Rob Duncan
Planning
Consultancy

PLANNING STATEMENT

194 HIGH LANE
BROWN EDGE

JULY 2022

Site Address:
194 High Lane, Brown Edge, Staffordshire, ST6 8QB

Applicant:
Mr. Chris Willis

Proposal:
Conversion of former post office to form additional living accommodation

Planning Statement:
Date Issued: 26th July 2022
Job Reference: RDP/2022/114

Report Prepared By:
Rob Duncan BSc(Hons) MA MRTPI
Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd

Contact Details:
Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd.
70 Ferndale Road, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 7DL
Email: rob78duncan@gmail.com
Tel. 07779 783521

1 Introduction

1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. C. Willis to prepare a full planning application for the conversion of the former post office at 194 High Lane, Brown Edge to provide additional living accommodation to serve the existing dwelling.

1.2 The application represents a resubmission following the withdrawal of application SMD/2021/0599 which had proposed the conversion and extension of the former post office to form 2no. dwellinghouses. That application was withdrawn following concerns being raised about the external appearance of the resultant development.

1.3 This revised planning application proposes the change of use of the former post office to provide additional living accommodation to serve the existing dwellinghouse at no.194 High Lane. The resultant accommodation of the dwelling will comprise of a living room, hallway, dining room, kitchen, utility, shower room and integral garage at ground floor with four bedrooms and bathroom at first floor.

1.4 The application is part-retrospective and proposes to retain a number of external works that have already been partly undertaken, including removal of the former shop front and its replacement with a new window, the erection of a front canopy, which is finished with grey tiles to match the main roof of the building, along with the building up of an existing opening on the side elevation and the installation of a garage door to replace a window on the front elevation. The application also proposes to finish the front, side and rear extension of the building in render, with the existing tile hanging to the gable end to be removed.

2 Site & Surroundings

2.1 The application site lies within the defined settlement boundary of Brown Edge and comprises the former village post office. The use ceased in 2020 and has since been re-located to the nearby mini-supermarket. The site comprises a semi-detached property located on the southeastern side of High Lane, directly opposite the Holly Bush Public House. Residential development extends to both the northeast, southwest and east of the site.

2.2 The site is not within a Conservation Area, nor does it have any formal policy designation. There are no statutorily listed buildings located within the immediate locality.

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 (2020) of which the following policies are of relevance:

3.2 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan states that the Council will expect the development and use of land to contribute positively to the social, economic and environmental improvement of the Staffordshire Moorlands in terms of delivering, in partnership with other agencies and services:

- a mix of types and tenures of quality, affordable homes, including starter homes, to meet the needs and aspirations of the existing and future communities

- quality local services, including provision for education, healthcare, leisure, community, cultural and tourist facilities in response to anticipated population change and visitor numbers

- easy access to jobs, shops and transport services by all sections of the community

- increased economic prosperity and opportunities for employment and greater local capacity with an educated, skilled and flexible workforce

- a healthy, safe, attractive, active, well-designed and well-maintained environment

- development which maintains the locally distinctive character of the Staffordshire Moorlands, its individual towns and villages and their settings

- development that is undertaken in a way that protects and enhances the natural and historic environment of the District and its surrounding areas, including the Peak District National Park, both now and for future generations

- support development which secures high quality, sustainable environments, efficient and effective use of resources and contributes effectively to tackling climate change and reduced carbon emissions

3.3 Policy SS8 of the Local Plan confirms that the larger villages shall retain and enhance their role as rural service centres, providing for the bulk of the housing requirement of the rural areas and also for employment needs of a scale and type appropriate to each settlement having regard to infrastructure capacity and character. This will be achieved by a number of actions, including:

- Protecting community facilities where loss would be deemed to reduce the community's ability to meet its day to day needs

- Increase the range of available and affordable housing types, including for first time buyers and families

- Supporting the development of housing windfall sites within the village boundaries

- Ensuring that new development reflects and enhances each village's special character and heritage

3.4 Policy C1 of the Local Plan states that in order to create sustainable communities at a local level, the Council will resist proposals involving the loss of community facilities unless:

a) an alternative facility of the same type and quality that meets the needs of the community is available in the locality or can be provided in an accessible location in the same locality; or

b) a viability appraisal including a marketing exercise by a qualified professional demonstrates that there are no options for continued or shared use as any type of community facility which are financially viable and it can be demonstrated that loss of the facility would not disadvantage local residents.

3.5 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan states that new development should be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area. Proposals should 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. Development should also protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping.

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development and sets out guidance *inter alia*, in respect of securing high quality design and safeguarding community facilities. The content of the National Planning Policy Framework has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD

4.2 This document sets out guidance aimed at securing high quality design that respects and reinforces the vernacular of the Staffordshire Moorlands. The content of this document has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

5 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

5.1 The application proposes the change of use of the former post office on the site to form additional residential accommodation to serve the existing dwellinghouse. The proposal consequently involves the loss of a community facility.

5.2 Policies SS8 and C1 of the Local Plan seek to resist the loss of existing community facilities unless an alternative facility of the same type and quality is available in the locality to meet the needs of the community. In this case the post office facilities previously provided on this site have been relocated to the mini-supermarket at no.199 High Lane, a short distance to the northeast of the site.

5.3 Consequently, an alternative facility of the same type and quality exists in the same locality to serve the needs of the community and consequently local residents will not be disadvantaged by the change of use of the existing premises to residential accommodation. The proposed development is therefore acceptable in principle and meets the requirements of policies SS8 and C1 of the Local Plan.

Design & Visual Impact

5.4 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan states that development proposals should

> *"be of a high quality and **add value to the local area**, incorporating creativity, detailing and **materials appropriate to the character of the area**. Proposals should 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" (my emphasis)

5.5 The existing building constitutes a semi-detached property that is finished in a mixture of external materials, including two differing shades of red brickwork at ground floor, render to the first floor, and tile hanging to an existing projecting gable. The adopted Design Guide SPD recognises render as a traditional material within the Staffordshire Moorlands, and the surrounding area strongly reflects that, with a large majority of properties within the surrounding area being finished in white render, including the six neighbouring terraced properties to the east, the Holly Bush Public House opposite the site, as well as numerous other dwellings along High Lane. Render is therefore a very common material within the immediate locality.

5.6 The external finish of the existing building contributes little to the wider character of the area, encompassing a somewhat awkward and unsuccessful mixture of red facing brickwork at ground floor, a section of render above, and a central projecting bay / gable end that is finished in tile hanging – a wholly alien external finish within the surrounding area. The attached neighbouring property has an entirely different colour of render at first floor (off yellow) and a rather unsuccessful patch of replacement brickwork above its ground floor window. The overall appearance of these buildings, both individually, and collectively, is not one that contributes positively to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

5.7 The application proposes to finish the front, side and rear elevations of the building in render in order to give the property a unified, continuity of material that will enhance the appearance of the building and contribute positively to the established character of the area.

5.8 In doing so the application takes the opportunity to remove the poor quality tile hanging from the projecting gable, as well as removing the somewhat awkward appearance of the mismatched brickwork at ground floor. The resultant rendered appearance of the property will add value to the local area and be wholly in keeping with its established character, both in terms of appearance and its materials. The loss of the existing brickwork is a benefit of the proposal as the current brickwork contributes little. Indeed, one could go so far as to say it detracts from the character of the area given the unsuccessful attempt to match the brickwork.

5.9 The proposed front canopy is not considered to be contentious from a design perspective, as front canopies are a common feature within the surrounding area, in particular on the properties to the west of the site and on the Holly Bush Public House directly opposite the site. The canopy will therefore not appear as an incongruous feature within the streetscene.

5.10 The removal of the shopfront in favour of a window is also appropriate in terms of its impact on the character and appearance of the building, with the window being of matching proportions to the first floor windows above and arranged in a column below the first floor window – a design approach specifically advocated by the adopted Design Guide SPD.

5.11 Overall, it is concluded that the alterations to the external appearance of the building, whilst resulting in a proposal that will appear different to its attached neighbour, will nevertheless enhance the appearance of the existing property and contribute positively to the character and appearance of the wider streetscene. The proposed development consequently meets the requirements of policies SS1 and DC1 of the Local Plan and guidance contained with the adopted Design Guide SPD.

Residential Amenity

5.12 The works proposed to the existing building will not give rise to any conflict with the Local Authority's informal Space about Dwellings Standards and consequently the development will not detract from the amenity of any neighbouring residential occupiers. The proposed development consequently meets the relevant requirements of policy DC1 of the Local Plan.

Highway Safety

5.13 The existing dwelling on the site comprises a three-bedroomed property, which commands a requirement to provide two off-street parking spaces under the Local Authority's adopted parking standards. As part of the conversion works the applicant will be remodelling the internal layout of the dwelling to relocate the existing bathroom into Bedroom 1, and to create a fourth bedroom where the bathroom was previously located.

5.14 By resultant effect the property will become a four bedroomed-property. There is ample space within the curtilage of the property to accommodate the parking of three vehicles and consequently the proposed development will comply with the adopted parking standards as set out in the Local Plan. It also needs to be acknowledged that the internal works proposed by the applicant do not in themselves require planning permission, and consequently the change of the property from a three bedroomed house to a four bedroomed house could take place without consent.

5.15 Having regard to the above it is concluded that the proposed development will not give rise to any severe residual impacts to highway safety and consequently the proposal meets the requirements of paragraphs 110 and 111 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The proposed change of use of the former post office to provide additional living accommodation to serve the existing dwelling on site is acceptable in principle and will not disadvantage local residents as there is an existing alternative facility of the same type and quality to meet their ongoing needs.

6.2 The proposed development will furthermore serve to enhance the external appearance of the building, removing the existing poor quality elements and providing an external finish that is wholly in keeping with the wider character and appearance of the surrounding area. No harm will furthermore ensue to neighbouring residential amenity or to highway safety.

6.3 The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the provisions of policies SS1, SS8, C1 and DC1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020) and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework, and the Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD.