

This application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of the former Police Station to offices (Class B1(a) use)

The site lies within the Newcastle Town Centre Conservation Area and is also on the register of locally important buildings. It is located within the Primary Shopping Area of Newcastle Town Centre, but lies beyond the Primary Shopping Frontages, as identified by the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The statutory 13 week determination period for the planning application expires on 25th February 2019

RECOMMENDATIONS

PERMIT subject to conditions relating to:

- 1. Time limit**
- 2. Approved plans**
- 3. Provision of weatherproof parking for minimum of 4 cycles**
- 4. Delineation of car parking spaces**

Reason for Recommendation

The proposal complies with National and Local Policies regarding non-retail development within town centres and so is acceptable in principle. The proposal would bring a vacant building within the town centre back into use and so would contribute towards maintaining the viability and vitality of Newcastle Town Centre. The development would bring a Locally Important Building back into viable use and would not result in any harm to its character and appearance. In addition the proposal would not harm the Town Centre Conservation Area and as such would ensure that its significance is preserved and maintained. No parking or highway safety issues would arise from the application. Subject to conditions there are no objections to this development.

Statement as to how the Local Planning Authority has worked in a positive and proactive manner in dealing with the planning application

This is considered to be a sustainable form of development and so complies with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Key Issues

The application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of the former police station (sui generis use) to offices (Class B1a use).

The building is listed as a Locally Important Building and lies within the Town Centre Conservation Area. The site is also situated within the Town Centre, as identified by the Local Development Framework Proposals Map.

The main issues to be addressed in the determination of the application are as follows:-

1. Is the proposed development acceptable in principle?
2. Is the proposed development acceptable in relation to the visual amenities of the area, Conservation Area and this Locally Important Building?
3. Does the proposed development raise any adverse highway safety/parking concerns?

Principle of the proposed development

Paragraph 80 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states 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.

Paragraph 85 of the NPPF details that both planning policies and decisions should support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation. Planning policies should amongst other criteria define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability – by allowing them to grow and diversify in a way that can respond to rapid changes in the retail and leisure industries, allows a suitable mix of uses (including housing) and reflects their distinctive characters.

Policies within the Core Spatial Strategy seek to support and encourage economic development with Policy SP2 seeking to support economic development that results in improvement in the levels of productivity. Modernisation and competitiveness of existing economic activities.

The proposed change of use would see the building used as offices falling within Class B1(a) of the use class order. The ground, first and second floors would all be occupied by offices with the basement maintained for storage purposes.

The former sui generis use as a Police Station means that the proposal would not result in any loss of retail space within the Town Centre. The Newcastle Town Centre SPD identifies that the application sites straddles the Historic Core, the public heart of the town centre with retail uses at its core, and the Northern Quarter which is of a more mixed zone. Given its location within the Town Centre and the appropriate B1a use proposed, the development is considered to be acceptable in principle.

In addition to the above, as the building has sat vacant for a number of years, the proposed development would see a locally important building within the town centre brought back into use, and with it generating new employment opportunities and services that would contribute to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.

Therefore given the sites sustainable location within the Town Centre and the benefits that would arise from the development, the proposal would accord with Policy SP2 of the Core Spatial Strategy as well as the provisions of the NPPF.

Is the proposed development acceptable in relation to the visual amenities of the area, Conservation Area and this Locally Important Building?

It is a statutory duty to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of Conservation Area.

Paragraph 193 of the NPPF details that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset; great weight should be given to the assets conservation. The more important the asset the greater the weight should be and any harm or loss should require clear and convincing justification.

Policy CSP2 seeks to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the historic heritage of the Borough.

Policy B8 states that the Council will ensure the conservation of locally important buildings and structures by encouraging their retention, maintenance, appropriate use and restoration. Policies, B9, B10 and B13 all relate to development within Conservation Areas and the requirement to preserve or enhance its character or appearance.

The proposal is for the change of use of the entire building to offices. Currently the building has sat vacant since around 2012 and so the proposed change of use would ensure that this locally important building is brought back into a viable use, securing its longer term future.

There are no external changes proposed to the building, and so visually the development would preserve the special character of the building and this part of the Town Centre Conservation Area. Its use as offices within a town centre, and surrounded by a variety of other commercial and retail uses is

also considered to be appropriate. The proposal will therefore not result in any harm to the Conservation Area

Both the Council's Conservation Officer and Conservation Advisory Working Party have no objections to the proposed development.

Therefore in light of the above the proposed development is considered to preserve and maintain the significance of this local important building and the surrounding Conservation Area. It would comply with Policy CSP2 of the Core Spatial Strategy, Policies, B8, B9, B10 and B13 of the Local Plan as well as the provisions of the NPPF.

Highway safety/parking

Paragraph 109 of the Framework states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Policy T16 of the Local Plan states that development which provides significantly less parking than the maximum specified levels will not be permitted if this would create or aggravate a local on-street parking or traffic problem, and furthermore that development may be permitted where local on-street problems can be overcome by measures to improve non-car modes of travel to the site and/or measures to control parking and waiting in nearby streets.

However, Paragraph 106 of the Framework states that maximum parking standards for non-residential development should only be set where there is a clear a compelling justification that they are necessary for managing the local road network, or for optimising the design of development in town centres that are well served by public transport. It goes on to state that in town centres local authorities should seek to improve the quality of parking so that it is convenient, safe and secure, alongside measures to promote accessibility for pedestrians and cyclists.

The site benefits from an existing car park to the west of the main building that provides space for 15 vehicles with a further 6 spaces available within the undercroft loading bay. These spaces would be retained as part of the proposals and so provides sufficient parking for the proposed use. Also given the sites location within the town centre, there are a variety of public transport links available, and town centre parking for visitors.

The Highway Authority raises no objections to the development subject to the provision of secure weatherproof parking for 4 cycles, and the clear delineation of the car parking spaces prior to the first use of the development.

Therefore in light of the above the proposal would not raise any adverse highway safety and/or parking issues and so would comply with the provisions of the NPPF.

APPENDIX

Policies and proposals in the approved development plan relevant to this decision:-

[Newcastle-under-Lyme and Stoke-on-Trent Core Spatial Strategy \(CSS\) 2006-2026](#)

Policy SP1: Spatial Principles of Targeted Regeneration
Policy SP2: Spatial Principles of Economic Development
Policy SP3: Spatial Principles of Movement and Access
Policy CSP1: Design Quality
Policy CSP2: Historic Environment
Policy CSP3: Sustainability and Climate Change

[Newcastle-under-Lyme Local Plan \(NLP\) 2011](#)

Policy ASP5: Newcastle and Kidsgrove Urban Neighbourhoods Area Spatial Policy
Policy B8: Other Buildings of Historic or Architectural Interest
Policy B9: Prevention of Harm to Conservation Areas
Policy B10: Requirement to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area
Policy B13: Design and Development in Conservation Areas
Policy T16: Development – General Parking Requirements
Policy T18: Development – Servicing Requirements

Other Material Considerations include:

[National Planning Policy Framework \(2019\)](#)

[Planning Practice Guidance \(2018\)](#)

Newcastle Town Centre Supplementary Planning Document (2009)

Relevant Planning History

None considered relevant

Views of Consultees

The Council's **Environmental Protection Division** has no objections to the application.

The Council's **Conservation Officer** has no objections to the application but notes that if signage is required it should comply with policy and gain the necessary consent.

The **Conservation Advisory Working Party** has no objections to the proposed development

The Council's **Waste Management Department** notes that the property will require commercial waste collection services for the waste generated within the building to be legally disposed of. They note that the Borough Council can provide this service.

The **Highway Authority** has no objections to the proposal subject to conditions to secure, weatherproof details of a secure cycle parking facility and that parking spaces are delineated prior to first use.

Representations

None received

Applicant's/Agent's submission

All of the application documents submitted for consideration are available for inspection on the Council's website and can be viewed using the following link; <https://publicaccess.newcastle-staffs.gov.uk/online-applications/plan/19/00925/COU>

Background papers

Planning file
Development Plan

Date report prepared

20th January 2020