DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2023/0402 **Valid 17/08/2023**	**24 FOUNTAIN STREET** **LEEK**	**CHANGE OF USE OF THREE FLATS TO A SINGLE DWELLING** **(FULL - MINOR)**

MAIN ISSUES

The principle of the development
The impact on the character and appearance of the area
The impact on residential amenity
The impact on highway safety

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site lies within the development boundary of Leek and lies a short distance to the east of the town centre. It comprises an end-of-terrace typical Victorian redbrick building on a corner plot but directly fronting onto Well Street to the west (where the front entrance is located) and with Fountain Street running along the north side wall, although there is also a "front door" in the corner of the building onto this street as well as Well Street, with adjacent shopfront windows either side which could suggest the building was originally a corner shop (there has been previous commercial uses of the ground floor). The building has higher than average eaves and second floor within the roofspace and could be described as a three-storey or two-and-a-half storey building. The attached terraced dwellings lie to the east along Fountain Street. To the south, the building is separated from another row of terraced dwellings facing Well Street by a small "backyard". There are further terraced dwellings to the north on the opposite side of Fountain Street. On the opposite side of Well Street to the west is a large open yard area belonging to Leek Police Station. The building is currently used as three 1-bed flats (one flat per floor) with the corner door used for access to the ground floor and the Well Street front door used to access the upper floor flats via an internal staircase. The site is not within the Leek Conservation Area.

PROPOSAL

This is a full planning application for the use of the building as a 2-bed dwellinghouse with one bedroom on the first floor and the second bedroom on the top floor. The Well Street front door would provide the main access into the new dwelling. There would be no external alterations required to achieve this and only minimal internal works. The back yard would be used as a small outdoor seating area.

A Design and Access Statement has been provided which gives further details as follows:

The property was previously used as a ground floor office for a mortgage broker with 2 self- contained apartments above. Planning permission to change the ground floor office into a self-contained apartment was recently approved under application number SMD/2022/0169. This permission has now been implemented and the building is currently used as three self-contained apartments.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Staffs Moorlands Local Plan (adopted September 2020)

SS5 – Leek Strategy
H1 – New Housing
DC1 – Design Considerations

NPPF (Revised July 2021)

Sections 5 (Housing) and 12 (Design).

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

The most recent application is as follows:
SMD/2022/0169. Change of use of ground floor office into an apartment. Approved and implemented.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: 10.10.23
Neighbour consultation period ends: 10.10.23
Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None.

Town / Parish Comments

None.

Local Highways Authority

No objection.

SMDC Waste Collection Service

No objection.

OFFICER COMMENTS

The proposal would result in the loss of two units of accommodation which is contrary to the current Planning aims of the Council to provide more housing to address the undersupply as the Council cannot currently demonstrate a five year housing land supply. However, the NPPF aims to encourage not just more housing but decent quality new homes. None of the three current flats meet the thresholds for adequate liveable floorspace in the government's Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS). The top floor flat has 33.4 sq.m of floorspace and so does not meet the 50 sq.m required for a 1-bed 2-bedspace unit. The middle floor flat is even smaller and does not even meet the 37 sq.m required for a 1-bed 1-bedspace unit with shower room. The ground floor flat is 1-bed 2-bedspace unit like the top floor unit and also falls short with 40.4 sq.m where 50 sq.m is required.

The proposed two-bed dwellinghouse would however easily meet the required standard for a 2-bed 2-bedspace unit over three floors. The proposal therefore would result in the loss of three poor quality substandard units but would result in a gain of one easily habitable 2-bed to address the policy requirement to provide more quality homes in the District and is also in a sustainable location a short walk from the town centre. I therefore consider the proposal is acceptable in principle.

With regard to the impact on the character and amenities of the area, there would be some benefits with the proposal. There would be less scope for overlooking/loss of privacy and noise and disturbance arising from one 2-bed dwellinghouse than three 1-bed units. There would be no impact on the appearance of the area as no external changes are made and a dwellinghouse in this location is more in keeping with nature of the the area which mainly comprises terraced dwellinghouses and not flats. There would be less pressure for car parking space arising from the reduction in units from three to one which in an area of terraced street of restricted width is a benefit to highway safety.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposal represents sustainable development and due to acceptable impacts on the visual and residential amenities of the area and on highway safety would comply with the Council's Local Plan and the government planning guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE

Case Officer: Chris Johnston
Recommendation Date: 12.10.23

X B.J. Haywood

Signed by: Ben Haywood

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council