



PLANNING COMMITTEE

31st March 2016

REPORT OF HEAD of PLANNING ENGINEERING and TRANSPORTATION

51- 53, WOLVERHAMPTON STREET, WALSALL, WV13 2NF

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

To request authority to take planning enforcement action in respect of the material change of the land located at 51-53 Wolverhampton Street, Walsall WV13 2NF from the use of warehouse and storage with ancillary offices to use as a 15 bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (“HMO”).

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 That authority is granted for the Head of Planning Engineering and Transportation to issue an Enforcement Notice** under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), to require remedial actions to be undertaken as shown below in 2.3.
- 2.2 To authorise the Head of Planning Engineering and Transportation to institute prosecution proceedings** in the event of non-compliance with an Enforcement Notice or the non-return of Requisitions for Information or a Planning Contravention Notice; and the decision as to the institution of Injunctive proceedings in the event of a continuing breach of planning control.
- 2.3 To authorise the Head of Planning Engineering and Transportation, to amend, add to, or delete from the wording** set out below stating the nature of the breach(es) the reason(s) for taking enforcement action, the requirement(s) of the Notice, or the boundaries of the site, in the interests of ensuring the accurate and up to date notices are served.

Details of the Enforcement Notice

The Breach of Planning Control:-

Without the required planning permission the material change of the land from use as warehousing and storage unit with ancillary offices (Class B8) to use as a 15 bedroom House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) (Class C4) (“the unauthorised development”).

Steps required to remedy the breach:-

- (a) Permanently cease to use the land as a House in multiple occupation;**

- (b) To re-instate the land to its authorised use as a warehouse and storage unit with ancillary offices;
- (c) Permanently remove from the land all features, fixtures, fittings, items and structures associated with the use of land as a 15 bedroom house in multiple occupation

Period for compliance:-

Two months.

Reason for taking Enforcement Action:-

(a) It appears the above breach of planning control has occurred within the last 10 years;

(b) The change and sub-division of the warehouse and storage unit together with ancillary offices to the use of a 15 bedroom house in multiple occupation requires planning permission and the intensive use of the building for this type of residential accommodation does not provide acceptable levels of amenity for occupants in particular with regards to :

- Providing adequate parking provision;
- The provision of sufficient or adequate amounts of useable private amenity area for occupants;
- Overlooking between habitable room windows and to the limited shared amenity space;
- Noise protection measures between the adjoining industrial uses and the unauthorised residential use;

The unauthorised use of the land fails to have a positive impact on the character of the area and is therefore contrary to the aims and objectives of policies GP2, 3.6 ENV10 and ENV32 of Walsall Unitary Development National Planning Policy Framework.

3.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

An appeal against an enforcement notice could be subject to an application for a full or partial award of the appellant's costs in making an appeal if it was considered that the Council had acted unreasonably.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The report recommends enforcement action in order to seek compliance with planning policies. The following planning policies are relevant in this case:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF sets out the Government's position on the role of the planning system in both plan-making and decision-taking. It states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, in economic, social and environmental terms, and it emphasises a *"presumption in favour of sustainable development"*.

All the **core planning principles** have been reviewed and those relevant in this case are:

- Seek to secure high quality design and good standards of amenity for all existing and future occupants

- Take account of the different roles and character of different areas

Key provisions of the NPPF relevant in this case:

4: Promoting Sustainable Transport

32 All development should have safe and suitable access to the site for all people. Development should only be refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe.

7: Requiring Good Design

58. Developments should function well and add to the overall quality of the area.

60. It is proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.

64. Permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions.

11: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

109. The planning system should prevent new and existing development from contributing to or being put at unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of.... noise pollution.

120. To prevent unacceptable risks from pollution decisions should ensure that new development is appropriate to its location. The effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health or general amenity and the potential sensitivity of the area or proposed development to adverse effects from pollution, should be taken into account.

123. Planning decisions should aim to:

- Avoid noise from giving rise to significant adverse impacts
- Mitigate and reduce to a minimum other adverse impacts on health and quality of life.
- Recognise that development will often create some noise
- Identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value.

On **planning conditions** the NPPF says:

Planning conditions should only be imposed where they are necessary, relevant to planning and to the development to be permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.

On **decision-taking** the NPPF sets out the view that local planning authorities should approach decision taking in a positive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development and look for solutions rather than problems and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Pre-application engagement is encouraged.

The Development Plan

Planning law requires that planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration in planning decisions but recognises that what it terms 'Local Plan' policies should not be considered out-of-date simply because they were adopted prior to the publication of the framework.

The Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS)

http://www.walsall.gov.uk/index/environment/planning/local_development_framework/ldf_core_strategy.htm

This was adopted under the current Local Development Framework system, and the NPPF says that for 12 months from the publication of the national framework “*decision-takers may continue to give full weight to relevant policies*. However, it is more than 12 months since the NPPF was published in March 2012. Now (as with the saved policies of Walsall’s UDP) the NPPF advises that “... *due weight should be given to relevant policies ... 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)*.” To consider the conformity of the BCCS with the NPPF the four Black Country councils have completed a ‘Compatibility Self-Assessment Checklist’ (published by the Planning Advisory Service) and have discussed the results with a Planning Inspector. Whilst there is no formal mechanism to certify that the BCCS is consistent with the NPPF the discussions led officers to the conclusion that the exercise identified no issues that would conflict with the NPPF or require a review of the BCCS in terms of conformity.

This checklist has been published on the BCCS and Council websites. Cabinet on 24th July 2013 resolved to endorse the assessment undertaken by officers from the four local authorities and agreed that the Black Country Core Strategy is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework, so that the Core Strategy policies should be given full weight in planning decisions.

The relevant policies are:

ENV2: Development proposals will be required to preserve and, where appropriate, enhance local character.

ENV3: Development proposals across the Black Country will deliver a successful urban renaissance through high quality design that stimulates economic, social and environmental benefits. Implementation of the principles of “By Design” to ensure the provision of a high quality networks of streets, buildings and spaces.

TRAN2: Planning permission will not be granted for development likely to have significant transport implications.

It is considered in this case that the relevant provisions of the BCCS can be given full weight.

Walsall’s Unitary Development Plan (UDP)

www.walsall.gov.uk/index/environment/planning/unitary_development_plan.htm

Policies that have been saved and not replaced by the BCCS remain part of the development plan. However, in such cases the NPPF says “*due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans 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)*”.

The relevant policies are:

GP2: Environmental Protection

The Council will expect all developments to make a positive contribution to the quality of the environment and will not permit development which would have an unacceptable adverse impact on the environment. Considerations to be taken into account in the assessment of development proposals include:

- I. Visual appearance.
- II. Creation of pollution of any kind
- VI. Traffic impact

3.6: Development should help to improve the environment of the Borough.

3.7 Seek to protect people from unacceptable noise, pollution and other environmental problems.

ENV10 states that development which may give rise to pollution such as noise and smell will only be permitted where it would not have an adverse effect on adjoining uses/potential uses.

ENV32: Poorly designed development which fails to properly take account of the context or surroundings will not be permitted

T7 – Car Parking

All development should satisfy the car parking standards set out in Policy T13. This will involve providing an adequate level of parking to meet operational needs while not exceeding any maximum parking standards that are specified.

T13: Development will provide adequate on-site parking to meet its own needs, and that there will be no adverse effect on highway safety and the environment.

It is considered in this case that the relevant provisions of Walsall's saved UDP policies are consistent with the NPPF

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD)

On the basis that relevant UDP policies are consistent with NPPF, the related SPD(s) will also be consistent provided they are applied in a manner consistent with NPPF policy. The relevant SPD's are:

Designing Walsall (SPD) (Feb 2008)

Aims to achieve high quality development that reflects the borough's local distinctiveness and character, through eight key design principles and ten policies. The following are the relevant policies;

DW3: Character - all new development must be designed to respect and enhance local identity

DW9: High Quality Public Realm - new development must seek to ensure it creates places with attractive environmental quality

Appendix D: Numerical Guidelines for Residential Development

5.0 **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

Pursuant to section 171A(a) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) the carrying out development without the required planning permission or failing to comply with a condition or limitation subject to which planning permission has been granted constitutes a breach of planning control. Section 171B adds that where there has been a breach of planning control consisting in the carrying out without planning permission of building, engineering, mining or other operations in, on, over or under land, no

enforcement action may be taken after the end of the period of four years beginning with the date on which the operations were substantially completed. In respect of any other breach (such as change of use or breach of condition) no enforcement action may be taken after the end of the period of ten years from the date of the breach except where the breach of planning control consists of a change of use of any building to use as a single dwellinghouse, in which case a four year period applies.

It appears to officers that the breach of planning control occurring at this site commenced within the last ten years.

Section 172 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that the local planning authority may issue an Enforcement Notice where it appears to them:

- (a) that there has been a breach of planning control; and
- (b) that it is expedient to issue the notice, having regard to the development plan and to any other material considerations.

The breach of planning control is set out in this report. Members must decide whether it is expedient for the enforcement notice to be issued, taking into account the contents of this report.

Non-compliance with an Enforcement Notice constitutes an offence. In the event of non-compliance the Council may instigate legal proceedings. The Council may also take direct action to carry out works and recover the costs of those works from the person on whom the Enforcement Notice was served. Any person on whom an Enforcement Notice is served has a right of appeal to the Secretary of State.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

Article 8 and Article 1 of the first protocol to the Convention on Human Rights state that a person is entitled to the right to respect for private and family life, and the peaceful enjoyment of his/her property. However, these rights are qualified in that they must be set against the general interest and the protection of the rights and freedom of others. In this case, the wider impact of the appearance of the land overrules the owner's right to the peaceful enjoyment of his property.

7.0 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The report seeks enforcement action to remedy adverse environmental impacts.

8.0 WARD(S) AFFECTED

Willenhall South

9.0 CONSULTEES

None.

10.0 CONTACT OFFICER

Stuart Crossen - Tel: 01922 652608
Development Management

11.0 **BACKGROUND PAPERS**
Enforcement file not published

Steve Pretty
Head of Planning, Engineering and Transportation

Planning Committee
31st March 2016

12.0 BACKGROUND AND REPORT DETAIL

A complaint was received April 2015 about the use of this building as a House in Multiple Occupation and the agent acting on behalf of the property was notified.

Notification of Prior Approval for the proposed change of use of the premises from office use (Class B1(a)) to two dwelling houses (use C3) was applied for by the Agent 15/0564/CUPD.

Permitted development rights allow change of use from class B1(a) offices to class C3 use as a dwellinghouse subject proper approval.

Application 15/0564/CUPD was refused by Planning Officers on the following grounds:

*The evidence available to the **Council fails to demonstrate that 51-53 Wolverhampton Street has an established lawful use as B1a Offices**. Any established offices within the building appear to be ancillary to a primary use which is not B1a Offices. For this reason the building **would not** benefit from permitted development rights under Class O of the Town and Country (General Permitted Development) Order 2015. According planning permission would be required for the proposed use.*

Following further complaints, the property was visited by Planning Officers on the 04/03/16 with a Housing Standards Officer and it was confirmed that the building has been converted and is being used as a 15 room house in multiple occupancy with three shared kitchen areas for which no planning permission had been sought or approved.

A letter has been sent to the owner and the agents explaining the position and confirming that an enforcement report would be going to the next available planning committee.