PLANNING STATEMENT

CHANGE OF USE OF A BUILDING FROM OFFICE/ STORAGE BACK TO CLASS C3 DWELLING.

Silverwood Garden Centre Browns Gate Long Sutton Spalding

Prepared by:

Mark Simmonds Planning Services

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1. INTRODUCTION

Mark Simmonds Planning Services have been instructed by Mr & Mrs J Tyrrell of Silverwood Garden Centre, Browns Gate, Long Sutton to prepare and submit a planning application for the change of use of the office back to a dwelling on site. This would allow the building to return to its previous use as a dwelling.

On the 30th June 2016 permission was granted on site for a replacement dwelling which at the time of writing this statement is substantially built. The site itself consists of Silverwood Garden Centre, the dwelling subject to this application, and several other outbuildings which have been used for other local businesses. The replacement dwelling has been built at the far end of the site. The applicant applied for the change of use of this dwelling to that of an office back in 2020 and this was permitted under planning reference H11-0742-20 by the Planning Committee at SHDC.

This application was made in the very early stages of the Covid pandemic and the changes to working practices was not established or felt at that time and it is only now, that the applicant has felt the change in home working practices which have left the now office building underutilised.

1.1 Documents

This planning application is supported by the following documents:

Planning Statement;

Site Plan

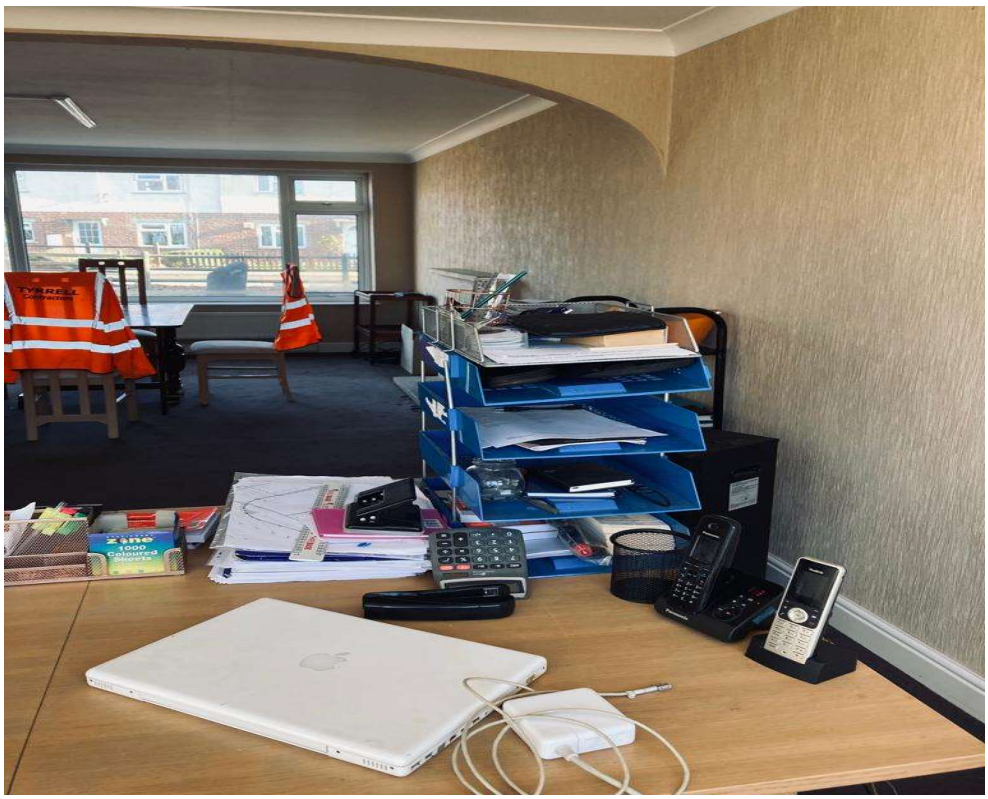
Floor plans

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

The full application is for a change of use from an officer back to a dwelling. The change of use to an office was originally permitted under planning reference H11-0742-20.

2.1 THE CHANGE OF USE

The previous change of use to an office was permitted on 12th December 2020 and this was implemented shortly after with a number of computers and office furniture installed and staff attending the building for work.







The building is located to the side of the garden centre and enjoys a separate access off Browns Gate and has a generous amount of parking which would accommodate a number of cars; the screenshot of the site below demonstrates the suitability of the access and the extent of parking which can be suitability utilised by this change of use back to a dwelling.



The building is set back from the road but enjoys an open position in this street scene and is part of this built vista along Browns Gate.

The building is structurally sound and requires very little in the way of reconfiguration to allow it to become fully usable as a dwelling once again. Although as part of the permission for the replacement house, this unit was conditioned to be demolished it is respectfully put to the Council that the replacement dwelling sits some distance from this unit on the far end of the site and this building could again be fully utilised to provide a family home.

It was not the applicant's original intention to be in this position of applying to revert the use back to its original residential use, however the pandemic resulted in unexpected changes in working practices.

2.2 Working From Home:

At the height of the pandemic the majority of workers who could work from home did and this was encouraged/enforced under Government rules. This has led to employers investing in IT and streamlining practices to facilitate working from home for

employees. This was universal ranging from small companies to larger corporations including local and central government including Councils.

This trend for working from home does not seem to have declined in line with the lifting of Covid restrictions. The latest government figures confirm that between 19 and 30 January 2022, 36% of working adults reported having worked from home at least once in the last seven days because of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

YouGov details a number of articles which addresses the working from home trend and the Local Planning Authority is invited to read the link below as an example as this states that many people and businesses are convinced that workers will never return to offices at the same rate as before the pandemic, (with many believing this will disadvantage young employees). It states that half of British workers (50%) are still working from home at least some of the time, up from 37% before the pandemic. And an even higher number (60%) would prefer to work remotely always or some of the time if they could choose.

https://yougov.co.uk/topics/economy/articles-reports/2021/09/28/what-will-increased-remote-working-mean-britain

The applicants' employees have followed this working from home ethic, and with investment in upgraded IT, they have not only worked from home throughout the Pandemic as advised, but continued this practise even when restrictions have been lifted.

The applicant has found that apart from the occasional meeting and the attendance of staff to the office upon request, the majority of staff have efficiently and through personal choice, carried out their duties at home. In the average working week now, the applicant has found that the office is predominantly vacant which leads to questions to be asked with regard the heating of the building on a daily basis.

The initial change of use to an office was born out of a demand for office space with at least 6 employees attending the office 5 days a week during normal working hours, however the national trend to work from home has led to the building being largely

redundant and its maintenance and heating becoming an unnecessary burden on the applicant's business.

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3.0 SITE LOCATION AND PHYSICAL CONTEXT

The site is located on the rural outskirts of Long Sutton and is a well-established site with a long-standing garden centre which has grown and increased in popularity which also offers an outlet for other local business ventures. The site is also surrounded by existing residential development.

The site's location and boundaries are shown on the enclosed site location plan.

4.0 PLANNING POLICY

The proposals are supported by national planning guidance and by Local Plan policy, which makes it clear that the rural economy should be encouraged to grow to provide sustainable economic growth and jobs.

4.1. National Planning Policy Framework 2021

The newly revised National Planning Policy Framework ("the NPPF") is the foremost guidance for Local Planning Authorities.

The revised NPPF establishes the development plan as the starting point for the making of decisions, further, planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plans unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Paragraph 2 of the NPPF states that the National Planning Policy Framework is a material consideration when LPA's make planning decisions. Therefore, all planning decisions should have due regard to the NPPF and the relevant sections.

The most relevant sections of the Framework are considered to be:

Chapter 2: Achieving sustainable development

Chapter 4: Decision making

Chapter 5: Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

Chapter 11: Making effective use of land
Chapter 12: Achieving well-designed places

4.2 **The Development Plan**
South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, March 2019

If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, Section 38 (6) to the Town and Country Planning Act as amended by the 2004 Act states that the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

It is considered that the most pertinent policies to this appraisal is as follows:

Policy 1 - Spatial Strategy
Policy 2 - Development Management
Policy 3 - Design of New Development
Policy 30 - Pollution

4.5 Policy 2: Development Management, in particular mentions several considerations to be taken into account when considering a planning application:

Proposals requiring planning permission for development will be permitted provided that sustainable development considerations are met, specifically in relation to:

1. size, scale, layout, density and impact on the amenity, trees, character and appearance of the area and the relationship to existing development and land uses;
2. quality of design and orientation;
3. maximising the use of sustainable materials and resources;
4. access and vehicle generation levels;
5. the capacity of existing community services and infrastructure;
6. impact upon neighbouring land uses by reason of noise, odour, disturbance or visual intrusion;
7. sustainable drainage and flood risk;

8. impact or enhancement for areas of natural habitats and historical buildings and heritage assets; and
9. impact on the potential loss of sand and gravel mineral resources.

4.6 Policy 3 concentrates on the important design considerations of development:

Policy 3: Design of New Development

All development will create distinctive places through the use of high quality and inclusive design and layout and, where appropriate, make innovative use of local traditional styles and materials. Design which is inappropriate to the local area, or which fails to maximise opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area, will not be acceptable.

Development proposals will demonstrate how the following issues, where they are relevant to the proposal, will be secured:

1. creating a sense of place by complementing and enhancing designated and non designated heritage assets; historic street patterns; respecting the density, scale, visual closure, landmarks, views, massing of neighbouring buildings and the surrounding area;
2. distinguishing between private and public space;
3. the landscape character of the location;
4. accessibility by a choice of travel modes including the provision of public transport, public rights of way and cycle ways;
5. the provision of facilities for the storage of refuse/recycling bins, storage and/or parking of bicycles and layout of car parking;
6. the lighting of public places;
7. ensuring public spaces are accessible to all;
8. crime prevention and community safety;
9. the orientation of buildings on the site to enable the best use of decentralised and renewable low-carbon energy technologies for the lifetime of the development;
10. the appropriate treatment of facades to public places, including shop frontages to avoid visual intrusion by advertising, other signage, security shutters, meter boxes and other service and communication infrastructure;
11. residential amenity;
12. the mitigation of flood risk through flood-resistant and flood-resilient design and sustainable drainage systems (SuDS);

13.the use of locally sourced building materials, minimising the use of water and minimising land take, to protect best and most versatile soils;
14.the incorporation of existing hedgerows and trees and the provision of appropriate new landscaping to enhance biodiversity, green infrastructure, flood risk mitigation and urban cooling;
15.the appropriate use or reuse of historic buildings.

The site is located outside of any settlement boundary defined in the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan, 2019 (SELLP). Policy 23 of the SELLP indicates that proposals for the conversion of existing buildings which are located outside defined settlement boundaries to residential use will be permitted provided that:

1. the building is structurally sound and capable of conversion without the need for significant extension, alteration or rebuilding;
2. the building is of architectural or historic merit or makes a positive contribution to the character of the landscape, to justify conversion to ensure retention;
3. the proposal is in keeping with its surroundings;
4. the design is sympathetic to the character and appearance of the building in terms of architectural detailing and materials of construction; and
5. development leads to an enhancement of the immediate setting of the building.

4.7 Policy Analysis

The most pertinent planning considerations will be addressed separately further on in this statement but with regards to national policy this proposal is compliant in providing support and continued prosperity to a rural area.

The building, prior to this change of use, was very much a family dwelling and forms part of the linear form of residential development along this road. To return to its use as a dwelling creates very little in the way of harm; amenity remains unaffected and in terms of highways and flood risk this is an existing building, and the change of use creates no increased risk.

The dwelling originally was conditioned to be demolished as part of the permission for the replacement house on site. The change of use to that of an office negated the

principle of this condition, therefore in the absence of a need for the continued office use, we would be left with a situation of having a disused office on site which over time will become a detrimental visual impact and a detractor in the street scene to the detriment of the character and appearance of the area.

The building is structurally sound and visually, despite the change of use, retains all the characteristics of a traditional dwelling. There are no building works required, therefore in terms of disruption due to build works, there are none. There are also environmental benefits in reusing a building rather than demolishing it when its permitted use becomes redundant.

5 year land supply- The council is able to demonstrate a supply of deliverable sites equivalent to 8.5 years through the latest Housing Land Supply Assessment. The assessment covers the five-year period 2021/22 to 2025/26 and has been prepared in accordance with the revised National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance. However, achieving a supply over 5 years is not a limit to be reached which absolves the Council from planning for future homes. There is a fundamental national housing shortage, and the Council is respectfully asked to consider the nature of this building and the fact that it constitutes all the features and functionality of a dwelling without the need for anything actually being built.

The building is an established feature in the street scene and reflects the design and character of other nearby dwellings. The location of the building and its detachment from an alternative business and the national trend of home working, means that its rental as an office is unlikely. Its return to its use as a dwelling, respectfully employs a common-sense approach and prevents a perfectly functional dwelling being lost through demolition.

The Council is respectfully asked to consider the proposals compliance with Local Plan policy and the national planning guidance contained within the NPPF and that it does not undermine the objectives of that planning policy and guidance and would cause any additional harm.

5.0 OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Access and Highways

The development would continue to be served by the existing road infrastructure and there is no likely additional impact from the return to use as a dwelling. The site is well set out with clear visibility for access and egress and provides generous parking arrangements for a family within the site.

The building enjoys a good degree of separation from the wider site and its use of as garden centre and other associated activities. The dwelling maintains its previous levels of privacy and the curtilage of the dwelling and amenity space is well screened from any activity.

Flood Risk

The site is within a flood risk area – Zone 3 as is a large extent of Long Sutton. As this is a proposed change of use from office to its previous designated use as residential, the proposal does not increase any risk beyond what was initially intended. The Council is asked to consider the predominantly residential area surrounding the site.

Landscape/Visual Impact

There would be no material adverse visual or landscape impacts. The site is already characterised by the dwelling and the backdrop of the Garden Nursery and associated business enterprises on site. The external appearance has not been altered at all to accommodate the permitted office use and internally only very minor works are required to return the building to its original intended use.

Archaeological Heritage

There are no known heritage or archaeological impacts.

Socio-economic

The building has now become a burden on the business as the predominant working practise is now that of ‘home working’. The heating, running and maintenance costs of the office is no longer a justifiable expense with its actual use dwindling away to a level that it is not economically viable.

The proposal would return a quality family home to the market in a location which is a notable residential area.

Ecology

There is no reason why the proposed development should have any material impact upon ecology in the local area. There would be no impact upon any ecology in the wider area.

The building is still in use and has been regularly accessed by the applicant and staff and is secure and watertight. There is no reason to suspect any ecological activity or use by protected species.

6.0 Conclusion

Taking into account the above, it is considered that the proposal is sustainable and will see a building returned to its original established residential use.

The proposal is not harmful to amenity, does not severely effect highways and will not be harmful to the environment or ecology. It will however make good use of a perfectly good building which can no longer sustain/justify its office use.

The Council is respectfully asked to consider the benefits of the proposal and its general conformity to both national and local plan policy requirements.

Angela Simmonds
For and on Behalf of Mark Simmonds Planning Services
February 2022.