

DELEGATED DECISION REPORT

SMD/2025/0447
Valid 17/10/2025

56 & 58 HIGH STREET
BIDDULPH

**CHANGE OF USE OF FIRST
FLOOR OF PREMISES TO
OFFICES (USE CLASS E)**

(FULL - MINOR)

MAIN ISSUES

- Loss of a housing unit
- Highway Safety and Parking

DESCRIPTION OF SITE

The site consists of a second storey flat which forms part of a larger two storey red brick building on Biddulph High Street, the ground floor of which is currently in Class E commercial use. The planning history for the site shows it was originally a flat, and then in 1979 was converted to office use, and then converted back to a flat again in 2023. The site is in a town centre location, and within the Biddulph Development Boundary.

PROPOSAL

The application seeks permission for the change of use of the first floor flat into offices. The application does not propose any changes to the external appearance of the building.

RELEVANT LOCAL AND NATIONAL PLANNING POLICIES

Local Plan (adopted 9th September 2020)

SS1 Development Principles
SS2 Settlement Hierarchy
SS6 Biddulph Area Strategy
DC1 Design Considerations
E1 New Employment Development
T1 Development and Sustainable Transport

Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan

LE1 Biddulph Town Centre
DES1 Design
DES2 Public Realm, Car Parking and Movement

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph(s) 1 -14, 47, 109, 131, 135, 139.

Section(s) 4 – Decision making, 9 – Promoting sustainable transport, 12 – Achieving well designed and beautiful places.

Adopted Supplementary Planning Documents/Guidance (SPD/G):

- Design Principles for Development in the Staffordshire Moorlands
- Staffordshire Moorlands Design Guide SPD
- Space About Dwellings SPD

SITE HISTORY / RELEVANT PREVIOUS APPLICATIONS

- SMD/1979/1591 (OLD REFERENCE: 79/07848/OLDDC). DESCRIPTION: Change of use of first floor flat to offices. DECISION: APPROVED
- DET/2023/0023. DESCRIPTION: Application to determine if prior approval is required for a proposed change of use from office to residential flat. DECISION: PNNOT
- SMD/2025/0449. DESCRIPTION: Lawful Development Certificate for a Proposed use of the premises falling within Use Class E. DECISION: PENDING.

CONSULTATIONS

Publicity

Site Notice expiry date: Expired

Neighbour consultation period ends: Expired

Press Advert: N/A

Public Comments

None received.

Town / Parish Comments

Support approval.

Staffordshire County Council Highways

No comments received.

OFFICER COMMENTS

Principle of Development

In accordance with Policies SS1 and SS2 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan the Council expects all new development to make a positive contribution towards the sustainability of communities and to protect and where possible enhance the environment.

Policy LE1 of the Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan relates to the town centre and supports a mix of uses where they support and enhance the town centre's vitality and viability. Converting a residential unit to office space could be interpreted as enhancing the town centres vitality as it suggests a local business is expanding, while wishing to remain in the town centre.

The downside is the loss of a housing unit when the Council cannot demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply, however one unit is not such a great loss that it should impede this development, and the office space can be converted back into residential use under Permitted Development, as was the case in DET/2023/0023. Furthermore, the site is within the Biddulph Development Boundary and therefore acceptable in principle.

Design

SMDC Policy DC1 requires development to be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area; and 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, character and appearance.

Paragraphs 131 and 135 of the NPPF outline what is expected of good design and required for the development of high quality, beautiful places, and provides for a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. The application does not propose any changes to the external appearance of the building and therefore is considered acceptable in terms of design.

Amenity

Paragraph 135 f) of the NPPF seeks to secure a high standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants. Local Plan Policy DC1 requires development to achieve a satisfactory relationship to adjacent development and to not cause unacceptable effects by reason of visual intrusion, overlooking, shadowing, overbearing effect, noise, light pollution or other adverse impacts on local character and amenity. The change of use from a residence to offices will not impact the local amenity, both uses are consider to be compatible with one another. Therefore the proposed development would not harm surrounding residential amenity and is acceptable in this regard.

Highway Safety

Paragraph 109 of the NPPF states that patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes and contribute to making high quality places. Policy DES2 of the Biddulph Neighbourhood Plan and

Policy T1 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan seeks to provide safe and sustainable access and ensure that development can accommodate the required vehicular parking, in line with Appendix 2.

The application does not make it clear whether the offices are to be used in association with the ground floor business, so this is assumed to be the case. The parking guidance also uses the old use classes, whereby financial services (present ground floor use) and medical services (use proposed in SMD/2025/0449) are still separated by their old use classes (A2 and D1 respectively), and have different parking requirements. However, the site has no off street parking and none is proposed. Due to the town centre location of the premises and the fact it is a short walk from town centre parking and large retail car parks, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in this regard. The site is considered to be located within a sustainable location with access to public transport and local services and facilities.

CONCLUSION / PLANNING BALANCE

The proposed development is recommended for approval as it complies with the relevant national, local and neighbourhood policies, and is acceptable in principle, as well as in regards to highway safety and amenity.

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION : APPROVE, subject to conditions

Case Officer: Reuben Berriman

Recommendation Date: 12/12/2025

X 

Signed by: Jane Colley Signature

On behalf of Staffordshire Moorlands District Council