

Planning statement for the erection of two units (Class E/Sui Generis) and associated works.

Land at Broad Street, Leek.

On behalf of Gastronomy Properties Ltd.

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full planning application to erect a building with two units (Class E/Sui Generis) comprising of a coffee shop/bakery and restaurant at Land at Broad Street, Leek.
- 1.2. The application site consists of a vacant, previously developed site in close proximity to Leek Town Centre (as defined by the Local Plan) but within the town centre masterplan area (as shown in the Leek Town Centre Masterplan SPD). The site is located on a main route, Broad Street (the A53), which connects Leek with Stoke-on-Trent and Newcastle-under-Lyme to the south-west. The site is currently secured by large hoardings.
- 1.3. The site is located in a mixed area which includes some residential uses alongside various commercial uses, such as the adjacent Toolstation store and a signage shop, antiques shop, and newsagent between the site and St Edward Street. Further west down Broad Street (beyond Toolstation), uses include a fish and chip shop and a car garage/showroom alongside residential uses.
- 1.4. The site is identified in the Leek Town Centre Masterplan as the 'Former Broad Street Garage Site' which indicates its previous use. It has also previously been granted planning consent (reference SMD/2010/0628) for mixed use development including A1, A2 and A5 (former Use Class Order).
- 1.5. The documents and plans submitted with this application are as follows:
 - Planning Statement
 - Sequential Assessment
 - Retail Statement
 - Transport Statement
 - Site Location Plan (drawing no. 0000/2022/G001)
 - Site Block Plan (drawing no. 0000/2022/G001)
 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan (drawing no. 0000/2022/G100)

- Ground Floor Plan (drawing no. PLO10)
- Existing Site Plan (drawing no. 0000/2022/G120)
- Proposed Site Plan (drawing no. 0000/2022/G121)
- Proposed Roof Plan (drawing no. 0000/2022/G100)
- Proposed External Elevations (drawing no. 0000/2022/G211).

1.6. This Planning Statement will assess all the relevant planning aspects associated with the proposals for the application site. It will be shown that the proposals are in accordance with national and local planning policies and the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Accordingly, it is respectfully requested that planning permission be granted.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1. The proposed development would redevelop a vacant, previously developed site located on the edge of the town centre. The site was previously used for commercial use (as a garage) and has previously had planning consent to be redeveloped for mixed commercial, including A1, A2 and A5 uses (under the former Use Class Order).
- 2.2. The proposed development description is:

"Erection of two units (Class E/Sui Generis) and associated works".
- 2.3. Details of the proposed development can be found on the submitted drawings and documentation. For ease of reference, the main parts of the proposed development are described below.
- 2.4. The proposed building will comprise two units. The larger unit (with a gross internal area of approximately 180 square metres) is proposed to be a hot food takeaway with dine-in facilities. It will also have a window on the front elevation to collect home deliveries. The smaller unit (at 111 square metres) is proposed for Class E use as a coffee shop/bakery.
- 2.5. On the rear elevation, each unit will have an extract duct vertical discharge, air supply grille, A/C condenser(s), and stacked cold-room condensers. In addition, a waste oil storage tank will be situated beneath the air supply grille of the larger (Sui Generis) unit.
- 2.6. The central access point (which is currently blocked by hoarding boards) is proposed to be permanently stopped up, with the existing site access from the southwestern corner of the site widened and modified to become the main entrance. 23 parking spaces are proposed, including two disabled bays. In addition, staff parking spaces are to be provided at the rear of the units, which will be accessed via a private lane which forks leftwards on entering the site.
- 2.7. Landscaping including grass, shrubs, and trees are proposed to be planted along the eastern and southern boundaries of the car park.
- 2.8. The proposed development would create approximately 35 new jobs.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

- 3.1. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.2. The Site falls within the administrative boundary of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council, where the statutory Development Plan consists of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (adopted in September 2020).
- 3.3. **Policy SS 1 (Development Principles)** states that development should positively contribute to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands. The Policy goes on to emphasise the importance of having good quality local services and opportunities for employment, among other things.
- 3.4. **Policy SS 2 (Settlement Hierarchy)** identifies Leek as a 'Town', which is the highest-ranking position in the hierarchy. Towns are defined as large settlements which contain services and facilities. Future growth in the District should be focussed on Towns, which have fixed development boundaries.
- 3.5. **Policy SS 5 (Leek Area Strategy)** sets out the Council's desire to consolidate the role of Leek as the District's primary service centre. It states that new development opportunities should be established in accordance with the town centre masterplan, and sensitive improvements to increase the quality of supporting town centre uses should be supported. The Policy also refers to Leek's special character and heritage, requiring the conservation and enhancement of sites and areas of heritage importance, with distinctive, high quality and sustainable buildings. Moreover, the setting and historic character of the town should be protected and improved.
- 3.6. **Policy TCR 1 (Development in the Town Centres)** state that the vitality and viability of Leek should be protected and enhanced. This can be done through focussing and promoting retailing as well as other town centre uses, supporting proposals which will enhance the town centre environment, and ensuring that development is well-connected to pedestrian shopping routes. Furthermore, there should be suitable parking facilities in and around town centres, and designs should improve and enhance the distinctive heritage of town centres.

- 3.7. **Policy TCR 2 (Primary Shopping Frontages)** emphasises that proposals for changes of use to A1 retail will be supported in primary shopping frontages. Development in other use classes will also be permitted as long as it would not generate an over-concentration of non-shopping uses, change the retail character of the area, or affect the town centre's vitality or viability.
- 3.8. **Policy TCR 3 (Retailing and other Town Centre uses outside Town Centres)** states that town centre uses of 200 square metres or more on sites outside of town centres and not in accordance with an up-to-date development plan will require a Sequential Assessment and/or Impact Assessment. Preference will be given to sites in the town centre, followed by edge of centre sites. Moreover, if a development would have an impact on a defined centre, developer contributions may be requested to mitigate this.
- 3.9. **Policy DC 1 (Design Considerations)** requires development to be well-designed so that it reinforces local distinctiveness and positively contributes to the character of the area. Design should be of a high quality, respect the site and its surroundings, and promote a sense of place. In addition, design concepts for buildings should reduce the impact of development, the amenity of the area must be protected, and the maintenance, enhancement and restoration of biodiversity and geodiversity should be promoted where appropriate. There should be safe and satisfactory access, with a contribution towards meeting the parking requirement arising from the development. New developments should be well-integrated for car, pedestrian and cycle uses, with sustainable transport links.
- 3.10. **Policy DC 2 (Historic Environment)** states that heritage assets and their settings should be conserved and enhanced wherever possible – development should positively contribute to the character of historic environments.
- 3.11. **Policy NE 1 (Biodiversity and Geological Resources)** makes clear that biodiversity and geological resources should also be conserved and enhanced. Where possible, development is expected to deliver a net gain in biodiversity which is proportionate to the size and scale of the development. If adverse impacts cannot be avoided, developers must ensure that impacts are mitigated, with suitable compensation measures towards habitat loss.
- 3.12. **Policy T 1 (Development and Sustainable Transport)** notes that the Council will support development which reduces reliance on the private vehicle and the need to travel. Development should be located where the highway network can accommodate the traffic the scheme will generate, and appropriate parking should be made available. In Appendix 2, for

Class A1, the requirement is 1 space per 20 m² gross floor area up to 1000 m² and 1 space per 14 m² thereafter, whilst for Class A5 2 spaces, plus 1 space per 5 m² are needed. Furthermore, new development should facilitate walking and cycling within town centres. If development will generate a significant demand for travel, a contribution towards public transport provision, junction improvements, traffic management, and highway infrastructure may be required.

- 3.13. **Policy T 2 (Other Transport Measures)** states that the Council will support development proposals which encourage electrical battery powered vehicles.

Material Considerations

Leek Town Centre Masterplan (adopted March 2014)

- 3.14. The Masterplan is an adopted Supplementary Planning Document which sets out the Council's vision and strategy for Leek's town centre, advocating maximum intervention. The aim is to enhance the town centre, which includes regenerating vacant land to help strengthen Leek's role as a retail and service hub.
- 3.15. The Site is shown to be within the town centre boundary and is identified to be part of the Town Centre West area. This is characterised by gateway parking, and residential, employment and retail uses in the case of Broad Street.
- 3.16. The Site is allocated as an Opportunity Site in the Masterplan ('Former Broad Street Garage'), where it is referred to as a significant vacant cleared site at the edge of the retail core. The Council suggest a retail use, which would generate around 27 new jobs. It is deemed to be a low-risk site, with a short-term implementation timescale of between one to three years.

Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide (adopted February 2018)

- 3.17. This Supplementary Planning Document outlines the Council's principles on good design and will be taken into consideration when determining all planning applications.
- 3.18. It is noted that new buildings have the potential to either enhance or harm the special characteristics of the area. The setting, character and context of a building/site should be considered, and the pattern for new development will be dependent on the nature of the settlement – new buildings should respect the settlement's "grain", i.e. the relationship buildings have to the street and to each other. The scale and proportion of surrounding buildings should be considered.

- 3.19. For shopfronts, corporate signs and colour schemes should be adapted to suit the local area, with well-proportioned signage complementing the frontage, with only discreet illumination. Moreover, it is important for shopfronts to respect the host building and street scene. Traditional materials and finishes are generally preferred, and it is said that access should be improved wherever possible.
- 3.20. Regarding building materials, it is noted that stone, slate, tile and brick and the predominant materials for roofs and walls in Staffordshire Moorlands – however, high-quality modern materials can also be acceptable. Proportion and subdivision of windows should have vertical emphasis, and the colour of window frames and doors should be considered in relation to its use.

National Planning Policy Framework (July 2021)

- 3.21. The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied in decision-making. The NPPF constitutes a material consideration.
- 3.22. Paragraph 38 states that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way and that decision-makers should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 3.23. Paragraph 81 states that 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, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
- 3.24. Paragraph 86(e) affirms that if there are no available sites in the town centre for town centre uses, edge of centre sites should be considered to accommodate these. Paragraph 88 goes on to say that those edge of centre sites which are accessible and well-connected to the town centre should be given preference. Paragraphs 90 and 91 outline that a sequential test should be performed to determine the impact of the proposal on the town centre's vitality and viability – if an application fails to satisfy this test, it should be refused.
- 3.25. Paragraph 111 states that development should only be refused on highways grounds if it would lead to an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or severe impacts on the road network resulting from residual cumulative impacts.

- 3.26. Chapter 11 of the NPPF focuses on making effective use of land. Planning policies and decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions. Strategic policies should set out a clear strategy for accommodating objectively assessed needs, in a way that makes as much use as possible of previously developed or 'brownfield' land. Paragraph 120(c) states that planning decisions should give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements.
- 3.27. Paragraph 126 states the importance of creating high-quality, beautiful, and sustainable buildings. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, which contributes towards creating better places within which to live and work. Paragraph 130 goes on to add that developments should add to the overall quality of the area, and be visually attractive in terms of its architecture, layout, and landscaping.

4. ASSESSMENT OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

4.1. The planning application relates to vacant brownfield land at Broad Street, Leek and seeks full planning permission for the erection of a building comprising two units for Class E and Class Sui Generis use and associated works.

4.2. Having regard to the policies of the Development Plan, the key planning matters are:

- Principle of development
- Town centre uses in an edge of centre location
- Highways, access, and parking
- Design and external appearance
- Economic benefits

4.3. Each of these planning matters are considered below.

Principle of Development

4.4. The Site is brownfield land located within the town of Leek, which, according to Policies SS2 and SS5, is a principal location for services, facilities, and future growth. In line with Paragraphs 119 and 120 of the NPPF, this proposal seeks to make effective use of this land and provide additional services (a coffee shop/bakery and restaurant). As the NPPF notes, when determining a planning application great weight should be given to the value of developing brownfield land, and this is therefore a preferable site to develop to provide additional services for the settlement.

4.5. The Leek Town Centre Masterplan provides clear in principle support for this scheme. Although it is only a material consideration, the statutory development plan (Policy SS5) does stress that development opportunities should be established in accordance with town centre masterplans. The Masterplan identifies the site as an Opportunity Site and a retail use is proposed, which the smaller of the two units would partially provide. Developing this site would make a clear contribution towards realising the Masterplan's vision for Leek.

4.6. The site has previous outline planning consent (SMD/2010/0628, approved on 1 October 2010) and reserved matters consent (SMD/2016/0617, approved on 1 March 2017) for the erection of

a retail unit, financial and professional services, and a hot food takeaway. This indicates that the site is an acceptable location for town centre uses.

Town centre uses in an edge of centre location

- 4.7. The site has been vacant for several years and, with the hoarding boards currently in place, is highly unsightly in a key location on the edge of the historic town centre. This proposal would bring the site back into active use, making it a destination on Broad Street with pedestrian connections to the town centre. Its presence would greatly enhance the townscape and vitality of the eastern end of the street. Policy TCR1 notes the importance of enhancing the vitality of towns in the district, and this scheme would help to achieve this.
- 4.8. The sequential assessment submitted as part of this application identifies eleven vacant units within the town centre. The assessment demonstrates that none of these units are suitable and/or available for the defined end-use. This is mostly due to the size of the vacant units (with the gross internal floor area being either too small or too large) and the fact that several of the units are 'under offer'. The proposed edge of centre site is within 300 metres of the town centre and shopping area, and is very accessible, benefitting from good pedestrian and public transport links. Therefore, with all vacant town centre units having been considered, the proposal satisfies the sequential assessment required by Policy TCR3 of the Local Plan.
- 4.9. The Retail Statement submitted as part of this application finds that the trade diversion from the town centre would only be limited, and would therefore not have a significant adverse impact on the centre as a whole.

Highways, access, and parking

- 4.10. The site shares an existing access point with Tool Station, and this would be widened to allow for two-way traffic. The Transport Statement finds that this access arrangement is safe and appropriate for the scale of development. Therefore, it is compliant with Policy DC1, which stipulates that access must be both safe and satisfactory. Moreover, a junction capacity assessment has indicated that this access can operate with significant reserve capacity.
- 4.11. This development is not anticipated generate greater pressure on the public highway. Although it would create a new destination on Broad Street which will attract motorists, a significant proportion of these customers are likely to be stopping on their journey into, or out of, the town centre (perhaps as part of a commute), meaning that their vehicles would be on the

highway anyway. Indeed, the Transport Statement finds that there would be just one additional journey per 30 seconds during peak periods. This would not have a material impact on the safety or operation of the highway. Given that the development would not generate any unacceptable impacts on highway safety, the development should not be prevented on highway grounds, as per Paragraph 111 of the NPPF.

- 4.12. Policies T1 and DC1 stress that adequate parking should be provided to meet the need arising from the development. This scheme would create a new customer car park with 23 spaces, which complies with the minimum parking standards in Appendix 2 of the Local Plan. The Transport Statement (Table 4.1) highlights that the public floor area of the units equates to 21 parking spaces, therefore the proposal exceeds this. It is clear that the site will be able to comfortably accommodate those visiting by car, as well as staff members due to the additional parking spaces at the rear of the site.
- 4.13. The scheme would be well-connected to the town centre, being only a six-minute walk or two-minute cycle away from the site, according to the Transport Statement. There is a focus on encouraging forms of active travel, as called for by Policy DC1. For pedestrians, this will be achieved through the implementation of a tarmac footpath and a zebra crossing to the units themselves.
- 4.14. The site is also well-connected to public transport, with a bus stop to the south of the site on Broad Street. This is served by routes 16, 108, 109 and 18. Thus, the site can be accessed using sustainable modes of transport, as Policy T1 encourages.

Design and external appearance

- 4.15. The scheme has been carefully designed to ensure that it is appropriate for this location and contributes towards the character of the area. This will be partly achieved through the use of certain building materials. Red bricks have been chosen as they are commonly used in the Staffordshire Moorlands. They will match those of neighbouring buildings along Broad Street, helping to ensure that the development is well-integrated so that it forms a relationship with other buildings and the street as a whole, as required by the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide.
- 4.16. The submitted elevations illustrate the proposed shopfronts for the units; there are two horizontal areas for signage above each unit, and these are well-proportioned and

complimentary to the building. In line with the Design Guide, it is considered that the shopfronts are appropriate, with the design reflecting the adjacent building (occupied by Toolstation).

- 4.17. The landscaping and planting of four trees along the southern boundary of the site will complement the existing tree on the other side of Broad Street (within the grounds of Leek Masonic Hall), and those to the rear, west, and east of the site. The result will be a greener eastern end of Broad Street, enhancing its feel and appearance.
- 4.18. As outlined in Section 2.5, the rear of the units will include extract ducts. These are necessary for the proposed uses, such as noise and odours. They are an important and necessary part of the proposal, which will help to protect the amenity of the area, in accordance with Policy DC1. Due to the sloped roof, none of this will be publicly visible from the front of the site or Broad Street.
- 4.19. It is acknowledged that the site is in close proximity to a number of Grade II listed buildings. These include the Victoria Buildings (40 metres to the north east, on Broad Street), Ash Almshouses (48 metres to the north east, also on Broad Street), and Hargreaves School (56 metres to the south west on Alsop Street). Many of the buildings along St Edward Street (55 to 114 metres away as the crow flies) are also listed. The above points have demonstrated how the development would accord with both Policy DC1 and the Design Guide, meaning that it is suitable for this location, and there would be no impact on the setting of these heritage assets.

Economic benefits

- 4.20. The Leek Town Centre Masterplan estimates that the redevelopment of the site for retail use would create approximately 27 new jobs. This proposal will create even more than this, at approximately 35 jobs. The importance of providing opportunities for employment within the district is highlighted in Policy SS1, and Chapter 6 of the NPPF. This makes clear that "*significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity*". Thus, the creation of employment is a key benefit of the scheme.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of a full application to erect a building comprising two units for Class E (coffee shop/bakery) and Sui Generis (hot food takeaway) use, together with all associated works, on a vacant brownfield site at Broad Street, Leek.
- 5.2. Having reviewed the relevant statutory planning policy and material considerations it is evident that there is in principle support for this development. Brownfield land will be brought back into use, as explicitly encouraged by the NPPF, and the town of Leek is an appropriate location for the proposed uses. Crucially, the site is allocated as an 'Opportunity Site' in the masterplan for Leek, which gives it support for retail use, and a previous planning approval confirms that an ancillary takeaway use would also be acceptable here.
- 5.3. All eleven vacant units within the town centre were assessed as part of the sequential analysis, and it is found that none are suitable and/or available for the defined end-use. As such, the proposal satisfies the sequential assessment required by Policy TCR3 of the Local Plan, confirming that this is an optimal location for this proposal, as an edge of centre site.
- 5.4. The development would not generate enough traffic to have a material impact on the safety or operation of the highway, with just one additional journey per 30 seconds during peak periods. The access point is safe and suitable for the scale of the development, and a policy-compliant parking area will be provided, exceeding the 21 spaces which equate to the public floor area of the units. Therefore, the car park will be able to comfortably accommodate customers and staff. No adverse impacts would be generated by this development, and therefore it cannot be refused on highway grounds as per Paragraph 111 of the NPPF.
- 5.5. The scheme has been carefully designed so that it is well-integrated into Broad Street, complementing other buildings through the utilisation of similar building materials, and preserving the character of the area. The planting of trees will help to make this a distinctively greener part of Broad Street. The design also incorporates equipment to ensure that amenity will not be affected by the presence of the new units.
- 5.6. Overall, this Statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is compliant with the provisions of both national and local policy. It is considered that there are no reasons why planning permission should be withheld, and therefore it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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