



PLANNING STATEMENT

CHANGE OF USE FROM GROUND FLOOR RETAIL UNITS TO 2NO. FLATS

303-307 BARNSELEY ROAD, CUDWORTH, BARNSELEY, S72 8SY

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1. INTRODUCTION

The proposal which forms the subject of this application for planning permission is for the change of use from ground floor units to 2No apartments, at a site known as 303-307 Barnsley Road, Cudworth. The applicants, Mint Livin Ltd, seek to invest significant capital to fully restore the building back into beneficial use, which will remove a current eyesore in this local district centre.

This planning support statement is submitted with the application in order to ensure that the Council have full information and details relating to the background to the proposal, together with its relationship to planning policy. It is considered that this statement demonstrates to the Council that when judged against planning policy and all material considerations, it is clearly the case that planning permission for the change of use proposed should be granted.

This statement now proceeds to give details of the site, the proposal and background. The issues that the proposal raises are then examined and finally the conclusion is drawn that in reference to the development plan and all material considerations this would point to the grant of planning permission for the proposed development.

Whilst it is considered for the reasons set out in this statement that planning permission should be granted, nevertheless the applicant remains willing to assist the Council by providing any further information required in respect of all aspects of the proposal.

2. THE SITE, THE PROPOSAL & BACKGROUND

The subject site forms 1 block of 2No retail units at ground floor level. The upper floors are in use as a HMO but this area does not form part of the application. The site has recently been purchased by the applicant. It is understood that the retail units have been empty for some time and are now disused and boarded. In its current form and condition the site detracts from the general amenity of the area and the vitality and viability of the District centre.

The site is located in a sustainable urban location on public transport routes and is situated in a local district shopping centre. Other typical local shopping centre commercial uses are located around the site. The site is close to other residential development.

From the lengthy period that the property has been on the market and disused (in excess of 18 months), it has become clear that it will not be possible to let or sell the retail units as there is no demand for these or indeed other similar commercial use. This is clearly reflective of the general trends in retailing and commercial uses. The applicant wishes to invest significant funds in the property to ensure the improvement of living conditions of future residents. The applicant cannot invest in a scheme which would not be economically viable. The shop units are considered to be wholly unviable. Therefore, this application seeks the change of use of the ground floor to 6No apartments to ensure that the proposed development is economically viable, deliverable and can proceed.

In summary, the current position is:-

- It is clear that there is no current demand for the site for 2no retail units, for retail or other town centre uses;
- In the current climate there appears likely to be little future demand; and
- Owing to general changes in retailing, the likelihood of the retail use or other commercial use becoming viable seems to be slim.

Given the site's location on a prominent street frontage, it is considered that the site remaining empty and disused is not assisting the vitality and viability of this district centre. Indeed, it is considered a detriment to the local centre for this site to remain empty and disused. It is considered that the use of the site for residential purposes will result in the redevelopment of the site which can only assist in economic regeneration. It will also provide much needed housing in a highly sustainable location. It is considered that it is no one's interest (and indeed not in the interests of the proper planning of the area) for the site to remain disused.

It is clear that the redevelopment of the subject site will bring this disused site and urban resource back into full beneficial use, which will have some small scale economic benefit, will provide much needed housing and will assist the vitality and viability of the District centre.

The current application follows a recent refusal at the site for a more comprehensive redevelopment including the upper floors. The council had no concerns over the loss of the retail units previously but raised a number of other issues which have been addressed in full as part of this resubmission. These matters are expanded on in more detail below.

The Council is urged to support the proposal.

3. PLANNING ISSUES

This application follows a recent refusal at the site and subsequent pre-application discussions with the relevant planning officer, Mr Nathan Denman. The previous application (ref 2020/1345) was for the “change of use of ground floor retail units with HMO above to 6no.apartments including external alterations” and was refused on the following grounds:

“A number of the proposed room sizes and flats are not up to the minimum standards as expected within SPD: Design of Housing Development and the South Yorkshire Residential Design Guide (SYRDG). In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the proposed development does not provide adequate living and internal amenity space for future residents, contrary to Local Plan Policy GD1, SPD: Design of Housing Development and the SYRDG.”

And,

“The proposed development does not provide any off-street parking to support the proposed use, nor does it provide any Electric Vehicle charging points. In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the proposed development therefore does not provide adequate off-street parking for future residents, contrary to SPD: Parking and Local Plan Policy T4: New Development and Transport Safety and the proposal will not support or encourage Sustainable travel, contrary to SPD: Sustainable Travel.”

And,

“In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority, the proposed development fails to provide the adequate shared private space which is required for 6 no. flats of this nature and does not uphold the minimum external space standards expected of new residential development to the detriment of residential amenity of the future occupants, contrary to Local Plan Policy GD1 and SPD: Design of Housing Development.”

In relation to the first reason for refusal, the proposal has been significantly reduced in terms of unit numbers. The proposed flats now fully comply with the SYDG in terms of unit and room sizes. The proposed flats would benefit from excellent light levels and the proposal would clearly provide a high standard of living environment. The first reason for refusal has therefore been fully addressed.

Turning to the second reason for refusal, the site is located in a highly sustainable location with outstanding access to public transport links and services. Furthermore, the site is located directly opposite a public car park. The Parking SPD states:

“It has been generally accepted that the availability of car parking has a major influence on a person’s choice of transport. The restriction and control of parking facilities within all new developments/redevelopment, especially in areas which are readily accessible by other modes of transport, has an effect on the choice of transport promoting more sustainable choices, and also potentially releases land for other uses.”

The SPD clearly provides scope for developments which do not meet parking standards provided they are in sustainable locations. This criteria is clearly met in this instance and the lack of parking would actually discourage car ownership/ usage given the location of the site. The council have applied similar discretion elsewhere, for example at Holland Town hall, and there is no reason to refuse this application on the grounds of parking/ EV points.

In relation to the third reason for refusal, the existing yard area to the rear of the site measures 61m² and this will be provided as shared amenity space for the proposed residents of the two flats. This is considered much larger than at most flats in Barnsley. Again, the council have demonstrated a degree of flexibility elsewhere in this regard and it is anticipated that this will not be a reason for refusal in the proposed scheme.

It is therefore considered that all previous concerns have been addressed.

4. CONCLUSION

The subject site forms a prominently located block of 2No ground floor retail premises. The retail units have been unused and boarded for in excess of 18 months as there is no demand for retail units or town centre uses in the area. The nature of the building is detrimental to the amenity of the general area and is harmful to the vitality and viability of the district centre.

It has to be recognised that there has been a sharp decline in the demand for retail and other traditional town centre uses in town and district centres and that decline shows little chance of slowing in the foreseeable future as consumer's habits change. The choice for the Council, therefore, is whether they want to support a proposal which will bring the site back into full beneficial use and provide much needed housing in a sustainable location or resist the proposal ensuring that the building is trapped into disuse at ground floor.

The grant of planning permission will allow much needed investment into this building, which will provide immediate improvements to the local environment and vitality and viability of the district centre. At the same time it will provide much needed housing in a sustainable location. It is clear by reference to the NPPF that residential development can have an important role to play in the vitality and viability of town centre. The applicant has addressed all previous reasons for refusal.

The council are therefore urged to support this application and grant planning permission. Nevertheless, the applicant remains willing to discuss all aspects of the proposal with the Council.