

ITEM

Application Reference	DC/081269
Location:	32 Woodford Road Bramhall Stockport SK7 1PA
PROPOSAL:	Partial change of use of ground floor to create new entrance to the offices at upper floor level, installation of new entrance door at ground floor. Alterations to the windows to the front elevation at first and second floor level, erection of a front roof extension and erection of an office pod to the rear at roof level together with the installation of new air con units and new windows at first floor level to the north and south side elevations
Type Of Application:	Full Application
Registration Date:	07.09.2021
Expiry Date:	20211102
Case Officer:	Jane Chase
Applicant:	DM Safety and Health Services Limited
Agent:	Green Square Architecture Limited

DELEGATION/COMMITTEE STATUS

Called up by Cllr Bagnall

DESCRIPTION OF DEVELOPMENT

The application proposes the creation of a new entrance to the upper floor offices at ground floor level to the right hand side of the shopfront. This entails the insertion of a new door and the partial change of use of ground floor to office floorspace in order to create the new stairwell and lift access to the upper floors. The installation of the lift and the headroom required in connection with it results in the need to construct an extension to the front roof plane of the existing building. This extension would be positioned centrally within the front roof plane measuring 13m wide, 2m deep and 0.5m high projecting 0.1m above the existing ridgeline. 3 velux windows are proposed to this roof extension.

Alterations are also proposed to the front elevation at first and second floor level including new floor to ceiling windows above the office entrance and new windows above the existing ground floor restaurant.

On the flat roof to the rear of the building at second floor level it is proposed to install an office pod measuring 15m wide, 6.7m deep and 3.1m high with a flat roof. Materials of external construction are indicated as zinc cladding and the proposed pod would be split into 3 units each with floor to ceiling windows and doors to the northern elevation. Access to this pod would be gained via the existing internal stairwells within the building and externally across the existing flat roof. On the flat roof, 4 new air conditioning units are proposed adjacent to the parapet that runs along the rear elevation of the building.

Externally the application also proposes the insertion of 3 new office windows in the southern side elevation of the building at first floor level and 4 new office windows in the northern side elevation at first floor level. NB: in response to objections the application has been amended to delete a new office window proposed to the rear elevation.

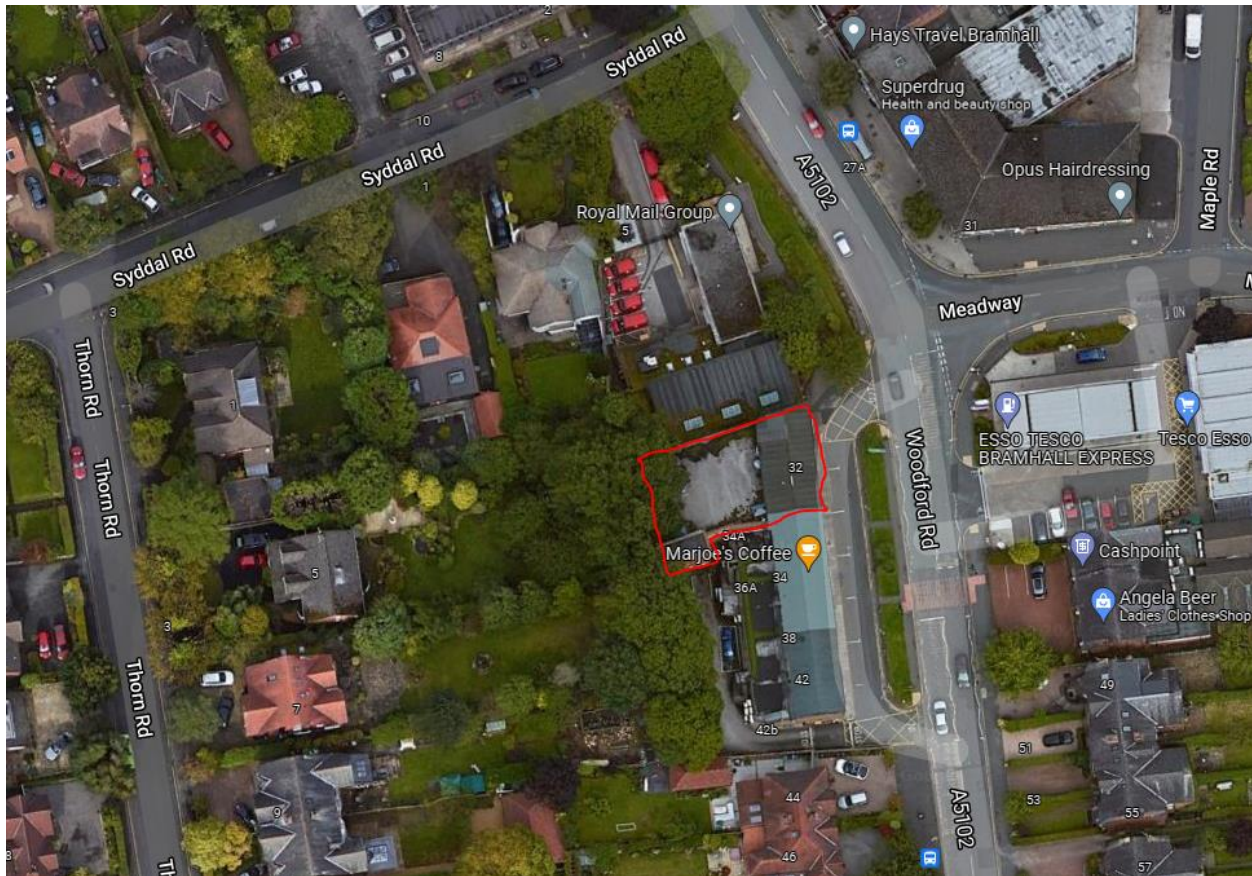
SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application site is located on the west side of Woodford Road within the District Shopping Centre and forms the end (northernmost) unit in a short parade of 5 commercial uses. The parade is 3 storeys high to Woodford Road with a shallow pitch roof to the front. To the rear the application property benefits from a deep flat roofed projection rising 2 to 3 storeys in height with a flat roof.

The application site is in use as a restaurant on the ground floor with offices above which are accessed from the rear of the site. The existing restaurant benefits from an extraction system that exits on the flat roof of the 2 storey projection at the rear. Here there are also cooling units.

The upper floors of the application property are in commercial use however that to the remainder of the parade accommodate residential dwellings with a duplex flat above each ground floor commercial use. Access to these dwellings is via the car park to the rear of the site where external staircases give access across the flat roof of a single storey extension that extends to the rear of all properties save for the application site. In the rear elevation of the adjoining parade are the front doors to each dwelling together with habitable room windows at first and second floor level. The parade as a whole is set back from Woodford Road and benefits from a service road with off street parking positioned behind a grass verge. A car park to the rear of the parade is accessed off the service road from Woodford Road to the south.

Opposite the site on Woodford Road is a petrol filling station also within the District Centre. Beyond this to the north and south are commercial uses. Immediately to the north of the application site is the Royal Mail sorting office on the junction of Woodford Road and Syddal Road. To the rear of the site are residential properties on Thorn Road which are located within the Syddal Park Conservation Area. The rear gardens of these houses back on to the application site and the boundary is formed by a belt of mature trees.



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

HC1.3 Special Control of Development in Conservation Areas

PSD2.5 Other Development in District Centres

E1.2 Location of New Business Premises and Offices

LDF Core Strategy/Development Management policies

CS1 Overarching Principles: Sustainable Development – Addressing Inequalities and Climate Change

SD1 Creating Sustainable Communities

CS5 Access to Services

CS6 Safeguarding and Strengthening the Service Centre Hierarchy

AS1 The Vitality and Viability of Stockport's Service Centres

CS7 Accommodating Economic Development

AED2 Employment Development in District Centres

CS8 Safeguarding and Improving the Environment

SIE1 Quality Places

SIE3 Protecting, Safeguarding and Enhancing the Environment

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 20th July 2021 and replaced the previous NPPF (originally issued 2012 & revised 2018 and 2019). 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 – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*
- b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- c) an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”*

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. 81 *“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. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.”*

Para. 83 *“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 *“Planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which:*

- a) promote social interaction, including opportunities for meetings between people who might not otherwise come into contact with each other – for example through mixed-use developments, strong neighbourhood centres, street layouts that allow for easy pedestrian and cycle connections within and between neighbourhoods, and active street frontages;*
- b) are safe and accessible, so that crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion – for example through the use of attractive, well-designed, clear and legible pedestrian and cycle routes, and high quality public space, which encourage the active and continual use of public areas; and*
- c) enable and support healthy lifestyles, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs – for example through the provision of safe and accessible green infrastructure, sports facilities, local shops, access to healthier food, allotments and layouts that encourage walking and cycling.”*

Para. 111 *“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.”*

Para.126 *“The creation of high quality, beautiful and sustainable buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities. Being clear about design expectations, and how these will be tested, is essential for achieving this. So too*

is effective engagement between applicants, communities, local planning authorities and other interests throughout the process.”

Para. 130 *“Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments:*
a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;
b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;
c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);
d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;
e) optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and
f) create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users⁴⁹; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”

Para.134 *“Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes. Conversely, significant weight should be given to:*

- a) development which reflects local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes; and/or*
- b) outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”*

Para. 174. *“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*
a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
d) minimising impacts on and providing net gains for biodiversity, including by establishing coherent ecological networks that are more resilient to current and future pressures;
e) preventing new and existing development from contributing to, being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, unacceptable levels of soil, air, water or noise pollution or land instability. Development should,

wherever possible, help to improve local environmental conditions such as air and water quality, taking into account relevant information such as river basin management plans; and

f) remediating and mitigating despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated and unstable land, where appropriate.”

Para.185 “Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life;

b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and

c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation.”

Para. 189 “Heritage assets range from sites and buildings of local historic value to those of the highest significance, such as World Heritage Sites which are internationally recognised to be of Outstanding Universal Value. These assets are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations.”

Para. 195 “Local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. They should take this into account when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset’s conservation and any aspect of the proposal.”

Para.197 “In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.”

Para.199 “When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is

irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.”

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

DC043585 - Application under Class E of Schedule 2 Part 3 of the T&C Planning (General Permitted) Development) Order 1995 for the following range of uses or mixture thereof within the building:-

Ground floor:-

- up to two Class A1 (retail) units
- up to two Class A2 (financial and professional service) units
- up to two Class A3 (restaurant and cafe) units
- a mix of up to two of these three uses.

First floor:-

- Class B1 (office use) of whole floorspace
- ancillary uses for ground floor Class A1/A2/A3 units of whole floorspace
- a mix of these two uses.

Second floor:-

- Class B1 (office use).

Approved 2010 with conditions including that requiring the submission and approval of any external means of extraction.

DC081267 – Advertisement application seeking the installation of 2no. internally illuminated fascia signs, 1no. internally illuminated projecting sign and 1no. internally illuminated sign. Approved October 2021

DC081268 - Installation of a new extract fan and cooling units to the rear elevation of the building, relocation of existing air conditioning unit to roof terrace. Under consideration and forms the preceding application on this agenda.

DC/082623 – Advertisement application seeking the installation of an illuminated fascia sign . Approved October 2021

NEIGHBOUR'S VIEWS

The application has been advertised by way of a site and press notice. The occupiers of 24 neighbouring properties have also been notified in writing. At the time of writing this report 3 letters have been received objecting on the following grounds:-

- The 3 new windows will result in overlooking and a loss of privacy to neighbouring gardens should the conifer trees on the boundary die.
- The proposed office pod will cause overshadowing, loss of privacy, noise and light pollution.
- There has been a significant increase in traffic since the last review of this site and parking will be a problem.
- Consideration needs to be made to refuse storage, cycle parking, disabled access and parking.
- Impact on property value.

One of the writers also raises objections to the proliferation of bars, cafés and restaurants in Bramhall, noise from the collection of refuse and bottles and problems associated with anti social behaviour. None of these objections are however relevant to the consideration of this application given that the use of the ground floor for a restaurant is lawful.

CONSULTEE RESPONSES

Highway Engineer – The proposal involves some internal alterations and the addition of 79m² of floorspace by the installation of a roof level office pod. Floorspace at the ground floor restaurant is reduced slightly by the proposed alterations to the access.

The proposed increase in office floorspace and minor change of use at ground floor are not judged to result in any significant change to the nature or volume of vehicular traffic to the site such as to severely impact on highway safety or the operation of the local highway and I therefore raise no objection.

The current and existing uses have no on curtilage parking. No additional parking is included with the development. The site is reasonably accessible lying on the A5102 Woodford Rd. Public car parking is available within easy walking distance on Meadway, including EV charging facilities, with limited parking also available to the site frontage lay by.

Stockport MBC parking standards suggest that a maximum of 2 parking spaces would be required for the additional office floorspace. I am satisfied that this potential increased demand can be accommodated locally and as such raise no objections.

Environmental Health Officer (Noise) – The impact of the noise from the proposed development has been assessed in accordance with: BS4142:2014+A1:2019, 'Methods for rating and assessing industrial and commercial sound', to determine the rating level arising from the introduction of the proposed sound source.

The onus is upon the applicant, to demonstrate, that the introduction of the sound sources:

- Does not create a negative impact upon the amenity of noise sensitive receptors
- Shall not cause an increase in the ambient background sound level at the boundary of the nearest noise sensitive receptor.

To provide context of the impact of the new plant at this location:

- The closest noise sensitive residential receptors are located within the same building with commercial ground floor uses. The flats above have front elevations set back from the A5102 Woodford Road and rear elevations with outdoor amenity areas overlook a service road/area (bin storage areas) and car-parking.
- Noise sensitive receptors are accustomed to impacts arising from the former restaurant. In addition this service has no noise or odour complaint history arising from conflicting adjacent uses at this location.
- The applicants NIA, noise modelling software has calculated the expected level 'of the new plant' to be less than or equal to 50dBA. A reduction in the specific sound levels over the former Pizza Express plant operations (with all former plant operating) as 51dBA.

Impact on the new office pod facade is noted to be 52dBA at the facade closest to the outdoor roof mounted office condensing units. It is proposed that the office pod will be mechanically ventilated to avoid the requirement to open windows.

This service accepts the outcome of the BS4142 assessment subject to the following condition:

The rating level from all fixed plant and machinery associated with the proposed development (when operating simultaneously), shall be in accordance with the outcome of Red Acoustics, PROPOSED BAB RESTAURANT 32 WOODFORD ROAD, BRAMHALL, SK7 1PA BS4142:2014+A1:2019 IMPACT ASSESSMENT R1987-REP01C-SJW 25 NOVEMBER 2021. As per the methodology of BS 4142:2014+A1:2019, 'Methods for Rating and Assessing Industrial and Commercial Sound'.

Informatives should be added to the decision notice if planning permission is to be approved in relation to hours of construction works, licencing and the registration of any new food business with the Council.

ANALYSIS

In the first instance it is important to note that this application seeks planning permission for external alterations and the erection of an office pod only. The lawful use of the premises is as a restaurant at ground floor with offices above with such uses approved in 2010 (DC043585) and subsequently implemented. As such objections regarding the proliferation of bars, restaurants and cafés in the District

Centre along with those relating to noise from the collection of refuse and bottles and problems associated with anti social behaviour are not relevant to the consideration of this application.

The main issues for consideration are therefore the principle of additional office floorspace and associated highway impacts, the impact of the proposed works upon the Conservation Area to the rear of the site and character of the locality in general together with the impact upon the amenities of neighbouring occupiers.

Principles of Development

Saved UDP Review policy E1.2 confirms that new office developments will be permitted within District Centres. All sites for office development must be appropriate in size and scale to their surrounding area and not conflict with other UDP Review policies for housing, retail and the protection of the environment as well as having good access to the highway network and public transport. Core Strategy policies CS7 and AED2 confirm that office development will be encouraged on suitable sites in and around District Centres.

The NPPF at para 81 confirms the need for planning decisions to 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. Para 119 confirms that planning decisions should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses while safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring healthy and safe living conditions.

The application proposes the provision of an additional 79m² of office floorspace in the form of a pod to be constructed on the flat roof of the rear projection. Being within the District Centre, the provision of additional floorspace is acceptable in principle and subject to satisfactory assessment in relation to the impact of the development upon the environment and having good access, complies with saved UDP Review policy E1.2, Core Strategy policies CS7 and AED2 together with advice contained within chapter 6 of the NPPF.

It is noted that the creation of the access to the offices at ground floor level would result in the loss of some floorspace associated with the lawful use as a restaurant. This loss at circa 13m² is small and noting the benefits that this will bring in terms of access to the offices from the front of the premises rather than the rear as existing, will have little or no impact upon the vitality and viability of the District Centre.

Impact on Conservation Area and Character of the Locality

Policies CS8 and SIE1 of the Core Strategy seek to ensure that development is designed to a high standard having regard to the environment within which it is located. Specific account should be had of the site's characteristics and context to surrounding buildings and spaces.

Saved policy HC1.3 and Core Strategy policy SIE3 seek to ensure that development preserves or enhances the character and appearance of Conservation Areas together with the setting of Conservation Areas as well as views in and out.

The NPPF at chapters 12 and 16 confirms the importance of achieving well designed places. Planning decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and create places that provide a high level of amenity for existing and future users (para 130). Heritage assets are an irreplaceable resource and should be conserved in an appropriate manner to their significance so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations (para 189). In determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets.

The works to the front elevation including the new office entrance, alterations to the windows are considered to be in keeping with the appearance of the existing building parade and wider locality. There are no other roof extensions to the front roof plane of this parade given the low height of this extension and its positioning centrally within the roof plane with the velux windows positioned so to align with the windows below, it is not considered that this element of the proposal will be visually prominent or harmful to the appearance of the property or wider parade. It is also noted that the new windows at first and second floor level being deeper than those existing will be different in size and appearance than the remainder of those in this parade. Having regard however to the variety in window styles and sizes in the wider locality and the fact that this parade does not enjoy any special protection, any impact in this respect is not considered to cause sufficient harm to justify the refusal of planning permission. Furthermore, these elements being to the front of the parade will have no impact on the setting of the adjacent Conservation Area or views into or out of it.

At first floor level, it is proposed to insert 4 new windows to the north, side elevation of the existing rear projection and 3 new windows to the south, side elevation. That originally proposed to the west, rear elevation has been deleted in response to objections. Those to the northern side elevation will be visible from Woodford Road and from Syddal Road where the side elevation projects above the adjacent Sorting Office. They are considered to be of an acceptable size and design, in keeping with the pattern of surrounding development and this will cause no harm to the character of the locality or the adjacent Conservation Area.

Those to the southern side elevation will face onto the car park and service area to the rear of the parade however will not be visible in any public views of this part of the building. Beyond the application site to the west are the rear gardens of houses on Thorn Road. This boundary is formed from mature trees and in this respect, it is noted that the objector references the screening afforded by existing conifer trees. Views of the windows to the south elevation from these properties on Thorn Road are restricted by this tree planting. Even if this planting were not to exist, the part of

the building where the windows are to be inserted is positioned 2.5m behind the projecting 3 storey element. As such, it is most likely that it will not be possible to see these windows from the rear gardens of 3 and 5 Thorn Road. They may be visible from the rear of 7 Thorn Road should the tree cover cease to exist but even still, being viewed in the context of a building that is punctuated by other openings, there will be no harm to the character of the area or the setting of the adjacent Conservation Area.

Views of the air conditioning units on the flat roof will be screened by the parapet running around the roof. As such there will be no harm to the character of the locality or adjacent Conservation Area in this respect.

The proposed office pod does not cover the entire existing flat roof area but rather is positioned away from the parapets to both sides and rear of the roof, 4.8m from the northern side parapet, 0.9m to 2.2m from the southern side parapet and 4.3m from the western side parapet. In terms of height, the pod has a monopitch roof sloping down from its front elevation to the rear. At its highest point the pod will be 10cms above the existing ridgeline of the parade where it ties in with the front roof extension.

Viewing the site from directly opposite on Meadway, the pod would be screened from view by the existing building and proposed front roof extension. Viewed from the north on Woodford Road and from Syddal Road, the pod will be set back 4.8m from the northern side elevation of the projection to the rear of the building. Notwithstanding this, views of it rising above the flat roof of the rear projection will be possible. The inclusion of a flat roof will help to reduce the prominence of the pod and will ensure that in terms of its design it echoes that of the flat roofed projection upon which it is positioned. In the context of the sorting office buildings in the foreground and are also of a near flat roofed construction, it is not considered that this aspect of the development will cause harm to the general character of the area.

From the Conservation Area on Syddal Road and Thorn Road, views of the office pod are likely to be screened by the tree cover that exists although this may be reduced when any deciduous trees are out of leaf. Even if this tree cover were not to exist it is considered that the proposed pod on account of its siting away from the parapets and flat roof is such that it will not cause harm to the setting of or views out of the Conservation Area.

In conclusion and for the reasons set out above, it is not considered that the proposed development would be harmful to the character of the existing building, locality in general or the adjacent Conservation Area. In this respect the proposal is compliant with saved UDP Review policy HC1.3, Core Strategy policies CS8, SIE1 and SIE3 together with advice contained within chapters 12 and 16 of the NPPF.

Impact on Residential Amenity

Policies CS8 and SIE1 of the Core Strategy seek to ensure that development is designed to a high standard having regard to the environment within which it is located. Specific account should be had of the site's characteristics and context to surrounding buildings and spaces and the provision of satisfactory levels of amenity for neighbouring users and residents.

Core Strategy policy SIE3 notes that obtrusive noise is a considerable factor in the enjoyment of residential amenity. This policy therefore seeks to control noise so as not to detract from residential amenity.

The NPPF at chapters 12 and 16 confirms the importance of achieving well designed places. Planning decisions should ensure that developments function well and add to the overall quality of the area, are visually attractive, sympathetic to local character and create places that provide a high level of amenity for existing and future users (para 130).

The closest residential occupiers are those above the adjacent commercial uses in this parade and those to the rear of the site on Thorn Road whose rear gardens share a boundary with the application site to the west. There are also residential occupiers on Syddal Road however they are separated from the application site by the sorting office.

The works to the front elevation including the new office entrance, alterations to the windows and front roof extension will have no impact on the amenities enjoyed by the adjacent residential occupiers.

In terms of the new windows proposed to the side elevations of the rear projection, those to the north will be adjacent to the boundary with the Sorting Office. Noting the low height of this adjacent development, the windows will most likely be visible from the rear of 1 Syddal Road which is positioned away from the site beyond the Sorting Office. The distance between these proposed windows and the rear of this residential property is between 30m and 40m. Noting also that the side elevation of the application property is offset from the rear elevation of 1 Syddal Road (and is therefore at an oblique angle to it) it is not considered that an unacceptable impact in relation to the overlooking of this property from these new windows will arise.

The new windows to the south elevation will face onto the car park and service area to the rear of the parade within which the application site is located. Beyond the application site to the west are the rear gardens of houses on Thorn Road. This boundary is formed from mature trees and in this respect, it is noted that the objector references the screening afforded by existing conifer trees. Views between the application property and these neighbours are restricted by this tree planting. Even if this planting were not to exist, the part of the building where the windows are to be inserted is positioned 2.5m behind the projecting 3 storey element. As such, it is most likely that it will not be possible to view the rear gardens of 3 and 5 Thorn Road

from these windows. There may be views of the rear garden to 7 Thorn Road should the tree cover cease to exist but even if this occurs, noting that these windows would be at least 16m from the boundary with these properties and at least 58m from the houses themselves, an unacceptable degree of overlooking would not arise.

The proposed windows to the south elevation would be closest to the residential properties above this parade, particularly that immediately adjacent above 34 Woodford Road. As mentioned above, access to the front doors of these duplex flats is via the rear of the parade, up a flight of stairs and across the flat roof of a single storey rear projection. The proposed windows to the south elevation would be at right angles to the windows serving these flats and at their closest would be only 1.5m away. Those further away (up to 7.5m) would, like that closest to the adjacent flats, still have views out over the flat roof area in front of these flats. To avoid any issues with regard to overlooking and to protect the amenities of these neighbouring occupiers, it is considered that these windows should be obscurely glazed and non openable. Subject to a condition to secure this, it is not considered that there will be an adverse impact upon these neighbouring occupiers in this respect.

The proposed office pod does not cover the entire existing flat roof area but rather is positioned 4.8m from the northern side parapet, 0.9m to 2.2m from the southern side parapet and 4.3m from the western side parapet. Whilst the pod will be positioned away from the northern side elevation of the rear projection, it is considered that on account of its height rising to a point just above the ridgeline of the main parade, it is likely to be visible from the rear of 1 Syddal Road especially when the adjacent trees are out of leaf. That aside, noting that the pod will be over 25m from the rear garden of 1 Syddal Road and positioned at an oblique angle to it, it is not considered that it will appear overbearing or visually obtrusive. Given this distance, and the position of the pod being off set from 1 Syddal Road, it is not considered that there will be an unacceptable impact in relation to light reduction.

In relation to the houses on Thorn Road, the trees on the boundary offer a considerable degree of screening of the application site. As such with these in situ, views of the pod in the context of the existing flat roofed rear projection would not be harmful to the amenities of these neighbouring occupiers. When they are out of leaf or were they to die or be removed then the pod may be more prominent. In this respect however the pod would be positioned 4.3m from the western parapet and at its highest point would be only be 30cm above that of the stairwell. Taking this into account and given the absence of any windows to the western elevation of the pod, it is not considered that this element of the proposal will be harmful to the amenities of 1 and 3 Thorn Road by way of overlooking, loss of light or visual intrusion. With regard to 5 Thorn Road and the houses beyond, even if the tree cover on the boundary were not to exist, the existing stairwell would be likely to screen most views of the pod. Taking this into account and given the absence of any windows to the western or southern elevation of the pod, it is not considered that this element of

the proposal will be harmful to the amenities of 5 Thorn Road or properties beyond to the south by way of overlooking, loss of light or visual intrusion.

In relation to the flats above the parade within which the application site is positioned, the pod will be positioned 0.9m to 2.2m from the southern side parapet and no windows are proposed to this side of the pod. The side elevation of the rear projection where it extends beyond the rear elevation of the adjacent flats already forms an imposing structure. Given the siting of the pod away from this elevation, rising to a point on the southern elevation no higher than the stairwell and containing no windows, it is not considered that the amenities of these neighbouring occupiers will be adversely affected by way of overlooking, loss of light or visual intrusion.

It is accepted that the erection of the pod will increase the use of the flat roof to the rear projection. Whilst there is already access to this flat roof this is most likely only to be in connection with the maintenance of the roof and the extraction/cooling units accommodated at roof level. As a result of the proposed development the users and visitors to the office pod would have to cross the flat roof to gain access to the pod and thus usage would increase. Subject to the roof being used for access and maintenance only and not being used for sitting out upon, working or socialising (which could be secured by condition) it is not considered that an adverse impact upon the neighbouring residential occupiers would arise.

The proposed air conditioning units would be positioned adjacent to the western parapet of the roof and would be screened from view by this parapet from all aspects. The consideration of noise pollution relates not just to the existing residential occupiers but also to commercial occupiers whether existing or proposed. The EHO has worked extensively with the applicant to ascertain and agree noise levels that would be emitted from the units and advises that subject to a condition requiring compliance with the Noise Impact Assessment, there will not be an adverse impact on upon the amenities of the existing adjacent occupiers or the future occupiers of the development.

For the above reasons the proposal is considered compliant with policies CS8, SIE1 and SIE3 of the Core Strategy together with advice contained within the NPPF at chapters 12 and 16.

Highway Impacts

Policy CS9 of the Core Strategy requires development to be sited in locations accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. The Council will support development that reduces the need to travel by car. This position is followed through in policy T1. Policy T2 requires parking in accordance with the maximum standards and policy T3 confirms that development which will have an adverse impact on highway safety and/or the capacity of the highway network will only be permitted if mitigation measures are proposed to address such impacts.

The NPPF at para 111 confirms 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.

The application site is located within the District Centre with good access to public transport. The site is therefore considered to be in an accessible location. Whilst there is no off street parking associated with the application site, public car parks are available within a short walk. The adopted parking standards require a maximum of 2 parking spaces only for the proposed office floorspace. Whilst this cannot be met on site, there is no evidence to believe that it could not be accommodated on street (where restrictions do not prevent parking) or within the nearby car parks should visitors to or occupiers of the office pod chose to access the site via private means.

The proposal is therefore considered compliant with Core Strategy policies CS9, T1, T2 and T3. Noting that there will not be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, the NPPF advises that permission should not be refused on highway grounds.

Conclusions

The provision of additional office floorspace accords with saved UDP Review policy E1.2, Core Strategy policies CS7 and AED2 together with advice contained within chapter 6 of the NPPF.

In respect of the impact of the development upon the adjacent Conservation Area and general character of the locality the proposal accords with saved UDP Review policy HC1.3, Core Strategy policies CS8, SIE1 and SIE3 together with advice contained within chapters 12 and 16 of the NPPF.

The proposal will not have an unacceptable impact on the amenities of the neighbouring occupiers and thus complies with policies CS8, SIE1 and SIE3 of the Core Strategy together with advice contained within the NPPF at chapters 12 and 16.

The site is in within a location that is accessible by sustainable modes of travel. Any additional demand for parking can be accommodated within the locality and the traffic generated by the development will not give rise to conditions prejudicial to highway safety. The proposal therefore accords with Core Strategy policies CS9, T1, T2 and T3 together with advice contained within the NPPF.

RECOMMENDATION GRANT SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS