

Application Reference	DC/077225
Location:	Frederick House 3 Raleigh Street South Reddish Stockport SK5 7ER
PROPOSAL:	Change of use from existing industrial to D1, non residential education.
Type Of Application:	Full Application
Registration Date:	29.07.2020
Expiry Date:	20200923
Case Officer:	Jeni Regan
Applicant:	Outcomes First Group
Agent:	Walker Associates

DELEGATION/COMMITTEE STATUS

Planning and Highways Regulation Committee – Development is a Departure from the Development Plan.

Application referred to Heaton and Reddish Area Committee for comment and recommendation only.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application site is an existing light industrial building located on an island site bounded by Raleigh Street, Weston Street, Conway Street and Ann Street. It comprises a large modern portal framed workshop building with office and ancillary accommodation to one side and with a parking area for 16 cars to the front. The building is a combination of a double height workshop with a two storey element attached to the side.

The car parking area to the front is accessed from an existing vehicular access point from Weston Street and is surrounded by an existing paladin weld mesh security fence and gates. There is a small yard area to the rear of the building on the corner of Conway Street and Ann Street, which again is enclosed by an existing paladin weld mesh security fence and gates.

There is an existing hedge around the eastern boundary of the site onto Raleigh Street along the boundary facing the existing residential properties opposite at Nos. 74 to 77 Drake Court. This is the only soft landscaping at the site.

The application property lies within a small industrial area located off Reddish Road / Coronation Street in South Reddish, comprising Bankfield Trading Estate, Bankside Business Park and The Conway Centre, which is located to the rear of the large Adsa, Wickes, Halfords and Poundstretcher stores on Manchester Road. There are some existing residential properties opposite the site on Drake Court.

The application site is located within a designated Employment Area as defined in the Stockport UDP and appears to have last been used for office/light industrial/warehousing purposes. The property is currently vacant and has been marketed for some time with a view to finding a new occupier.

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of Frederick House from employment/industrial use to education use (Class D1) in association with Reddish Hall School. The new owners are proposing to use the building as a Vocational Education School affiliated to Reddish Hall School, which is located in the north of the Borough and provides specialist education for provision for young persons who are not currently provided for within mainstream schools.

The school has been looking for an extended period of time for a building to provide vocational education opportunities for pupils, which would need a large workshop area for building and motor trades, as well as space for computing and catering training classes and studios. It was also necessary to have a site with a suitable parking and drop off area, all within a manageable distance from the existing school.

It is anticipated that there would be approximately 30-40 vocational students being accommodated on this site. The training courses on offer would include Construction Trades (Bricklaying, Carpentry, Plumbing and Plastering/ Decorating), Motor Mechanics, Food Technology, Hair and Beauty, Computing, and English, Maths and Personal, Social and Health Development.

The school have identified a number of local businesses requiring students with these skills and it is their ambition to develop relationships with them in the future which will allow the students to move on to apprenticeships or employment with those companies. There would also be between 17 and 18 full time equivalent employment posts at the site.

Within the existing car parking area to the front of the building, it is proposed to provide 15 car parking spaces, 1 disabled accessible space, 1 mini bus parking space, 3 drop off spaces for parents dropping off/picking up pupils at the site, a secure and covered bicycle rack and a designated and demarcated pedestrian route from the street to the main entrance door.

The existing hedge to the Raleigh Street boundary is to be retained, along with the existing fencing and gates. The yard area to the rear of the building is proposed to be used as a bin storage area.

There are no elevational alterations proposed to the building as part of the proposals.

POLICY BACKGROUND

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 ("PCPA 2004") requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The Development Plan includes-

- Policies set out in the Stockport Unitary Development Plan Review adopted 31st May 2006 which have been saved by direction under paragraph 1(3) of Schedule 8 to the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004; &
- Policies set out in the Stockport Local Development Framework Core Strategy Development Plan Document adopted 17th March 2011.

Saved policies of the SUDP Review

- CTF1.1 Development of Community Services and Facilities
- E3.1 Protection of Employment Areas

LDF Core Strategy/Development Management policies

- AS-2 Improving Indoor Sports, Community and Education Facilities and their Accessibility
- Core Policy CS7 Accommodating Economic Development
- AED-3 Employment Development in Employment Areas
- AED-5 Education, Skills and Training Provision
- SIE-1 Quality Places
- T-1 Transport and Development
- T-2 Parking in Developments

National Planning Policy Framework

A Revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) issued by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on 19th February 2019 replaced the previous NPPF (originally issued 2012 & revised 2018). The NPPF has not altered the fundamental legal requirement under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 that decisions must be made in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations (such as the NPPF) indicate otherwise.

The NPPF representing the governments up-to-date planning policy which should be taken into account in dealing with applications focuses on achieving a lasting housing reform, facilitating the delivery of a greater number of homes, ensuring that we get planning for the right homes built in the right places of the right quality at the same time as protecting our environment. If decision takers choose not to follow the NPPF, then clear and convincing reasons for doing so are needed.

N.B. In respect of decision-taking the revised NPPF constitutes a “material consideration”.

Para.1 “The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied”.

Para.2 “Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise”.

Para.7 “The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development”.

Para.8 “Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in

mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- a) an economic objective*
- b) a social objective*
- c) an environmental objective”*

Para.11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For decision-taking this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:

i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole”.

Para.12 “.....Where a planning application conflicts with an up-to-date development plan (including any neighbourhood plans that form part of the development plan), permission should not usually be granted. Local planning authorities may take decisions that depart from an up-to-date development plan, but only if material considerations in a particular case indicate that the plan should not be followed”.

Para.38 “Local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way..... Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”.

Para.47 “Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing”.

Para 82. “Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.”

Para 92. “To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to*

*enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;
c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;
d) ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and
e) ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services."*

Paras 117-121 emphasise the importance of promoting the effective use of land and giving substantial weight in decision making to reusing brownfield land and under-utilised buildings.

Para 120 states that planning decisions need to reflect changes in the demand for land. They should be informed by regular reviews of both the land allocated for development in plans, and of land availability. Where there is no reasonable prospect of an application coming forward for the use allocated in a plan, applications for alternative uses on the land should be supported, where the proposed use would contribute to meeting an unmet need for development in the area.

Para.213 *"existing policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted or made prior to the publication of this Framework. Due weight should be given to them, according to their degree of consistency with this Framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given)"*.

Planning Practice Guidance

The Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) is a web-based resource which brings together planning guidance on various topics into one place (launched in March 2014) and coincided with the cancelling of the majority of Government Circulars which had previously given guidance on many aspects of planning.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

There is one historic application on this site of relevance to this case:

Reference: DC/064056

Address: Frederick House, 3 Raleigh Street, South Reddish, Stockport, SK5 7ER

Proposal: Change of use from B8 to B2 (System Assembly/Testing & Component Manufacturing)

Decision Date: 06-FEB-17

Decision: GTD

NEIGHBOUR'S VIEWS

The owners/occupiers of 12 surrounding properties were notified in writing of the application. The neighbour notification period expired on the 24th August 2020.

The application was advertised by way of display of notice on site and in the press, the consultation periods for which expired on the 24th August 2020 and the 2nd September 2020 respectively.

No letters of representation have been received for this application.

CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Planning Policy - Employment

The proposal is for the change of use of a vacant workshop within an allocated employment area to an educational (D1) use.

Given the proposed use and the site's location with an allocated employment area there are two key issues of policy principle here. The first and primary one is the loss of the existing employment space. The second is the nature of the use in this location. The most relevant development plan policy is Core Strategy Policy AED-3 'Employment Development in Employment Areas', which states that the Council will protect employment areas for employment generating uses. Also relevant is Para 82 of the NPPF, which states that planning decisions "should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors."

With regards to the loss of the employment, it is noted that the unit has only been on the market since February, albeit with what appears to be only a limited amount of interest for a variety of different uses. This would not normally be regarded as a significant amount of time and in the current circumstances it would be reasonable to expect that there would be even less demand, but that this would not necessarily be indicative of future demand.

The Council's Employment Land Review 2018, identifies the Coronation Street/Reuben Street employment area, rating the area 29/39 and 'moderate'. The comments in the ELR in relation to the site are as follows:

"The site comprises most of an employment allocation on the UDP Review (2006) proposals map. The site has excellent links with the M60 and is very well located in terms of Public Transport links. Local site infrastructure is good and it is generally well occupied; additional units have been recently erected and seem fully let. Notwithstanding this, the operation of the site is inhibited by the site's close proximity to residential uses. In addition stock along Reuben Street is of poor quality and is in need of significant investment." Para 7.129

Whilst the loss of units in the area should resisted there is some flexibility in the application of policy. In applying flexibility regard should be had to the nature of use and its potential impact on the wider employment area to continuing operating in a successful manner. Given the nature of the proposed use, which is primarily to provide a workshop area as part of vocational teaching, the proposed use is not one which in itself would restrict other existing or likely future employment uses in the area, nor would it be unduly affected by those uses. In addition, although Para 82 of the NPPF is primarily relevant to economic sectors, given the nature of the proposed use in this case it is difficult to see that it would be better suited in a different type of area or building. In other locations, outside of allocated employment areas, it would be likely to have a detrimental effect on the amenity of neighbouring properties and residents. Consequently, such a use would be best located in an employment area.

The floorspace of the unit is around 1500sqm and with an estimated job density of up to 60sqm per job this unit could reasonably expect to deliver around 25 FTE jobs. The applicant has submitted additional information to indicate that around 18 FTE posts would be likely to be delivered on site by the proposed use. Whilst this is clearly lower than would be expected should the unit be used for a B8 or B2 use,

some weight should be given to the training and educational value of the use and the benefit to Stockport-based learners in obtaining future employment.

The loss of potential B-use class floorspace is to be weighed against the retention of existing employment in Stockport and the nature of the use in this location, alongside the need to consider flexibility in line with Core Strategy Policy AED3 and the NPPF. Given the lack of alternative sites for the proposed use, which is most suited to such a location, and the relatively minor impact the use will have on an employment area operating relatively successfully there is no objection to the proposed use. However, an unrestricted D1 use in this vicinity may not be suitable and therefore consideration may wish to be given to imposing a condition related to the restriction of the use.

Highways

This application seeks permission for the change of use of an existing warehouse unit at Raleigh Street, South Reddish, which the applicant outlines will be used for vocational training/education attached to Reddish Hall School which is nearby. Students will be aged between 14 and 18 and staff will number up to 15. No significant amendments are proposed to be carried out to the building.

Though conditioned as a part of earlier planning permissions the plans submitted in support of the application do not indicate any staff shower/locker facility or details of cycle storage (bike rack noted as within car parking area). Redundant vehicle access points to the site will also require infilling. I recommend that any approval include conditions to secure the aforementioned works.

The proposed scheme does not change the sites access or servicing arrangements and changes in vehicle movements to and from the site are not likely to be material. Parking would appear to meet likely demand from staff with some spare capacity to accommodate visitors.

Staff should be allowed and encouraged to travel by sustainable means of transport

Recommendation: no objection subject to conditions

Conditions:

1) No development shall take place until details of proposals to provide long-stay (a covered and secure cycle store for a minimum of 4 cycles) and short-stay (Sheffield stands, or similar, for a minimum of 1 cycle) cycle parking facilities have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be occupied until the cycle parking facilities have been provided in accordance with the approved details. The cycle parking facilities shall then be retained and shall remain available for use at all times thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that safe and practical cycle parking facilities are provided so as to ensure that the site is fully accessible by all modes of transport in accordance with Policies CS9 'Transport and Development', T-1 'Transport and Development' and T-3 'Safety and Capacity on the Highway Network' of the Stockport Core Strategy DPD and the cycle parking facilities are appropriately designed and located in accordance with Policies SIE-1 'Quality Places' and T-3 'Safety and Capacity on the Highway Network' of the Stockport Core Strategy DPD, supported by paragraphs 10.9-10.12 'Bicycle Long and Short Stay Parking', of the SMBC Sustainable Transport SPD.

2) No development shall take place until a detailed drawing outlining proposals to remove the vehicular footways crossings and reinstate the footway across the now redundant accesses that previously served the site adjacent to the junction of Conway Street and Ann Street and on Ann St has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall not be occupied until the footway crossings have been removed and the footway reinstated in accordance with the approved drawing.

Reason: In order to remove the existing redundant / unsafe access/s, ensure that the development can be accessed in a safe manner and ensure the safety of highway users in accordance with Policies SIE-1 'Quality Places', CS9 'Transport and Development' and T-3 'Safety and Capacity on the Highway Network' of the Stockport Core Strategy DPD.

3) The development shall not be occupied until details of measures to be provided and implemented to encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and have been brought into operation. Measures shall include the provision of transport information and maps and infrastructure to encourage and permit the use of sustainable forms of travel. The measures shall be operated at all times that the development is occupied and shall be reviewed on an annual basis in accordance with details that shall be included in the submitted details (which shall include the provision of up-to-date transport information, if applicable).

Reason: To ensure that measures are implemented that will enable and encourage the use of alternative forms of transport to access the site, other than the private car, in accordance with Policies CS9 'Transport and Development', T-1 'Transport and Development' and T-3 'Safety and Capacity on the Highway Network' of the Stockport Core Strategy DPD, supported by Chapter 4 'Travel Plans' of the SMBC Sustainable Transport SPD

4) The approved development shall not be occupied until the car parking facilities for the development have been provided in accordance with the approved drawings, marked out (with carriageway markings, or similar) and are available for use. The car parking facilities shall thereafter be kept clear and remain available for parking of vehicles for the development.

Reason: To ensure that adequate parking facilities are provided and that they are appropriately located and are of a safe and practical design, in accordance with Policies SD-6 'Adapting to the impacts of climate change', SIE-1 'Quality Places', T-1 'Transport and Development', T-2 'Parking in Developments' and T-3 'Safety and Capacity on the Highway Network' of the Stockport Core Strategy DPD, supported by Chapter 10, 'Parking', of the SMBC 'Sustainable Transport' SPD.

5) Details of proposals to provide shower, changing, locker and drying facilities within the development shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be occupied until the facilities have been provided in accordance with the approved details. The facilities shall then be retained and shall remain available for use at all times thereafter.

Reason: To ensure that suitable facilities are provided that will permit and encourage the use of sustainable modes of transport in accordance with Policies SIE-1 'Quality Places', CS9 'Transport and Development', T-1 'Transport and Development' and T-3 'Safety and Capacity on the Highway Network' of the Stockport Core Strategy DPD.

Environmental Health (Noise)

There are no objections to the proposed change of use.

ANALYSIS

Principle of Use and Loss of Employment Use

Development Management Policy AS-2 supports new education facilities within the borough and expressly requires provision of sufficient life long learning and special education needs facilities, and education facilities well located to serve the relevant population.

Core Policy CS7 states that PPS4 (now replaced by the NPPF) makes it clear that other uses beyond office, industrial and warehousing uses constitute economic development. As such, the Council will ensure that where proposals provide employment opportunities or contribute positively to the economy, and where they meet the overarching aims of the Core Strategy, they are assessed accordingly. This approach is reinforced by Development Management Policy AED-3, which states that the Council will generally protect employment areas for employment generating uses but within these areas the Council will also have regard to the requirement for flexibility for employment generating uses beyond the traditional employment uses of B1, B2 and B8. In addition, Policy AED-5 encourages the provision of training to help develop necessary skills to access jobs.

In terms of the Unitary Development Plan, Policy E3.1 states that in Employment Areas shown on the Proposals Map, development involving business and light industry (B1), general industry (B2) or warehousing (B8) will be permitted, provided that development on land close to residential areas will not have a materially detrimental effect on the living conditions of residents. Alternative uses, which will be considered on their merits, taking into account the factors set out below, include: (i) sui generis commercial uses, such as car showrooms, where they create job opportunities, assist in the regeneration of an employment area, or may enable the retention and/or expansion of existing firms and are proposed in conjunction with employment uses such as servicing and workshop facilities. (ii) complementary commercial and leisure uses, where suitable sites can be identified. Such uses could include indoor sports facilities and food and drink outlets of a modest scale, hotels, day nurseries and other uses that can provide a service to local firms or people working in the area.

Development within both these categories will only be permitted if the extent to which the area can function as an Employment Area will be maintained or enhanced. Factors to be taken into account are job creation, the availability of land for employment uses and the compatibility of the proposed use with the use of the adjacent land for employment purposes. Proposals involving the following uses are likely to be deemed unacceptable: retailing, retail warehousing, airport related car parking and housing.

Policy CTF1.1 relates to the development of new community services and facilities and states that proposals for new such facilities will be permitted provided that certain specified criteria are met where relevant. One of the criteria includes there being no harm to Employment Areas.

The proposal is for the change of use of a vacant workshop within an allocated employment area to an educational (D1) use. The application has been fully considered by Planning Policy officers and their full review and comments can be seen in the Consultations section of the report above.

It is confirmed that given the proposed use and the site's location with an allocated employment area there are two main issues to consider in this case surrounding planning policy principles and compliance. The first matter relates to the loss of the existing employment space. As outlined above, the most relevant development plan policy is Core Strategy Policy AED-3 'Employment Development in Employment Areas', which states that the Council will protect employment areas for employment generating uses. Also relevant is Para 82 of the NPPF, which states that planning decisions "should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors."

It has to be acknowledged that the unit has only been on the market since February 2020, which would not normally be regarded as a significant amount of time to justify a departure from this use. However, it should be noted that within that time, there has been a limited amount of interest for a variety of different uses. In the current circumstances, it would be reasonable to expect that there would be even less demand, however, this would not necessarily be indicative of future demand.

The Council's Employment Land Review 2018, identifies the Coronation Street/Reuben Street employment area, rating the area 29/39 and 'moderate'. The comments in the ELR in relation to the site are as follows:

"The site comprises most of an employment allocation on the UDP Review (2006) proposals map. The site has excellent links with the M60 and is very well located in terms of Public Transport links. Local site infrastructure is good and it is generally well occupied; additional units have been recently erected and seem fully let. Notwithstanding this, the operation of the site is inhibited by the site's close proximity to residential uses. In addition stock along Reuben Street is of poor quality and is in need of significant investment." Para 7.129

Whilst the loss of units in the area should resisted, there is some flexibility in the application of the relevant local and national planning policies. In applying flexibility, regard should be had to the nature of the proposed use and its potential impact on the wider employment area to continuing operation in a successful manner. Given the nature of the proposed use and the proposed retention of the internal floor layout, service accesses and larger spaces to provide a workshop area and studios as part of vocational teaching, the proposed use is not one which in itself would restrict the future change of use back to an employment B1, B2 or B8 use. Furthermore, it would not restrict or conflict with other existing or likely future employment uses in the area, nor would it be unduly affected by those uses.

In addition, although Para 82 of the NPPF is primarily relevant to economic sectors, given the nature of the proposed use in this case, it is difficult to see that it would be better suited in a different type of area or building. In other locations, outside of allocated employment areas, it would be likely to have a detrimental effect on the amenity of neighbouring properties and residents. Consequently, such a use would be best located in an employment area.

The floorspace of the unit is around 1500sqm and with an estimated job density of up to 60sqm per job, this unit could reasonably expect to deliver around 25 full time jobs. In response to early comments made from the Policy Officer, the applicant has submitted additional information to indicate that around 18 full time posts would be likely to be delivered on site by the proposed use. In addition to the 18 roles identified, there would also be other roles providing services to the school but not directly employed by them, not least involved in the maintenance and servicing of equipment. Meals will be provided from the main Reddish Hall School site, and as a consequence additional catering staff may well be required at this site to serve the children at meal times.

The proposed facility at Raleigh Street was one recommended by Ofsted at their last inspection at Reddish Hall, as being a necessary addition to their facilities going forward. The school employs 65 full time and 5 part time staff and is performing well at present. Vocational training is seen as playing an increasingly important part in the curriculum of schools such as this and having it would greatly assist the school in maintaining their current success in the future. The school are very keen to address the issue, where other similar schools in the North West are able to offer this type of educational facility and courses for their students, and Reddish Hall is currently not.

Whilst the proposed number of employment roles is clearly lower than would be normally be expected should the unit be used for a B8 or B2 use, material weight has to be given to the number of jobs being provided at the site alongside the training and educational value of the proposed use and the benefit to Stockport-based learners in obtaining future employment.

The loss of potential B-use class floorspace has to be weighed against the retention of existing employment in Stockport and the nature of the use in this location, alongside the need to consider flexibility in line with Core Strategy Policy AED3 and the NPPF. Given the lack of alternative sites for the proposed use, which is most suited to such a location as this, and the relatively minor impact the use will have on an employment area operating relatively successfully, it is considered that the proposed change of use of this unit is considered to be acceptable and compliant with Policy in this case.

Notwithstanding this, as outlined by Policy officers in their comments above, other potential uses within the D1 use class (now Class F1 'Learning and Non-Residential Institutions') would not be considered appropriate or suitable in this location and could result in a detrimental impact on this employment area operating successfully. This could include uses such as primary schools, public halls, places of worship etc. Therefore, it is considered to be necessary to impose an appropriately worded condition drafted in agreement with the applicant, related to the restriction of the use to a vocational educational training centre.

Therefore, on the basis of the matters discussed in detail above, it is considered that the proposed change of use to a vocational educational training school is acceptable and appropriate in this location and can be justified in relation to the loss of the employment use at this site. On this basis, the proposals are considered to be in compliance with Policies AS-2, CS7, AED-3 and AED-5 of the Core Strategy, Policy E3.1 and CTF1.1 of the Unitary Development Plan and paragraphs 82 and 92 of the NPPF.

Traffic Generation, Access, Highway Safety and Parking

The detailed comments received to the application from the Council Highway Engineer are contained within the Consultee Responses section above. The matters for consideration are site accessibility, traffic generation and highway impact and the detail of the site layout.

The application site is located within an area that is relatively well served by public transport, with bus services along Manchester Road and Reddish Road that connect Stockport Town Centre and wider residential areas around the site. Although it is acknowledged that the nearest rail stations at Reddish South, Heaton Chapel, Brinnington and Stockport Central are some distance away, this does offer potential for longer journeys if required from this type of use, linked travel and connectivity further afield. Pedestrian and cycle facilities within the locality give potential for walking and cycling to be a chosen travel mode and the site is within close proximity to a range of other services and amenities that could be used by staff and students of the site.

On this basis, the site is considered to be within a relatively accessible location where students and staff would not be likely to be so dependent on car travel and public transport, walking and cycling have potential to be realistic modes of travel.

In terms of traffic generation, the proposed development is forecast to provide spaces for approximately 30-40 students (aged 14-18), with 17-18 full time members of staff. On this basis, the total volume of daily traffic associated with the site would not be considered to be excessive. The proposed scheme does not change the site access or servicing arrangements and any changes in vehicle movements to and from the site are not likely to be material.

It is also important in this case to give full consideration to the former use of the site as a light industrial unit with associated servicing and regular vehicle movements from deliveries, staff and visitors. Therefore, it is possible to conclude that the proposal will not generate a volume of traffic that will materially or unacceptably impact on the operation of the highway.

In relation to parking requirements, it is proposed to provide 15 car parking spaces, 1 disabled accessible space, 1 mini bus parking space, 3 drop off spaces for parents dropping off/picking up pupils at the site, a secure and covered bicycle rack and a designated and demarcated pedestrian route from the street to the main entrance door, all within the curtilage of the site. The Highways engineer has confirmed that this proposed parking provision would appear to meet likely demand from staff with some spare capacity to accommodate visitors. This would ensure that parking from the proposed use would not spill out onto adjacent streets to the detriment of highway safety or the amenity of the residential properties on Drake Court.

It is noted that even though a bike rack is shown on the submitted proposed site layout plan within car parking area, the submitted plans do not indicate any staff shower/locker facility or any specific details in relation to details of cycle storage in terms of number and the enclosure itself. Therefore, it is recommended that an appropriately worded condition be included to ensure that appropriate facilities are provided at the site to encourage staff, students and visitors to travel to the site by bicycle.

It is also recommended that staff should be allowed and encouraged to travel by sustainable means of transport, and a condition requesting the submission of a Travel Plan should be included.

On the basis of the above, it is considered to be reasonable that with conditional control, the development is in compliance with policies T-2 and T-3 of the Core Strategy.

Residential Amenity

Policy SIE-1 of the Core Strategy outlines that development must pay regard to the built and/or natural environment within which it is sited, and account should be had to the provision, maintenance and enhancement (where suitable) of satisfactory levels of access, privacy and amenity for future, existing and neighbouring users and residents.

The site is located close to existing residential properties on Drake Court across the road on the eastern side of the site. The site edge red does not immediately bound the gardens of these properties, as they are located on the opposite side of Raleigh Street to the application site. It is acknowledged that the main area of external activity from the new use would be on this eastern side of the site within the car parking area, where staff would be arriving and leaving the site and pupil drop and pick off would take place. However, this is the existing vehicular access, service area and car parking area for the site and would have been regularly used by the former light industrial business that previously occupied the site. Due to the proposed use as a Vocational Course school, the hours of operation are in accordance with normal school hours and as such would not involve anti-social hours to the detriment of residential amenity.

There is a good buffer area between the site and these existing residential properties, through the retention of the existing thick green hedge along this eastern boundary. This would help to screen the site and any noise from the occupants of the properties at Drake Court. Furthermore, given the likely limited vehicle movements to normal school day working hours, it is not considered that the traffic associated with the proposed use would result in any significant impact on the amenity currently enjoyed by the occupants of these properties.

Finally, there appears to be existing lighting and CCTV present on the site currently, and there are no proposals to make any elevational alterations to the existing buildings.

On the basis of the above, the change of use is therefore, considered acceptable from an amenity perspective and compliant with development plan policies.

CONCLUSION

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 of the NPPF establishes three dimensions to sustainable development – economic, social and environmental and Paragraph 8 of the NPPF indicates that these should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.

The proposed use of this site for a Class D1 educational facility will result in the loss of an employment use within an area of Employment Land allocated within

the development plan. The loss of potential B-use class floorspace has to be weighed against the retention of existing employment in Stockport and the nature of the use in this location, alongside the need to consider flexibility in line with Core Strategy Policy AED3 and the NPPF. Given the lack of alternative sites for the proposed use, which is most suited to such a location as this, and the relatively minor impact the use will have on an employment area operating relatively successfully, it is considered that the proposed change of use of this unit is considered to be acceptable and compliant with Policy in this case.

Therefore, on the basis of the matters discussed in detail above, it is considered that the proposed change of use to a vocational educational training school is acceptable and appropriate in this location and can be justified in relation to the loss of the employment use at this site. The proposal is therefore considered to be compliant to policies AS-2, CS7, AED-3 and AED-5 of the Core Strategy, Policy E3.1 and CTF1.1 of the Unitary Development Plan and paragraphs 82 and 92 of the NPPF.

It is considered that the proposed development could be successfully accommodated on the site without causing undue harm to the visual amenity of the area or the residential amenity of surrounding properties. In the absence of objections from relevant consultees and subject to conditional control, the proposal is considered acceptable with regard to the issues of noise, traffic generation, parking and highway safety.

In view of the above, notwithstanding the site allocation of the application site as Employment Land and the fact that approval of the development would constitute a departure from the development plan, the proposal is considered to represent sustainable development. On this basis, in accordance with the requirements of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the application is recommended for approval.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT

Should Members agree the recommendation, the application should be referred to the Planning and Highways Regulation Committee for determination as a departure from the Development Plan.

HEATONS AND REDDISH AREA COMMITTEE (09/11/20)

The Planning Officer introduced the application and highlighted the pertinent issues of the proposal.

Members sought clarification from the Planning Officer on the following points:

- What courses would be provided at the site?

The officer responded to say the following courses would be provided: Construction Trades (Bricklaying, Carpentry, Plumbing and Plastering/ Decorating), Motor Mechanics, Food Technology, Hair and Beauty, Computing, and English, Maths and Personal, Social and Health Development.

- What will be the numbers of pupils at the site and how will they travel to the site in relation to large numbers of young people walking through a residential area to get to the site?

The Officer responded to say there would be approximately 30-40 vocational students between the age of 14-18. It is likely that these would travel to the school either by walking, cycling or there are 3 drop off spaces within the site for pick up and drop off by parents. There is the potential for there to be students walking past residential properties to access the site, however this will be during school hours rather than at any anti-social times of the day and 30-40 students is a lower number than would normally be associated with a normal sized school. Therefore, this would reduce the potential impact on residents.

There were no members of the public present speaking either for or against the application.

Members then debated the application further. The comments made were in relation to the following matters:

- Acknowledge that there is a loss in an employment use, however jobs will be created through teaching posts and that the use is to provide vocational courses that will eventually lead to future employment;
- School is special school trying to give their students vocational opportunities;
- The site is in Reddish, which is as close to Reddish Hall School as possible;
- Residents appear to be relaxed about what is being proposed due to absence of objections;
- Positive use rather than a vacant building to be left and vandalised;
- Residents are buffered from the site due to the car park;
- Shortage of special needs places and the value of vocational courses in these settings is very important and is a major step forward;
- Real investment of employment for the future to mitigate the loss of employment at the site;
- Note the comments about a condition for cycle parking and this should form part of the recommendation moving forward to PHR Committee;
- The situation of large groups of children walking through residential areas will need to be monitored to minimise the impact on local residents, however Members are sure the school will manage this appropriately and will want to be a good neighbour and work positively in the area;
- Will not be major traffic problems associated with this use;
- Send it to PHR Committee with a positive recommendation.

Therefore, it was unanimously resolved to refer the application to the Planning and Highways Regulation Committee with a recommendation to grant subject to the requested conditions.