PLANNING STATEMENT INCLUDING MATTERS OF DESIGN AND ACCESS

PROPOSAL : Proposed change of use of Warehouse (B8) to office use (Class E(g)) and associated alternations
ADDRESS : Cottage Delight Ltd, Brooklands Way, Basford Lane Industrial Estate, Leek, ST13 7QF
APPLICANT : Cottage Delight Ltd
DATE : November 2022 JOB No. : 2022-2714

DESIGN

ASSESSMENT

Assessment Area

The application building comprises of an existing industrial unit at Brooklands Way, Leekbrook. It is located within an existing and established industrial estate and lies in close proximity to the council's designated employment site off Basford Lane. Given the nature of the proposal it is considered that the proposal should be influenced by the nature of development on the site and nearby.

Physical

The application building relates to an existing warehouse building which forms part of the industrial unit occupied by Cottage Delight Lt which lies on an established industrial estate at Leekbrook. Buildings in the area are generally functional industrial buildings and comprise, usually, brick or concrete plinths with coloured sheeted walls and roofs.

PLANNING POLICY

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that when determining a planning application, the decision maker must make their determination in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for the area comprises Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (September, 2020) and the following policies are considered relevant:-

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (September 2020)
S01 Spatial Objectives
SS1 Development Principles
SS5 Leek Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
E1 New Development
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

For the purposes of brevity these are not reproduced in full here but referred to where relevant below.

National Planning Policy Framework places a strong emphasis on promoting economic growth and sets out policies for the control of development. The Development Plan represents the starting point for the determination of this application, which in this instance is the Core Spatial Strategy. The guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework is also

relevant, in particular the following Chapters: Paragraphs 80-84 of Chapter 6. Building a strong, competitive economy Within the NPPF it is also worth noting the following relevant paragraphs:

• Planning decisions must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise (para 2).

• At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. LPA's should approve proposals which accord with the development plan without delay (para 11).

• Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, (para 12).

EVALUATION

There is considerable planning policy and guidance relevant to the planning application proposal at both local and national levels. The NPPF is significant as it sets out the Government's commitment for a positive response to planning proposals that would deliver sustainable development in order to assist growth to the economy. It has been made clear that the planning system has a key role in facilitating growth and development should be supported with a presumption in favour of granting planning permission. This change of emphasis provides an important background to the application proposal.

Paragraph 81 of the National Planning Policy Framework confirms that the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity in the UK and confirms that planning policies should help create 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.

This guidance is carried forward in the recently adopted Local Plan (September 2020) with policy SS1 confirming that the council will expect development to increase economic prosperity and provide opportunities for employment and greater local capacity, with an educated skilled and flexible workforce.

The spatial strategy for Leek recognises that as the largest town in the District serving a wide area, it will be promoted as the principal service centre and market town. It is the administrative centre for the District and provides a high proportion of the District's jobs and has good transport links with the rest of the District. The Council's Development Capacity Study and Housing Land Availability Assessment both demonstrate scope for further growth.

Policy SS5 further confirms that the council will seek to create employment growth and increase the diversity of employment opportunities by supporting the retention and growth of the existing businesses within the town and providing opportunities for new enterprises and businesses by promoting further development. These provisions are further reinforced by Local Plan Policy E1 which deals with directly with new employment development is also relevant. It states that "New employment development will be assessed according to the extent to which it supports and improves the local economy in terms of providing for the needs and skills of the existing and future local resident workforce and meeting identified business needs, having regard to the Spatial Strategy Policies in SS2, SS3, area strategy policies, and general employment land requirements set out in Policy SS4. In general, the Council will endeavour to support the expansion of existing businesses and new businesses in the District, subject to the provisions below", including (inter alia)

All proposals should help maintain or enhance an appropriate range of employment premises and sites across the District in terms of their scale, location and type.

Other types of employment uses (including B use class developments (B1b, B1c, B2 and B8), commercial sui generis uses etc) should be located in existing or proposed employment areas. Such development outside of existing or proposed employment areas but within the settlement boundary may also be acceptable when it would not create undue harm to the character, appearance or amenity of the area.

The sustainable redevelopment, intensification or improvement of existing employment sites for new business and industrial developments will be supported provided it would not have an unacceptable impact on the amenities, character or appearance of the area."

As set out above planning policy at both the local and national levels would support proposals for the appropriate expansion of existing employment uses in sustainable locations. The application building is located within an established employment area on the fringes of Leek. It is in a highly sustainable location and close to public transport routes. The new office will allow all staff to the located in one building, currently they are split across two separate self-contained units. The business benefits of having everyone is the same space is all about driving efficiency and enhanced communication.

The change of use of a small area of the existing warehouse to provide additional office provision would not be prejudicial to the existing land use and the principle of the proposed development is therefore considered acceptable.

The three new proposed windows which would be inserted into the eastern elevation of the existing building to facilitate the proposed office use would be modest in terms of their number, size, and scale and their overall design and positioning have reflect those which already exist. The proposed external alterations will therefore cause no visual amenity harm to the unit or the business park within which the building sits.

The proposed unit is not in a proximity close enough to residential properties to result in any adverse impact upon residential amenity or adversely impact upon any neighbouring land uses.

The proposal will not conflict with the aims and objectives of the council's adopted Local Plan and this proposal represents a sustainable form of development. The application building does not detract from the industrial nature of the site. The proposal will be contained within the site and is located close to other buildings of a similar use and similar design.

Having regard to the modest nature of the proposal, its location on an existing and established industrial unit and proposed use it is not considered that the scheme would be detrimental to any neighbouring land uses or the amenity of any of the surrounding residential dwellings.

The site is located to the east of the A520 Cheadle Road and approximately 2.5km to the south of Leek. The entrance to the application site is via Basford Lane which connects directly to the A520, which is part of the moorlands primary road network. Local bus routes are served by bus stops on Cheadle Road and are sufficiently frequent to provide the opportunity for staff to travel by this mode to and from Leek, Leekbrook, Cheddleton and Stoke on Trent.

No alterations are proposed to the site access. The application site has adequate car parking

available for the current uses and this proposed use will not create any additional traffic to give rise to any issues in terms of highway or pedestrian safety. Whilst the proposed development would increase the office provision on the site this is to enable the existing office staff (currently 58) at present to be accommodated in a more appropriate open plan office environment. The proposed development will not result in any intensification in the use of the site or result in any increase in staff numbers.

CONCLUSION

The Government has a strong commitment to growth and provides a strong presumption in favour of development and is committed to increasing levels of growth. The NPPF states that local planning authorities should approach decision-taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development. The proposal is considered to constitute a sustainable form of development and therefore the application is considered to accord with the Development Plan Policies and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework. It is not considered that the proposal would be detrimental to the residential amenity of any of the surrounding residential properties nor adversely affect adjacent land uses. Nor would it be detrimental to highway safety. The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to endorse this application and grant planning permission accordingly

DESIGN

Use: The application proposes to change the use of a small part of an existing warehouse which is located on an established industrial estate on the outskirts of Leek into office accommodation which would support and provide administrative functions to the established business. In addition the application seeks consent for the insertion of three new windows in the eastern elevation of the building to facilitate the new use.

Amount: The application seeks planning permission to change 244 sq metres of the existing warehouse building into office accommodation and for alterations to the external façade, namely the insertion of three windows in the existing industrial unit.

Layout: The application drawings illustrate the layout and location of the proposed change of use and alterations.

Scale: The proposed development will not affect the scale of the existing unit.

Landscaping: The proposed is not considered to generate additional landscaping due to the limited scope within the area of the application building and its setting.

Appearance: The appearance of the proposed development reflects the character and appearance of the existing building and wider site.

ACCESS

VEHICULAR AND TRANSPORT LINKS

The application site is located within the established Basford Bridge Lane industrial Estate. The proposal will use the existing spine road serving the industrial estate off Basford Way which links to the main A520. No alterations to the proposed access are proposed.

INCLUSIVE ACCESS

The proposed development makes provision for access by less abled people.