DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2021/0580 **Valid 09/09/2021**	**7A HIGH STREET** **CHEADLE**	**CONVERSION OF THE UPPER FLOOR INTO A RESIDENTIAL APARTMENT WITH ASSOCIATED ALTERATIONS TO THE INTERNAL LAYOUT AND FRONT ELEVATION** **(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

- Street scene design
- Heritage – Cheadle Conservation Area
- Amenity

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

Two storey end unit in a c.1960s shopping parade fronting Cheadle High Street within the Conservation Area. The building is flat roofed. In common with the whole parade the ground floor is set back but the first floor projects out by c.2.5m as a cantilever forming in effect an open 'arcade'. The ground floor presents a glazed shop front to the street scene with a central door. In common with the adjacent units the shop front has a later applied 'heritage' styling in parts. The projecting first floor appears original and is in brick with a narrow horizontal glazed strip in four units just below a parapet with barge board edge. This first floor façade appears to repeat a similar design adopted for several units at the other end of the parade. In an intervening section running up to no.7 the first floor lacks any openings and is uniformly finished in small hexagonal tiles.

On its other side the unit is built up to abut an adjacent traditional style two storey building, part of a terrace of likely 19thC or earlier origin.

The premises are said currently to serve as an Insurance / mortgage broker's.

PROPOSAL

The ground floor is chiefly to be retained as a commercial office / retail unit but will be slightly reduced in width at the front to accommodate a partitioned off corridor hall way leading to existing stairs to the first floor. The partitioned corridor is to be served by a new second entrance door and the shop front would be adjusted accordingly but the façade as a whole is shown repeating the same applied 'heritage' stylings as currently.

The first floor frontage would become largely glazed to equivalent length as the existing glazed section but deeper to c.1.75m in height.

A Heritage Assessment accompanies the application.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)
SS1 Development Principles
SS7 Cheadle Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
DC2 The Historic Environment
H1 New Housing Development
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

National Planning Policy Framework February 2019
Paragraph(s) 1 – 14;
Section(s) 4 – Decision making; 6 – Building a strong and competitive economy; 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres; 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities; 11 – Making effective use of land; 12 – Achieving well designed places; 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment; 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):
- Space About Dwellings SPG
- Design Principles SPG
- Design Guide SPD adopted 21st February 2018

Local Plan Supporting Evidence Documents:
- Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS
Most recent appears to be 99/00958/FUL – shop front and replacement first floor window – approved

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity
Site Notice expiry date: 9th Dec 2021
Neighbour consultation period ends: 4th Oct 2021
Press Advert: 13th Oct 2021

Public Comments
None

Town / Parish Comments
Cheadle Town Council – no objections

SMDC waste collection service

No issues regarding waste collections. Suggests a 140 ltr brown organic wheeled bin might be better than a large caddy bin as on plans.

Staffordshire County Council Highways
No objection. Currently the property consists of a commercial unit to the ground floor and upper floor. The ground floor is to remain as a commercial unit although some internal alterations are proposed, the conversion of the upper floor will provide a 1-bedroom residential apartment with no off-highway parking. It is considered due its location within the town centre and access to public transport that residents are likely take up sustainable modes of travel. However, if off highway parking is required several public car parks are within walking distance of the property.

Parking to the rear of the development is disorganised. However, I note that no parking is proposed within the application. This response takes account of the sustainable town centre location and availability of public car parking.

SMDC Conservation Officer
None available

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development
In principle a residential use of premises within the town is accepted as appropriate chiefly on account of a town being a sustainable living location. Where a change of use is involved from a non-residential previous use, consideration needs to be given to the loss of the previous building function. Consideration is also needed as to the suitability of the premises for residential use, in particular in terms of area of living space, amenities and highways.

Although in this case not eligible due to the external alterations, it is also to be noted that various classes under Part 3 of the GPDO make change of use to dwelling house a permitted change. For example Classes MA and O provide for change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use falling within Class E (offices in respect of Class O) to Class C3 (dwelling houses). However there are various criteria which have to be met and in addition, in a Conservation Area, if there are changes to the ground floor, the proposal would need to be submitted for a determination as to whether prior approval would be required. This application has not been put forward on this basis however and to what extent the development might meet the criteria for change of use (of part of the building) to a dwelling under Part 3 is not set out.

This proposal retains the scope for a commercial office / retail use at ground floor albeit on a reduced floor area whilst providing habitable accommodation above.

Although these premises are reported as being in use, it is to be noted in general that a significant proportion of ground floor premises on the commercial high street are vacant with further vacant floors above. In these circumstances, an active use, whether residential or commercial is likely to be appropriate and indeed welcome in the interests of the town.

Design
In outward appearance the ground floor is kept consistent with the current style and that of its neighbouring units in the parade. The glazing proposed at first floor is appropriate in stye to the 1960s building and is an improvement on the rather stark high level horizontal window currently existing. On these two design counts the application can be supported. It would be important for the external frame finish to be in white. The use of upvc in this 20thC building despite its Conservation Area location is acceptable. Materials for the ground floor shop front are to match existing.

Amenity
NDSS prescribes minimum floor space for dwellings and for a one bedroom / two person single storey unit the requirement would be 50m2. In this case the gross internal floor area at first floor (excluding the stair well) would be 48m2 which very nearly meets the standard. In a two storey dwelling the requirement is 58m2 and paragraph 3 of the NDSS explains that the additional allowance is to provide the necessary circulation space for stairs. If the ground floor hall is factored in, a further 8m2 can be included meaning that the proposal would meet the NDSS in floor area terms.

NDSS also prescribes minimum bedroom dimensions and ceiling heights both of which are found to be met with possible very slight compromise on the bedroom but which is not of such a scale to reject the scheme or require amendment.

There is no private outdoor space but for a one bedroom unit this is a commonly accepted compromise. The town park is c.700m walking distance away and there are other attractive recreational routes nearby.

There are no prescribed requirements for light in the assessment of this application (unlike with certain PD classes) and it may be considered that the rear areas set out as kitchen would be compromised as the length of the flat is 10m. The front windows however are reasonably large and on balance the arrangement is judged acceptable.

Is appears that opposite the site are a number of flats above the existing ground floor commercial premises. These flats are positioned just 10m from the location of the full height windows. Whilst this is significantly below the privacy standards of the Council as set out in Space about Dwellings SPD, it is not uncommon in a town centre location for flats above shops/commercial premises to be positioned in close proximity to one another, resulting in mutual overlooking. It is noted that there may be a realistic fall back position in respect of Class MA, which would not assess the impact on existing residential amenity, only the amenity of future occupiers. It is also noted that the flats opposite have been notified of this application, with no neighbouring comments received. As such taking into account all of these factors it is considered that despite the substandard relationship to the flats opposite the development is considered to be acceptable.

Highway Safety

Although no parking space is available, again, for a town centre location this is a commonly accepted compromise as shops and services including bus routes are close by.

Heritage
As regards the Cheadle Conservation Area designation, Section 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act) 1990 places a statutory duty on the LPA in assessing this application (as with any in a Conservation Area) to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. In reaching its decision the LPA has to demonstrate that the Section 72 Duty has been applied and discharged. Section 72 (and Footnote 6 of para.11 of the NPPF) creates a strong presumption in favour of the preservation of Conservation Areas and their setting.

The 1960's shopping parade known as Penny Lane is likely to be regarded by many as an unfortunate architectural component of the High Street in the Cheadle Conservation Area. In consideration of the design changes introduced by this proposal it can reasonably be concluded that the altered and increased first floor glazing would comprise a modest improvement. Accordingly the proposed development would sustain the character and appearance of the heritage asset.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE
The proposal is acceptable in design including in relation to heritage and meets relevant minimum amenity standards.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : Approve

Case Officer: Arne Swithenbank
Recommendation Date: 9th Dec 2021

X

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature
On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council