

Planning Statement

Proposed reconfiguration of existing land to the front of 156 – 168 Mill Street, Leek, in conjunction with a new vehicular access from Mill Street and an egress to Hamil Drive, to facilitate off-road parking spaces with associated access, landscaping and servicing.

Land to the front of 156 – 168 Mill Street, Leek ST13 8ET

November 2021
Ref: 2194
Rev: A

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Registered in England and Wales.

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I. INTRODUCTION

- I.1 Planning permission is sought for the redevelopment of land in front of 156 – 168 Mill Street, Leek. The description of development is as follows: *Proposed reconfiguration of existing land to the front of 156 – 168 Mill Street, Leek, in conjunction with a new vehicular access from Mill Street and an egress to Hamil Drive, to facilitate off-road parking spaces with associated access, landscaping and servicing.*
- I.2 Plande has been appointed to submit a supporting statement for the development. This statement, which should be read in conjunction with the supporting information submitted with the application, aims to give an appraisal of the planning issues and merits in context with planning and other policies, guidance and material considerations.
- I.3 This statement has been prepared for the exclusive use of the applicant as part of their planning application and in accordance with the agreed scope of the project. The document may not be reproduced in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of Plande. The copyright in this document (including its electronic form) shall remain vested in Plande. Plande will not be liable for the contents or use of this document by any person for any purpose.

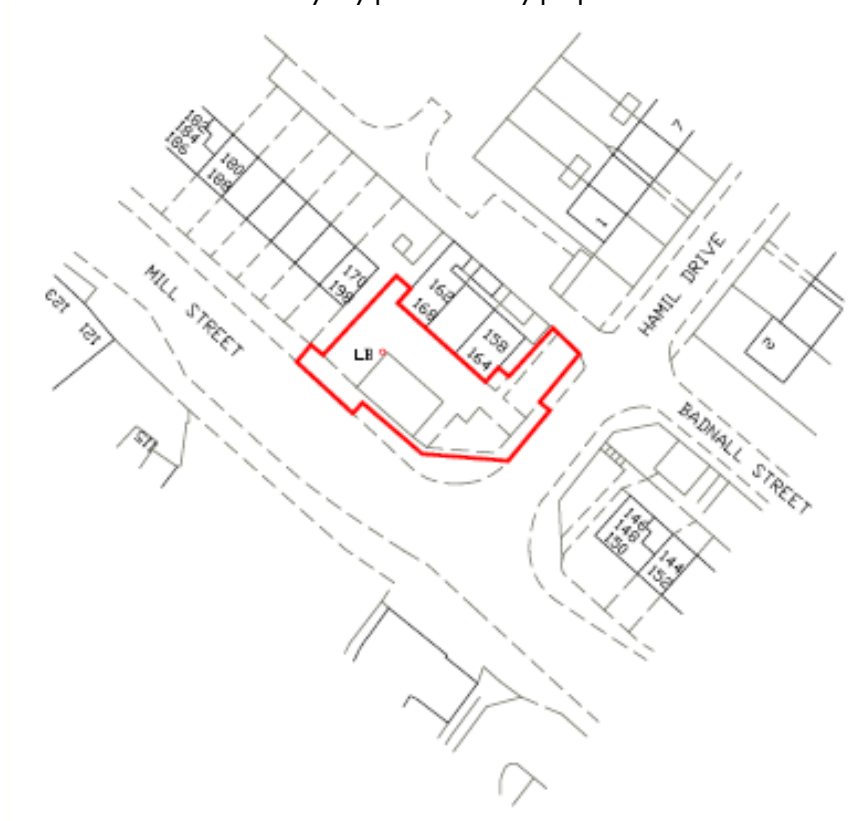


Figure I: Location Plan

- I.4 This planning statement seeks to provide an overall summary of the existing site and surroundings; the relevant planning history of the site, and to provide justification for the proposed change of use, in the context of the local surroundings, in order to support Staffordshire Moorlands District Council in the determination of this proposal and demonstrate that the proposed works comply with the policies of relevance within the Development Plan. The report is structured in the following format:
- Section 2: Site & Surroundings
 - Section 3: Planning History
 - Section 4: The Proposal
 - Section 5: Planning Policy Framework
 - Section 6: Scheme Assessment
 - Section 7: Conclusion

2. SITE & SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The application site comprises of areas of hardstanding, planting and grass to the front of a small parade of shops with two storeys of residential properties above. The site is located on the corner of Mill Street and Hamil Drive within the development boundary of leek, and in a mixed residential and commercial area.
- 2.2 To the northwest of the site is a three-storey block of flats. The site and surrounding properties are owned and managed by Your Housing Limited.



Figure 2: Existing Site Photograph (prior to installation of self-service laundrette machine)



Figure 3: Internal space

- 2.3 Vehicular access to the site is proposed from Mill Street with egress onto Hamil Drive. There is no material change proposed to pedestrian access to the units.
- 2.4 The application site is not within a flood risk or any local plan designated area.

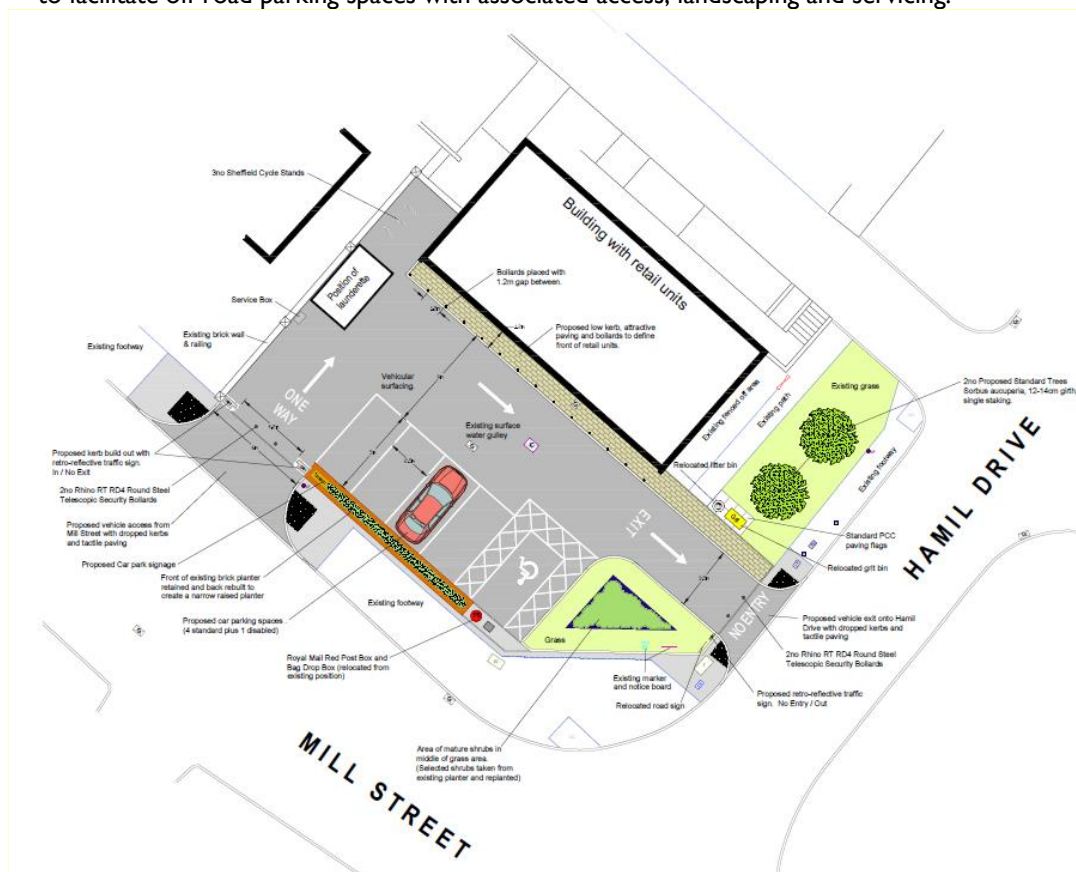
3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 A planning history search illustrates the following applications for the site:

Application number	Site location	Proposal	Decision	Decision date
SMD/2021/0197	162 Mill Street Post Office, Mill Street, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13 8ET	Installation of a modular self-service launderette facility and associated works (retrospective)	Planning Permission - Approved	14/06/2021
SMD/2013/0054	Mill Street Post Office, Mill Street Post Office, 162 Mill Street, Staffordshire, Leek, ST13 8ET	change of use from shop to office (A2)	Planning Permission - Approved (Prior Oct 2013)	15/04/2013
SMD/2001/0887	158 Mill Street, 158 Mill Street, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13 8ET	Change of use to sandwich shop/hot food takeaway	Planning Permission - Refused (Prior Oct 2013)	27/02/20

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 The application is seeking permission the reconfiguration of existing land to the front of 156 – 168 Mill Street, Leek, in conjunction with a new vehicular access from Mill Street and an egress to Hamil Drive, to facilitate off-road parking spaces with associated access, landscaping and servicing.



PROPOSED OPERATION AND USE

- 4.2 Your Housing Group (YHG) currently have three commercial units' underneath maisonettes at 156-168 Mill Street. YHG also have blocks of flats next to the Mill Street complex.
- 4.3 Whilst looking into ways of enhancing their community assets and after consulting with their customers, who reside and operate the commercial units, a problem of no parking attached to the complex was identified. Currently customers visiting the site park anywhere within the immediate vicinity which causes upset and concern for the residing tenants.
- 4.4 It is understood that the Local YHG Residents at the YHG Mill Street Flats have their own private designated communal car parking spaces at the rear of their flats. Customers' using the three Mill Street Shops (Mill Street News, Jackson's Barbers and Mill Street Kitchen) park in their car park which subsequently means YHG residents are not able to park in their own car park. In response, YHG has refurbished the car park surface and erected signs stating that the car park is for YHG Residents Only. This has helped but has not still helped us to reach the tipping point in terms of solving the problem.
- 4.5 Additionally, it is suggested that non-YHG residents who live on Hamil Drive are also suffering from customers for the shops parking on both sides of Hamil Drive near to the Junction with Mill Street in close proximity to the Mill Street Shops.
- 4.6 An alternative to the current proposals could involve incorporating physical barriers preventing unauthorised parking however this is likely to inconvenience the residents further as well as exacerbating the problem and pushing the parking onto other roads, further inconveniencing and proving a disamenity to those residents.
- 4.7 After researching into the demand of realigning the front of the shopping area it became an option that this area could be changed to create off road parking which helps to solve above issues and supports the commercial units in being viable businesses with the offer for the passing trade to safely pull off the road to access the amenities. The improvements to the site provide a wider benefit to the area as well as the immediate residents and YHG tenants.
- 4.8 As described above, the proposals seek to retain and enhance the character of the existing site whilst creating a high quality and complementary development reflecting the relevant standards.
- 4.9 It is suggested that the use of the site will be in keeping with and complementary to the vitality and mix within the area and will not have a negative impact on the amenity of the surrounding properties, the vitality, character, viability of the area as a whole.
- 4.10 It is suggested that the density, scale and amount of accommodation are appropriate for the site, the wider area and that the neighbourhood services can support the proposed uses.

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS & MOVEMENT

- 4.11 The existing site provides level and step-free access to all the building entrances from both Mill Street and Hamil Drive. Inclusive access would be retained throughout the site with no material amendments made to pedestrian access.

VEHICLE PARKING

- 4.12 The site and existing commercial unit currently do no benefit off street parking. The proposals would create vehicular access to the site, from an entrance only point on Mill Street and an exit only point to Hamil Drive.
- 4.13 The proposals effectively open up the existing pedestrian access to vehicles and include drop kerbs to facilitate the access. The proposals provide 5 parking spaces including a dedicated disabled parking space

- 4.14 The LPA parking standards would suggest the existing shops (previously A1 use) would have a parking requirement of 1 space per 20 m² of gross floor area.
- 4.15 The Valuation Office Agency Business Rates database suggests the following floor areas:
 158 Mill Street – 47.4 m²
 160 Mill Street – 54.4 m²
 162 Mill Street – 57.6 m²
- 4.16 This would suggest the parking requirement to be 8 parking spaces when combining the total gross area. While it is appreciated that the existing units have been operating without road safety problems for a long time, this helps to illustrate the scale of the problem which it is suggested by the current use of the private tenants parking, which as stated above, if formally restricted would likely cause further issues for on-street parking within the area.

LANDSCAPING

- 4.17 While it is any loss of any soft landscaping is regrettable however soft landscaping is retained within the proposals, particularly with the existing brick planter to the front of the site being retained albeit reduced in depth. This planter will still provide a natural screen and softening of the development and help to retain a similar appearance to existing. The existing grass area to the corner of the site will also be generally retained however additional planting is proposed, utilising existing planting from the existing planter, to improve the visual appearance of this part of the site. Two new trees are proposed to the existing side grass area which will also improve the appearance and amenity value of this section. Overall, it is suggested that the proposals will retain high quality soft landscaping while improving the overall appearance and useability of the site.

NEIGHBOUR CONSULTATION

- 4.18 As part of the pre-application scheme development Your Housing Group liaised with a range of neighbours to seek their view of the development. The following are the results of such consultation, with the names and addresses removed for GDPR purposes.
- 4.19 Resident 1 said the introduction of the launderette and new car park lay out in front of the Mill Street shops is ... "Alright by me."
- 4.20 Resident 2 "I have got no qualms with car parking and launderette going in front of the shops. It will help with people parking on Hamil drive where I live."
- 4.21 Resident 3 said that the installation of car parking in front of Mill Street shops ... was "fine by me."
- 4.22 Resident 4 the installation of the car parking in front of Mill Street shops ... "Sounds brilliant to me "
- 4.23 Resident 5 said that the installation of the car parking in front of Mill Street shops ... was "a great idea and will really help the local shops thrive which will be better for the local community. The new landlord of the newsagents has a great selection of crisps."
- 4.24 Resident 6 said that the installation of the car parking in front of Mill Street shops ... "will be ideal. A fantastic idea. It has been needed for a long time. The corner shop has a new owner who is really good. People having somewhere to park is needed to release pressure on Hamil Drive."
- 4.25 As part of the recent application for the self-service laundrette machine, no public consultations responses were received. In addition, no objections were raised by the statutory consultees, including Leek Town Council or Environmental Health. While it is appreciated these are different proposals the two developments are inherently linked and have similar issues including but not limited to the principle of development and residential amenity.

PRE-PLANNING APPLICATION ADVICE

- 4.26 As part of the scheme development Your Housing Group sought pre-planning advice from the LPA, which includes responses from the Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor, Environmental Health Officer and Highways.
- 4.27 The Policy Crime Prevention Design Advisor acknowledged "... the benefits to businesses and potential reduction in conflict that could derive" and stated, "*in terms of crime prevention/opportunities for crime and ASB, I see no particular reason why general issues should arise.*" The officer raised queries regarding the gap between the bollards along the frontage of the commercial units which have been addressed in the final submission version of the drawings. The gap between the proposed bollards was reduced to improve protection of pedestrians walking along the path as well as preventing accidental or intentional damage to the shops and are designed to prevent the opportunities for vehicles to attack the existing commercial units.
- 4.28 The Environmental Health Officer acknowledged that the "... *noise levels during the day are high*" but raised concerns regarding the use of the car park at night-time when the noise levels were likely to be lower. As recommended by the Officer, a noise assessment accompanies the application which addresses these issues. In addition, bollards are proposed to the vehicular access points to prevent access outside of the operating hours of the commercial units. The Environmental Health Officer also comments that there were no issues "... with the appearance of the works and note that some soft landscaping will be maintained".
- 4.29 The Highways Officer considered the original proposals and confirmed that "visibility at the Mill Street access is good in both directions assisted by the wide footway. Visibility at the Hamil Drive access is good to the northeast and is available as far as the junction with Mill Street to the southwest. There is on street parking on Hamil Drive." In addition, it was confirmed that "*there are no recorded personal injury accidents at the junction of Mill Street/Hamil Drive in the last 5 years*". The officer suggested the access from Mill Street "*would be appropriate*" but suggested a one way only at Hamil Drive due to the junction with Mill Street, to reduce the need for "*all vehicles to exit onto the much busier A523 Mill Street*". The submitted drawings have considered these comments and present a one-way system accordingly with parking bays dimensioned appropriately and providing adequate manoeuvrability.

5. PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

DEVELOPMENT PLAN

- 5.1 In accordance with S.38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, this application should be determined in accordance with the relevant Development Plan policies unless material considerations indicate otherwise. For the purposes of this determination, the Development Plan of relevance comprises:
- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

STAFFORDSHIRE MOORLANDS PLAN (2020)

- 5.2 The Local Plan was formally adopted in September 2020 and sets out a vision and framework for development within the district. It is the starting point for considering whether planning applications can be approved and sits alongside the London Plan. The Local Plan forms the Development Plan against which individual proposals are assessed.
- 5.3 The relevant Local Policies are suggested as:
- SSI Development Principles
 - Ia Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
 - SS5 Leek Area Strategy
 - DCI Design Considerations
 - T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

- 5.4 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in 2012 and revised in July 2021. The aim of the NPPF is to ensure there is a presumption in favour of sustainable development and that positive planning solutions are found to ensure development is brought forward. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions as outlined in Paragraph 2 of the NPPF and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 5.5 At Paragraph 7, the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 7 further states that, at a very high level, the objective of sustainable development can be summarised as meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 5.6 At Paragraph 11, the NPPF sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which requires decision takes to approve applications that accord with the Development Plan without delay.
- 5.7 Sustainable development is broadly defined in Paragraph 8 of the NPPF as having three overarching objectives:
- a) An economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure.
 - b) A social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
 - c) An environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

- 5.8 The NPPF sets out Government planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and that a presumption in favour of sustainable development is at the heart of the NPPF. For decision-taking this means:
- Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
 - Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, grant planning permission unless:
 - Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the policies in the framework as a whole; or
 - Specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted.
- 5.9 Paragraph 20 outlines that strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development and make sufficient provision for community facilities, such as health, education and cultural infrastructure.
- 5.10 Paragraph 38 states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and should work proactively with applicants to secure development that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area.
- 5.11 Paragraph 47 states that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.12 Paragraph 54 states that local planning authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions.
- 5.13 Paragraph 80 states that local planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity.
- 5.14 Paragraph 122 states that local planning authorities should take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs.
- 5.15 Paragraph 130 requires planning policies and decisions will function well, add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, sympathetic to local character, establishing or maintaining a strong sense of place, optimise the potential of sites as well as creating places that are safe, inclusive and accessible.

6. SCHEME ASSESSMENT

- 6.1 The following section will consider the compliance of the proposal with the Development Plan policies and material considerations for the proposed reconfiguration of existing in conjunction with a new vehicular access and egress to facilitate off-road parking spaces with associated access, landscaping and servicing and a more detailed, policy-orientated assessment of planning considerations.

PRINCIPLE OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 6.2 The site is located within the development boundary of Leek, which is identified as a “town” in Local Plan Policies SS2 and SS5. Policy SS5 seeks to support “*improvements to the range and diversity of educational, health, cultural and community services and facilities in the town*” and “*the retention and growth of existing businesses within the town*”. The policy also specifically seeks to “manage car parking to support the role of Leek ... without leading to congestion”.
- 6.3 The development seeks to improve and protect the existing facilities for the businesses, customers, and residents of the area which will increase economic prosperity and provide easy access to shops by all sections of the community.
- 6.4 The principle of development can therefore be considered acceptable in this location.

DESIGN

- 6.5 The development seeks a high-quality reconfiguration of the site, retaining and improving the hard and soft landscaping adding value to the area whilst respecting the site and its surroundings. It is suggested that the proposals promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, detailing, materials, landscaping, character and appearance in accordance with Policy DCI and the NPPF generally and specifically Section 12 relating to achieving well-designed places.
- 6.6 The proposals seek to create an attractive, functions, accessible and safe environment, providing safe and satisfactory access as well as contributing to meeting the parking requirement arising from existing car use. The proposals further reflect the aspirations of Policy DCI which requires new development to be well integrated for car and pedestrian use.
- 6.7 The nature of the proposals, effectively generally at ground level, will be well screened by the existing commercial buildings and adjoining flats as well as the soft landscape screening along Mill Street. It is therefore suggested that the views of the development and the impact on the street scene, particularly the perceived change from the current configuration are limited and would not materially detract from the character or appearance of the surrounding area.

NEIGHBOURING AMENITY

- 6.8 Accompanying the planning application is a noise assessment, produced by Hepworth Acoustics Ltd to assess the potential noise impact of the proposed development on the nearest dwellings, including the adjoining flats and the upper floor residential units above the commercial units.
- 6.9 The assessment incorporated noise surveys of the existing scenario with calculations of the likely noise levels associated with the development. The assessment concludes that the *“The predicted noise levels from use of the car park extension are low in absolute terms and within the prevailing noise climate and character of the area. There will be no perceptible increase in noise. On this basis, it is concluded that use of the proposed car park extension would not result in an adverse noise impact on the amenity of people living nearby.”*
- 6.10 The adjoining block of flats to do not have habitable room windows overlooking the site. It is suggested that the occupants, both of these flats and the residential properties above the existing commercial units, would, by the very nature of the existing uses and proximity to the main road, be accustomed to comings and goings and the general levels of activity in and around the site, including from the commercial units and self-service laundrette machine. It is suggested that the proposed development would not increase the number of visitors to the site.
- 6.11 The nature of the existing development and limited nature of the proposed works means that there are no material differences in relation to overbearing, overshadowing, overlooking or visual intrusion. It is suggested that the proposed development will not inherently create any noise or odour that would be detrimental to the occupiers of the residential properties.
- 6.12 It is suggested that the development will not materially affect amenity by virtue of daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy or noise and will comply with Policy DCI of the local plan and the NPPF.

CRIME AND SECURITY

- 6.13 The pre-application discussions confirmed that the development would not result in any significant crime or anti-social behaviour problems and additional provision have been incorporated to further mitigate any perceived risk.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed redevelopment of the land to provide parking spaces is in direct response to an identified need and to address an identified issue. The proposals will provide an economic benefit to the commercial units as well as a community benefit in providing improved and sustainable services. The proposals are located in a sustainable location, and it is suggested, that due to the nature of the existing use, will not materially increase traffic.
- 7.2 Overall, the proposed development would be highly beneficial to existing tenants, business and community as a whole as well Staffordshire Moorlands District Council and surrounding neighbourhoods and is in accordance with national, regional and local policies that encourage and promote a range of uses and good economic growth. The proposed development is consistent with the high-level objectives of current policy and is in accordance with the Government's overarching objectives for sustainable growth.
- 7.3 It is suggested that the benefits of the proposals outweigh any impacts of the scheme, including but not limited to, the impact on residential amenity, the loss of soft landscaping or impact on the street scheme,
- 7.4 In conclusion, the proposal is compliant with the relevant policies in the development plan and requirements of the NPPF, providing a sustainable, deliverable and high-quality flexible and development, within an acceptable sustainable location, which would contribute to the continued viability of the area and region as a whole. The proposal supports the presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 7.5 It is therefore respectfully requested that the application is approved. In the event that Staffordshire Moorlands District Council does not agree with this view, the applicant would seek to engage with the authority to secure a solution, in line with the NPPF.