

PLANNING STATEMENT

**56 & 58 HIGH STREET
BIDDULPH**

OCTOBER 2025

Site Address:

56 & 58 High Street, Biddulph, Staffordshire, ST8 6AR

Applicant:

Biddulph & Tunstall Chiropody Clinic Limited

Proposal:

Change of use of first floor of premises to offices (Use Class E)

Planning Statement:

Date Issued: 16th October 2025

Job Reference: RDP/2025/088

Report Prepared By:

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Rob Duncan Planning Consultancy Ltd. has been instructed by Mr. S. Reilly of Biddulph & Tunstall Chiropody Clinic to seek full planning permission of the change of use of the existing first floor accommodation at nos. 56 & 58 High Street, Biddulph to form offices within Use Class E.
- 1.2 The existing first floor accommodation is understood to have been previously used for residential purposes as an apartment, albeit there is no planning history to support this. The existing accommodation at first floor nevertheless points to this being the case, including the presence of a fireplace, and a kitchen.
- 1.3 The application proposes the change of use of the first floor accommodation to form offices, comprising of four individual office spaces, with an associated kitchen / staff area and toilet / bathroom. The gross internal floor area of the first floor of the building extends to approximately 86 square metres. The application does not propose any changes to the external appearance of the building.
- 1.4 The first floor accommodation is accessed via a pedestrian doorway off High Street, and also has a secondary access off South View via an existing rear courtyard and external stairwell. The site does not benefit from any off-street car parking provision. The external courtyard at the rear of the building, accessed off South View does nevertheless offer space for the secure storage of bicycles.

2 Site & Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site is located within the town centre of Biddulph, and comprises a two storey commercial premises located on the western side of High Street, and on the northwest corner of the crossroads between High Street, South View and King Street.
- 2.2 The ground floor of the premises is long established in commercial use (Use Class E) and has three separate display windows, two fronting towards High Street, the third fronting towards South View. At first floor above there is vacant accommodation that is understood to have been previously used as a residential apartment.
- 2.3 The existing building is constructed from red racing brickwork with a grey tiled roof atop. The corner of the first floor of the building overhangs the pedestrian entrance at ground floor below, forming a modest canopy feature.
- 2.4 To the west of the building lies an existing yard area serving the site, which is accessed via a pedestrian door off South View. A stairwell provides an emergency access to the first floor accommodation. Extending westwards away from the site along South View are a number of terraced residential properties.
- 2.5 Commercial premises extend northwards away from the site along High Street, with further commercial premises located to the south and east on the opposite sides of South View and High Street respectively.
- 2.6 The site is located within the defined settlement boundary of Biddulph, and is also located within the Biddulph Town Centre Boundary.

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into account of any material considerations.

3.2 The Development Plan for this area comprises the following documents:

- Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020)
- Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan (2023)

3.3 The following policies of the Development Plan are of relevance to the determination of this application.

Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

3.4 Policy SS1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development Principles' and 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

3.5 Policy SS6 of the Local Plan relates to the 'Biddulph Area Strategy' and states that the Council and its partners will seek to enhance the role of Biddulph as a significant service centre and a market town and support its regeneration. This will be achieved through a number of actions, including creating employment growth and increase the diversity of employment opportunities to meet existing and future needs by:

- Supporting the retention and growth of existing businesses within the town.
- Providing opportunities for new enterprises and businesses by promoting further development.
- Providing facilities and sites for new start-up businesses.

3.6 Policy E1 of the Local Plan relates to 'New Employment Development' and 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 a number of provisions, including:

- 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.
- New business developments (use class B1a) should be located in existing or proposed employment areas or in or on the edge of town centres. Preference will be given to town centre locations for office developments, unless ancillary to another use or specifically allocated. In other locations the Council will expect a sequential demonstration that there were no centre or edge of centre sites available first. Office (Class B1a) developments of 200m² gross or more must provide an impact assessment regarding the impact of the proposal on town centre vitality

and viability. This will not apply to appropriate expansions of existing authorised B1 sites.

3.7 Policy TCR1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development in the Town Centres' and states that the vitality and viability of the town centres of Leek, Biddulph and Cheadle (defined on the Policies Maps) will be protected and enhanced by positive management as follows:

1. Focusing and promoting retailing as well as other key town centre uses such as offices, leisure and cultural facilities within the town centres.
2. Supporting positive measures and proposals which enhance and regenerate the shopping and town centre environment and promote their tourism potential.
3. Enhancing local distinctiveness by supporting proposals which help retain, attract or expand the provision of independent retailers in the town centres including niche markets.
4. Ensuring new development is well related to pedestrian shopping routes.
5. Ensuring there are adequate parking facilities in suitable locations in and around the town centres and good access to the town centres is strengthened for those using public transport, cycling or walking.
6. Setting out design principles to improve and enhance the distinctive heritage of the town centres including high quality public spaces as well as minimising the risk of crime and considering the needs of disabled people.

7. Promoting housing on upper floors within town centres where this does not jeopardise their vitality and viability.

3.8 Policy DC1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Design Considerations' and states that all development should be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design SPD. It goes on to state that new development should (amongst others):

- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing 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, height, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance
- protect the amenity of the area, including creation of healthy active environments and residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping, as well as noise, odour and light pollution.
- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use.

3.9 Policy T1 of the Local Plan relates to 'Development and Sustainable Transport' and states that the Council will promote and support development which reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and accommodates residual development traffic in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. This will be achieved by:

1. Ensuring that all new development is located where the highway network can satisfactorily accommodate traffic generated by the development or can be improved as part of the development.
2. Ensuring that major development is located in areas that are accessible by sustainable travel modes or can be made accessible as part of the proposal.
3. Considering appropriate parking provision on a case by case basis with recourse to the parking guidance set out in Appendix 2.
4. Where appropriate all new development shall facilitate walking and cycling within neighbourhoods and town centres, and link with or extend identified walking or cycling routes. In addition applicants should also consider how their schemes can enhance the existing path network in line with the Staffordshire County Council Rights of Way Improvement Plan and also give consideration to the protection of non-definitive public footpath routes in addition to definitive routes.

Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan

- 3.10 Policy LE1 of the Neighbourhood Plan relates to 'Biddulph Town Centre' and states that within the defined town centre (as defined on the map of the Biddulph Town Centre), in addition to retail development other uses will be supported where they support and enhance the town centre's vitality and viability. Where planning permission is required for the change of use of ground floor frontages to uses which are not open to the public, including residential use, any existing shopfront should be retained or provided.

3.11 Policy DES1 of the Neighbourhood Plan relates to 'Design' and states that new development must complement the local context and be sustainable.

Development must:

- complement the existing character and townscape in terms of scale and massing;
- complement the established layout in terms of set-back from the road and spacing around dwellings;
- use high quality, durable materials, to complement the site, character and surrounding context;
- provide sustainable drainage and permeable surfaces in hard landscaped areas;
- provide screened storage space for bins and recycling.

3.12 Policy DES2 of the Neighbourhood Plan relates to 'Public Realm, Car Parking and Movement' and states that new development must demonstrate high standards of urban design by (amongst other measures):

- providing ease of movement for pedestrian routes and footpaths, including links to local services;
- providing a mix of car parking as an integral part of the layout, including garages, covered spaces and driveways, so that vehicles do not dominate the streets and spaces;

4 Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The National Planning Policy Framework seeks to secure the delivery of sustainable development and set out policies, *inter-alia*, in respect of boosting the economy, safeguarding town centres and ensuring highway safety. The content of the NPPF has been taken into consideration in the preparation of this application.

Staffordshire Moorlands Growth Strategy

- 4.2 The Growth Strategy identifies a clear demand for small-scale office provision within the District to sustain local business growth and to grow the economy. It goes on to confirm that employment growth is a key political priority within the Moorlands. The content of the Growth Strategy 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 existing first floor premises at nos.56 & 58 High Street, Biddulph to offices within Use Class E. The site is located within the defined settlement boundary of Biddulph and its current use is understood to comprise a residential apartment (currently vacant).
- 5.2 Policy SS6 of the Local Plan seeks to enhance the role of Biddulph as a significant service centre and a market town and support its regeneration. It places an emphasis on supporting the growth of existing businesses within the town, providing opportunities for new enterprises and businesses by promoting further development, and providing facilities and sites for new start-up businesses.
- 5.3 The provisions of policy SS6 of the Local Plan are reinforced by policy E2, which confirms that the Council will endeavour to support the expansion of existing businesses and new businesses in the District, placing an emphasis on maintaining and enhancing an appropriate range of employment premises across the District in terms of their scale, location and type.
- 5.4 The provisions of paragraph 85 of the NPPF are also of relevance, confirming 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. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its

strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential” (our emphasis)

- 5.5 The Local Authority’s Growth Strategy (2025-2028) provides clear evidence of a pressing need for new smaller office premises within the District in order to sustain local business growth, retain talent and diversify the economy. It also emphasises that over 92% of local businesses employ fewer than ten people, indicating that demand is strongest for smaller, flexible and modern workspaces suitable for micro and start-up enterprises.
- 5.6 The proposed change of use of the existing first floor accommodation to offices is firmly in accordance with the above policy objectives. The site occupies a sustainable location within the town centre and will provide a small-scale office premises that will be suitable for new / start-up enterprises, thus helping to boost the local economy.
- 5.7 Based on Homes and Community Agency Employment Density Guide (3rd Edition), the proposed offices could reasonably be expected to generate up to 7no. full time jobs, based on a density of one job per 12 square metres of floorspace. Such economic benefits lend significant weight in favour of the proposed development.
- 5.8 Having regard to the above considerations the proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policies SS6 and E2 of the Local Plan and guidance set out within the National Planning Policy Framework. The principle of development is therefore acceptable.

Town Centre Impact

- 5.9 The site is located within the defined town centre boundary of Biddulph. Policy E2 of the Local Plan confirms that new business developments (use class B1a – now use class E) should be located in existing or proposed employment areas or in or on the edge of town centres. The policy goes on to state that preference will be given to town centre locations for office developments. These provisions are broadly reflective of paragraph 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework which encourages likewise.
- 5.10 The provisions of policy E2 of the Local Plan are reinforced by Policy TCR1 which confirms that the vitality and viability of the town centre will be protected and enhanced by positive management, including focusing and promoting retailing and other key town centre uses such as offices within the town centre, as well as ensuring new development is well related to pedestrian shopping routes. Policy LE1 of the Neighbourhood Plan likewise confirms support for retail development and other uses where they will support and enhance the town centre's vitality and viability.
- 5.11 The application proposes the change of use of otherwise vacant first floor accommodation to provide new offices, which in themselves constitute an appropriate town centre use. The proposal will therefore make a positive contribution towards maintaining and enhancing the vitality and viability of Biddulph Town Centre, in accordance with the objectives of policies E2 and TCR1 of the Local Plan, policy LE1 of the Neighbourhood Plan and paragraph 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Design & Layout

- 5.12 The application does not propose, nor require any changes to the external appearance of the building. The proposal entails a change of use of the

premises only. Consequently, the proposed development will not give rise to any adverse harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area.

5.13 The site will be accessed via the existing pedestrian access off High Street, which provides a dedicated stairwell to the first floor accommodation. The ground floor commercial uses have their own separate pedestrian access points. At the rear of the premises there is a small courtyard which can be accessed via an external stairwell, with a doorway connecting it with South View to the south.

5.14 The premises will operate during normal working hours and consequently no adverse harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers will arise as a consequence of the development. The proposal is therefore held to meet the requirements of policies SS1 and DC1 of the Local Plan, and policy DES1 of the Neighbourhood Plan in this regard.

Highway Safety

5.15 Policy T1 of the Local Plan seeks to ensure that new development reduces reliance on the private car for travel journeys, reduces the need to travel generally and accommodates residual development traffic in line with the Integrated Transport Strategy. This will be achieved by a number of actions including considering appropriate parking provision on a case by case basis.

5.16 Policy TCR1 of the Local Plan confirms that developments within the town centre should ensure there are adequate parking facilities in suitable locations in and around the town centres and good access to the town centres is strengthened for those using public transport, cycling or walking. These objectives are reflected further by policy DC1 of the Local Plan and policy DES2 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 5.17 The site does not provide any off-street parking provision, but that is not considered to imperil the proposal. The site occupies a highly sustainable location within the town centre and is accessible by a wide range of means of transportation, including walking, cycling and public transport.
- 5.18 The nearest public transport connections are a very short walk away along High Street to the south. There also exists a courtyard area to the rear of the premises, accessed via a doorway off South View, that provides opportunities for the secure storage of bicycles so as to further encourage more sustainable modes of transport. Future users of the offices will therefore have a choice in their means of transportation to access the site.
- 5.19 Given the highly sustainable location of the site, it is submitted that the absence of any off-street parking does not derive any severe residual impacts to highway safety within the locality, and as a consequence the proposal is held to meet the requirements of policies T1, TCR1 and DC1 of the Local Plan, policy DES2 of the Neighbourhood Plan and guidance set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 5.20 The submitted proposal entails the change of use of an existing premises to offices, and does not necessitate, nor involve the removal of any habitat. As a consequence the proposal is exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain requirements.

6 Conclusion

6.1 The submitted proposal constitutes a sustainable form of development having regard to the following conclusions:

- The proposal constitutes an appropriate form of development within the defined settlement boundary of Biddulph.
- The proposal constitutes an appropriate town centre use within the defined town centre of Biddulph
- The proposal will support local economic growth.
- The proposal will not result in harm to the character and appearance of the surrounding area or the amenity of neighbouring occupiers.
- The site occupies a highly sustainable location and the proposal will not give rise to any severe residual impacts to highway safety.
- The development is exempt from statutory biodiversity net gain requirements.

6.2 The proposed development is consequently held to meet the requirements of policies SS1, SS65, E1, TCR1, DC1 and T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan (2020), policies LE1, DES1 and DES2 of the Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan, and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.