

14 Market Place, Leek Staffordshire, ST13 5HH Planning Statement



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Figure 1 – Site Location Plan

1 Executive Summary

1.1 This planning statement has been produced by Forward Planning and Development Limited ('FWPD') for a proposed redevelopment at 14 Market Place, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 5HH ('Application Site').

1.2 The building is not listed, but is located within a Conservation Area.

1.3 The building is currently used for residential purposes with retail at ground floor level. The proposal will introduce 3 new one bedroom units to the upper stories with a new entrance achieved via a side extension to the existing building. The retail unit at ground floor level does not form part of this application and will remain in retail use.

1.4 Planning permission is therefore sought from the Council in respect of the following proposal:-

'Conversion of first and second floors to create three, one bedroomed flats and two storey side extension'.

1.5 This application submission includes the following documents which should be read in conjunction with this statement:-

- Planning Application forms
- Relevant Certificate (Certificate A)
- Site Location Plan
- Site plan
- Existing and proposed planning drawings
- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Heritage Statement

1.6 The principle planning issues associated with this proposed change of use are as follows:-

- Land Use;
- Design Considerations;
- Heritage Considerations.

- 1.7 This Planning Statement concludes that the proposal complies with planning policy at all levels and that planning permission should therefore be granted.

2 Introduction

2.1 This Planning Statement describes the planning application for a development at 14 Market Place, Leek, Staffordshire ST13 5HH (herein referred to as “the building”).

2.2 This planning application is a renewal of a previous planning permission (Ref: SMD/2017/0678). This planning permission was for the conversion of the upper floors of 14 Market Place to residential use to create 3 x one bedroomed flats and a two storey side extension. This was granted on 20 December 2017 and has since expired.

2.3 The submitted application is identical to the previously approved application and the proposed layouts of the residential units have been checked against Lifetime Homes standards.

2.4 The building is currently in retail use at ground floor level as a single retail unit. The upper floors are currently vacant.

2.5 This application proposes the change of use of the upper floors (first and second floor) to three one bedroom residential units. A small two storey side extension is proposed which enables separate, self-contained access to the proposed residential units.

2.6 Planning permission is sought for:

‘Conversion of first and second floors to create three, one bedroomed flats and two storey side extension’.

2.7 This planning statement is one of a number of documents, which have been submitted in support of the application for planning permission. The other supporting application documents are:

- Planning application forms;
- Ownership Certificate A;
- A site location plan;
- Existing and proposed plans, sections and elevations;
- Planning Statement produced by Forward Planning and Development
- Heritage Statement produced by Forward Planning and Development
- Design and Access Statement (including Lifetime Homes Statement) produced by Building Link Design.

- 2.8 This planning statement provides a comprehensive review of national and local planning policy and guidance relevant to the nature of the proposals and the specific degree to which the proposals would accord with the policies of the statutory development plan. It also considers other material considerations, in accordance with the requirements of section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2005. It is concluded that the development proposals accord with the aims and objectives of national, strategic and local planning policy and therefore support the grant of planning permission.

3 Site and Surroundings

- 3.1 The Application Site is located within the administrative area of the Staffordshire Moorlands Council ('SMC').
- 3.2 The building is located on the southern side of Market Place between Derby Street to the east and Stanley Street to the west.
- 3.3 The site extends to 0.134 hectares.
- 3.4 The existing building currently provides a single retail unit at ground floor level which is occupied by Co-operative Travel with two upper floors which are currently vacant. The ground floor retail unit does not form part of this application.
- 3.5 The building comprises three storeys and forms part of a terrace of buildings which run from east to west along Derby Street and Stanley Street. The building has a pitched roof, a distinctive window at first floor level (thought to be a late C19 or early C20 first floor shop window) and two sash windows at second floor level.
- 3.6 There is a yard area to the rear of the site accessed via an alley way and a public car park to the rear of the yard area.
- 3.7 The site is located within the Leek Town Centre Conservation Area.
- 3.8 The surrounding area is characterised predominantly by retail uses at ground floor level and a mix of uses on upper floors.
- 3.9 The Application Site is shown on the location plan below.

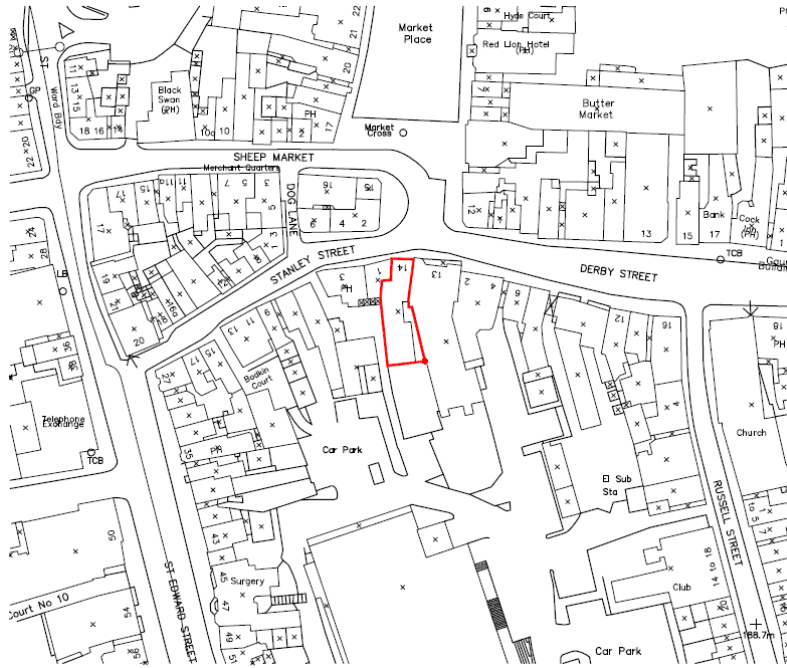


Figure 1: Location Plan

- 3.10 Additional detail on the site and building can be found in the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

4 Planning History

4.1 A review of the online Statutory Register of Planning Applications held by the Council has been carried out and the following planning history was found for the Application Site.

4.2 With the exception of the schemes approved in 2011, 2014 and 2017 the applications on the statutory register do not have any relevance to this application but for the sake of completeness these are summarised below:

- 80/09022/OLDDC – Change of use to offices - withdrawn
- 81/09825/OLDDC – Change of use to fish and chip shop - refused
- 83/12191/OLDDC – New shopfront - approved
- 00/00977/ADV – Advertisement Consent for an illuminated sign - approved
- 04/01002/ADV – Non illuminated projecting sign - approved
- 11/00378/FUL – conversion of first and second floors to three, one bedroom flats and two storey side extension - approved
- 12/00057/FUL – erection of a two storey building comprising two apartments
- SMD/2017/0678 - Conversion of first and second floors to create three one bedroom flats and a two storey side extension.

5 The Proposal

- 5.1 As previously set out, the proposal seeks to convert the first and second floors of the existing building into residential use to create three self-contained residential units each comprising one bedroom. A small two storey side extension will be constructed to create separate access to the residential units.
- 5.2 The ground floor will remain in retail use and no changes are proposed to the retail unit.
- 5.3 Each residential unit will provide a bedroom, a bathroom and a kitchen/living area.
- 5.4 The existing building will be retained with limited external alterations proposed. The first floor window which is currently covered with acrylic advertisements will be re-glazed with a safety glass and will be obscured up to a height of approximately 0.8 metres. This proposal will result in a significant enhancement to the appearance of the existing building.
- 5.5 The proposed side extension will be approximately 5.2 metres high, 5.8 metres long and 1.4 metres wide. It will have a monopitch roof and a ground floor timber entrance door. A window will be provided at first floor level of the extension to create natural light to the staircase. A small additional window will be provided on the eastern elevation of the building to provide additional light to the rear first floor flat.
- 5.6 Access to the new residential units will be gained from the rear.
- 5.7 Planning permission is therefore sought for:
- ‘Conversion of the first and second floors to three one bedroom flats and two storey side extension’.***
- 5.8 Further detail can be found in the Design and Access Statement prepared by Building Link Design.

6 Planning Policy Framework

6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The documents comprising the Staffordshire Moorlands Development Plan include:

- The National Planning Policy Framework (2024);
- The Local Plan (2020).

6.2 An overview of the relevant policy from these documents is provided below.

National Planning Policy

6.3 National Policy Guidance is produced by Central Government in the form of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF'), adopted in July 2018, updated in 2019 and most recently updated in December 2024. The NPPF is a material consideration when determining planning applications.

6.4 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the statutory development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.5 The Statutory Development Plan comprises of the policies set out in NPPF and the Staffordshire Moorland Local Plan.

National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') (2024)

6.6 The NPPF document sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. It summarises in a single document, previous national planning policy statements. The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans, and is a material consideration in planning decisions.

6.7 The NPPF introduces the **presumption in favour of sustainable development** although it makes plain that the development plan is still the starting point for decision making.

6.8 The NPPF confirms that it has 3 overarching sustainability objectives:

- Economic – to help build a strong responsive, competitive economy supported by necessary infrastructure;
- Social - to support vibrant, healthy communities in a well-designed safe built environment with appropriate accessible services and open spaces; and
- Environmental – contributing to protect and enhance the natural, built and historic environment.

6.9 The NPPF supports economic development. Planning decisions should ensure that developments are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change. Paragraph 85 requires planning policies and decisions to help create conditions in which business can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should also be given to supporting economic growth and productivity, taking account of local business needs and wider opportunities for development.

6.10 Paragraph 39 of the NPPF states that with regard to decision making *‘Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.’*

6.11 Paragraph 48 sets out that *‘Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.’*

6.12 Paragraph 61 of the NPPF states that *‘To support the Government’s objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed, that the needs of groups with specific housing requirements are addressed and that land with permission is developed without unnecessary delay. The overall aim should be to meet an area’s identified housing need, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community.’*

6.13 The NPPF goes on to state that the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies.

6.14 Paragraph 207 states that with regard to heritage assets *‘In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any*

heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.'

- 6.15 Paragraph 219 states that LPAs should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.

Local Planning Policy

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan ('SMLP')

- 6.16 The Local Plan was adopted in September 2020
- 6.17 The following adopted policies from the Local Plan are considered relevant to the consideration of this application and are discussed in greater detail in Section 7 of this Planning Statement below. Relevant policies of the Local Plan include:

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|
| • Policy TCR1 | Development in the Town Centres |
| • Policy H1 | New Housing Development |
| • Policy DC1 | Design Considerations |
| • Policy DC2 | The Historic Environment |

7 Planning Assessment

7.1 This section of the Planning Statement assesses the key planning considerations associated with the revised proposals. The key considerations include:

- a) Land use Considerations**
- b) Design Considerations**
- c) Heritage Considerations**
- d) Residential Amenity Considerations**

Land Use

Retail Use

7.2 The building is currently in use as a single retail unit at ground floor level and the upper floors are vacant.

7.3 The proposal does not involve any change to the existing retail use at ground floor level which accords with the Council's objective to ensure the long-term viability and vitality of Leek.

Residential Use

7.4 The proposal involves the conversion of the upper floors of the building into three residential units.

7.5 The principle of the proposed use of the building for residential use accords with National and Local Planning Policy objectives.

7.6 Paragraph 61 of the NPPF states that the overall aim of planning policy should be to meet an area's identified housing need, including with an appropriate mix of housing types for the local community. Paragraph 63 states that *'Within this context of establishing need, the size, type and tenure of housing needed for different groups in the community should be assessed and reflected in planning policies.'*

7.7 Small and medium sized sites are identified as making an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area.

7.8 Paragraph 90 of the NPPF states that planning policy should define a network and hierarchy of

town centres that promotes their long-term vitality and viability, including allowing a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and which reflects their distinctive characters.

- 7.9 One of the Council's spatial objectives is to 'provide new housing that is affordable, desirable, well-designed and meets the needs of residents of the Moorlands'. (Policy SO4).
- 7.10 The provision of sustainable, decent and affordable housing for all sectors of the community remains one of the priorities of the Council (paragraph 7.45).
- 7.11 Policy H1 relates to new housing developments and aims to provide for a mix of housing sizes, types and tenures. Proposals for ten dwellings or more should provide a mix of dwellings and all new dwellings should aim to be built to "Lifetime Homes" standard and must meet the sustainable design and construction requirements set out in policy SD1.
- 7.12 Part (7) of Policy TCR1 seeks to promote housing on the upper floors within town centres where this does not jeopardise their vitality and viability.
- 7.13 Paragraph 7.70 recognises that upper floors in the town centres are not used to their full capacity. It states that *'there is a local need for housing in accessible locations as well as the other benefits residential use could bring, such as security outside normal working hours and assisting with the development of the evening economy'*.
- 7.14 The proposals involve an increase in residential floorspace and the creation of three one bedroom units. This is considered appropriate and is wholly supported by national and local policies both in respect of securing the vitality and viability of the town centre and the need for additional, quality housing in sustainable locations.

Design Considerations

- 7.15 Design has been fully considered throughout the development of the proposal. This section seeks to provide a summary of the proposal and its design in the context of relevant policy.
- 7.16 The NPPF places enhanced emphasis on the importance of exceptional design in development proposals. Paragraph 131 states that *'The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in*

which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.'

- 7.17 Paragraph 137 of the NPPF states that '*Design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals.*'
- 7.18 At the local level, design policy seeks to promote local distinctiveness by means of good design and the conservation, protection and enhancement of historic, environmental and cultural assets throughout the district. The Council's design policies seek to ensure that all development is well designed to contribute to and complement the special character of the area.
- 7.19 In particular policy DC1 states that development should (inter alia):
- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detail and materials appropriate to the character of the area;
 - 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.
- 7.20 The proposals involve limited external alterations but all elements of the proposed design will be of a high quality. The proposed side extension to accommodate the entrance staircase will be constructed in brick to match the existing building. The design is simple and low key. It is located to the rear of the property and will not have a material impact on the wider area.
- 7.21 Minor alterations are proposed to the existing first floor window. The window is currently obscured by acrylic advertising panels. These will be removed and the existing windows retained but with new safety glass inserted and top hung opening lights incorporated. The lower part of the glazing will be obscured.
- 7.22 The proposed development concept represents a high quality design solution to maximise the development potential of the site whilst reflecting identified constraints.
- 7.23 The Design and Access Statement prepared by Building Link Design provides further detail on the design approach.

The Historic Environment

- 7.24 Section 16 of the NPPF relates to conserving and enhancing the historic environment and

provides guidance on the impact of development on the significance of Designated Heritage Assets and Heritage Assets.

- 7.25 Paragraph 207 states that with regard to heritage assets *'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.'*
- 7.26 Paragraph 219 states that LPAs should look for opportunities for new development within Conservation Areas to enhance or better reveal their significance. Proposals that preserve those elements of the setting that make a positive contribution to the asset (or which better reveal its significance) should be treated favourably.
- 7.27 At a local level, Policy DC2 states that *'the Council will safeguard and, where possible, enhance heritage assets, including their setting in a manner appropriate to their significance'*.
- 7.28 The building is located within the Leek Town Centre Conservation Area and whilst the building is not identified as being notable in its own right, proposed alterations to the building could have an impact on the significance of the conservation area (the Designated Heritage Asset).
- 7.29 The market place itself is identified as a key element of this part of the Conservation Area.
- 7.30 The proposals have been carefully considered to ensure that there is no impact upon the significance of the Conservation Area as the Designated Heritage Asset.
- 7.31 The proposed alterations to the front floor window will enhance this building and contribute to the significance of the conservation area and this building as a heritage asset. The conversion of the upper floors into residential use will bring this vacant floorspace into active use which is supported by national planning policy.
- 7.32 It is therefore considered that the proposals support national and local planning policy with regard to the historic environment.

Local Residential Amenity

- 7.33 The proposal has been designed to ensure there will be no adverse impact on the amenity of surrounding buildings or that of prospective occupiers.

- 7.34 Whilst no private outdoor amenity space can be provided on this site, the building is located close to public amenities including parks and open spaces.
- 7.35 Due to its location in the town centre, the site has good access to services and public transport.

8 Summary and Conclusions

8.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared to support a proposed planning application for new residential units at 14 Market Place, Leek, Staffordshire, ST13 5HH.

8.2 Planning permission is being sought for:

‘Conversion of first and second floors to create three, one bedroomed flats and two storey side extension’.

8.3 The applicants have instructed Building Link Design to design a scheme for the sustainable conversion of the upper floors of an existing building to residential use whilst retaining the ground floor retail unit. The building is located in the town centre and the proposed uses accord with the aspirations of planning policy for the applications sites central location and the aspiration of planning policy to promote residential use on upper floors of buildings where it does not comprise the buildings viability or vitality.

8.4 The revised proposals will deliver improvements to the appearance of the building through the removal of existing advertisements at first floor level. All other external alterations have been kept to a minimum to ensure the significance of the Conservation Area is preserved.

8.5 The proposal will result in the conversion and extension of the building to residential use through the provision of three residential units, bringing currently vacant floorspace back into active use in the town centre.

8.6 The units will comply with Lifetimes Homes standards wherever possible.

8.7 Accordingly, the proposals are fully consistent with the strategic and local objectives for Leek. The proposed scheme ensures that the most is made of the opportunities presented by the building and would make a positive contribution to the future social, economic and environmental well-being of this part of the town centre.

8.8 The proposal supports the policies of the development plan and in accordance with Section 38(6) of the 2004 Act, planning permission should be granted.

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