the loss of community facilities unless:*

  - *an alternative facility of the same type is available or can be provided in an accessible location in the same locality; or*

  - *a viability appraisal including a marketing exercise by a qualified professional demonstrates that there are no options for continued use Staffordshire Moorlands as a community facility which are financially viable and it can be demonstrated that loss of the facility would not disadvantage local residents.*

3.6 Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development should be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design SPD. It goes on to state that new development should (amongst others):

- *be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;*

- *be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance;*

- *protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping;*

- *provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use; ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available.*

3.7 Policy TCR2 of the Core Strategy states that major retail proposals (of 500m^2 or more) will not be permitted outside town centres in order to protect the vitality and viability of the town centres, unless the proposal can be demonstrated to be acceptable under national policy. Within the towns, but outside town centres, and in the larger villages identified in Policy SS6a, new or extended convenience retail units of up to 500m^2 gross floor space to serve everyday local shopping needs and improve access to retail facilities at a local level will be promoted and supported, provided that they complement but do not adversely impact upon the vitality and viability of the three town centres and are in sustainable locations.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and places a strong emphasis on promoting economic development, ensuring the vitality of town centres and encouraging sustainable modes of transport (amongst others). The content of the NPPF is discussed in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

Emerging Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

4.2 The Submission Version of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Pan (2016-2031) is due for submission for independent examination very soon, and whilst it cannot yet be afforded significant weight, its content points to the

current thinking of the Local Authority. The content of the emerging Plan is referred to in more detail within the Planning Assessment below.

5 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

5.1 The application proposes the change of use of the existing ground floor of the public house to convenience retail use. Policy C1 of the Core Strategy states that the District Council will resist proposals involving the loss of community facilities unless an alternative facility of the same type is available in the same locality, or a viability appraisal including marketing exercise is undertaken to show that there are no options for its continued use.

5.2 These provisions are reflected within policy C1 of the emerging Submission Version of the Local Plan (2016-2031) which also states that in the case of proposals to change use from one type of community facility to another, the Council will consider the respective benefits of both the existing and proposed uses in terms of their contribution to the community's ability to meet its day to day needs. The emerging policy represents the most up-to-date thinking of the Local Authority and as such can be afforded some weight in the determination of this application.

5.3 The public house has been closed since September 2017 and prior to that had experienced difficulties in terms of continuity of trading. There are no other public houses within the small settlement of Leekbrook, but there are other public houses located within a short distance of the site, most notably The Red Lion and The Black Lion in Cheddleton. Both of these pubs are located within comfortable walking distance of the site (approximately 1.6km), well within the 2km distance which Manual for Streets recognises as being appropriate for walking. The route furthermore benefits from pedestrian

footways and street lighting along its length, thus making it a safe option for pedestrians. Attention is also drawn to the regular bus service that operates along the Cheadle Road, which has stops close to the site and close to the aforementioned pubs. I would therefore submit that alternative facilities of the same type are available within the locality, and as such the loss of the public house would not be unduly disadvantageous to local residents.

5.4 The loss of the public house also has to be weighed against the benefits of bringing the building back into beneficial reuse as a shop (Policy C1 of the emerging Local Plan refers). The proposed retail use will provide local residents with easy access to everyday convenience goods which are currently only available by travelling into Leek (it is acknowledged that some limited provision is available at the nearby Leekbrook Newsagents / Off Licence, but this is not extensive).

5.5 The proposed retail unit is small-scale in nature, but will nevertheless serve everyday local shopping needs and improve access to retail facilities at a local level. It will also generate additional local employment in the order of 5 – 8 jobs. It is also noted that the proposed extent of retail floorspace, at 174 square metres, is substantially less than the retail floorspace that the Council has previously approved on the car park at Stanic Motor Company under application SMD/2011/0683 (256 square metres). That permission has since lapsed but was determined under the same Development Plan. The proposal is accordingly considered to accord with the provisions of policy TCR2 of the Core Strategy in this regard.

5.6 Paragraph 19 of the NPPF confirms that:

> *"The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic*

> *growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system".*

5.7 These provisions are reflected within paragraph 28 of the NPPF which states that to promote a strong rural economy, plans should:

> *"support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings";*

And:

> *"promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship".*

5.8 The submitted proposal is considered to constitute a sustainable form of economic development that will benefit the local community and the local economy by providing easier access to convenience shopping facilities. The loss of the existing public house is regrettable but is very much a reflection of the ongoing decline of public houses we see throughout the country. I submit that its loss to the community will be offset by the benefits of providing a new community facility in its place. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policies C1 and TCR2 of the Core Strategy, policy C1 of the emerging Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Submission Version), and the relevant provisions of the NPPF.

Highway Safety / Parking

5.9 The site benefits from an existing vehicular access point from the Cheadle Road at its northwestern-most end. This access is to be widened such that two vehicles will be able to pass one another on entrance/egress. The access leads into the existing parking area in front of the public house, which is capable of accommodating approximately 10 vehicles. A further seven spaces are to be created to the side and rear of the building, along with the creation of a further seven spaces to the side and rear of the building.

5.10 Having regard to the sustainable location of the site, its close proximity to regular public transport connections, and the proximity of the building to the residential area it is intended to serve, it is submitted that the proposed level of parking provision is appropriate for the proposed use. Such considerations lead to me to conclude that the proposal will not derive any severe residual impacts to highway safety, that being the test to be applied under paragraph 32 of the NPPF.

Design/Layout

5.11 The application does not propose any changes to the existing external appearance of the building, with only minor works to its rear to create the new parking area. These works will not derive any material adverse harm to the character and appearance of the area, and as such the proposal accords with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy in this regard.

Residential Amenity

5.12 The nearest residential properties to the site are located to the east of the site (approximately 42m away), and to the north on Bluebell Close, which lies on the opposite side of the Cheadle Road (approximately 52m away). Further residential development is located to the south of the site (approximately 64m away). It is considered that the comings and goings associated with the

proposed retail use will not derive any material adverse harm to the amenity currently enjoyed by local residents, having regard to the location of the proposed parking and manouvering areas, which are located away from neighbouring occupiers. Any impacts furthermore have to be considered against the lawful fall-back position of the public house in operation. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy in this regard.

6 Conclusion

6.1 It is considered that the proposed development represents an appropriate form of sustainable development having regard to the following conclusions:

- *The loss of the existing public house will not significantly disadvantage local residents, as there are similar existing facilities available within easy walking distance (and connected by a regular bus service);*

- *The loss of the existing public house will also be off-set by the benefits to the local community and the local economy by providing and improving access to retail facilities at a local level, and by generating further employment;*

- *The proposed area of retail floorspace is considerably smaller than that which the Local Authority have previously found to be acceptable under application SMD/2011/0683 nearby;*

- *The proposed level of parking provision is considered appropriate for the extent of retail floor area proposed, and provision of adequate*

manovuering space and widening of the site access is to be undertaken in order to avoid any adverse impacts to highway safety;

- *The proposal will not derive any material harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area;*

- *The proposal will not derive any adverse impacts to neighbouring residential amenity;*

6.2 The proposed development is therefore consistent with the provisions of policies SS1, SS6b, C1, DC1 and TCR2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy, policy C1 of the emerging Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (Submission Version), and the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

6.3 The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to grant full planning permission for the proposed development.