

**Planning Statement to Accompany  
Planning Application for Change of Use of Ground Floor Premises from A1 to  
2 Bedroom Flat  
At  
Former Post Office, 3 Station Road, Dinas Powys, CF64 4DE**



### Site Description

1. The application site comprises an end of terrace ground floor property located on the south side of Station Road, opposite the village square and close to the centre of the village, with easy access to local pubs, eateries and the village store. The ground floor was previously used as the local post office which has been shut for 2 years. The first floor has a lawful use as a separate 2 bedroom flat and has been occupied as such for a considerable number of years. There is a garage and driveway on the southern elevation. At the rear is access to a garden with timber decking and steps leading to a summerhouse adjacent the rear garden boundary. Under the ground floor is a basement that is used for storage with access from the side. The application site is located within the Dinas Powys Conservation Area.

2. The Post Office was closed in 2015 due to a retrenchment strategy by Her Majesty's Post Office. There is an existing active post office at The Murch, 14 Camms Corner, Dinas Powys CF64 4QY. The site has been extensively advertised for let or sale as A1 or other commercial use (subject to the necessary consents) but with little serious interest.

## Proposed Use

3. The proposal is for a change of use of the ground floor from A1 (Post Office) to 2 bedroom flat (C3 Use) with access from the front. The existing frontage and recessed porch would be maintained, providing access into a shared kitchen and living area with bedrooms and a toilet/bathroom located towards the rear. The flat would have access to the rear garden and the basement which could be used for storage. Further storage space is available in the garage for cycle storage and there is sufficient parking for 3 vehicles, one in the garage and two on the drive. There is also sufficient space on the drive for waste bins to serve both flats (which was the previous arrangement when the ground floor was in use as a post office).
4. It should be noted that the existing and proposed elevation show the post box that is situated in front of the premises. It is not a depiction of the ATM machine which has been removed following the closure of the post office.

## Planning Issues

5. It is considered that there are 5 main planning issues to be assessed in the determination of the application. These are:
  - The principle of the change of use to residential;
  - The impact on the Conservation Area and the character of the area;
  - The quality of conversion and the impact on neighbours;
  - Car parking provision and impact on highways;
  - Waste provision.

These are considered below:

### Principle of Change of Use to Residential

6. Section 54A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require planning applications to be determined in accordance with the approved or adopted development plan for the area unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
7. Planning Policy Wales (November 2016) constitutes national planning guidance and is therefore a material planning consideration. In chapter 9 on Housing at paragraph 9.2.6. LPAs are advised to address the scope of conversion (amongst other matters) when considering sites for housing development. Paragraph 9.3.3 advises that

cumulative effects of conversion (again amongst other matters) should not be allowed to damage an area's character or amenity, including neighbours' amenity.

8. The relevant development plan is Vale of Glamorgan Local Development Plan (VOGDP) 2011-2026, adopted in June 2017. Policy MG1, regarding meeting the housing provision target of 10,408 dwellings during the plan period, states that this will be achieved by various means, including the conversion of suitable buildings. 861 dwellings are expected to come from small sites of this type as a contribution to the overall housing target over the plan period.
9. Policy MD5 of VOGDP provides for development within settlement boundaries, such as Dinas Powys, subject to several criteria.
10. VOGDP Policy MG12 identifies Dinas Powys Village Centre as a Local Centre and diagram at Appendix 6 shows that the application site is within the designated centre. Policy MG15 permits non-A1 retail uses within Local and Neighbourhood Retail uses provided:
  - a) They would not result in an excess of 50% non-A1 retail uses;
  - b) It is demonstrated through active and appropriate marketing that the existing use is no longer economically viable; and
  - c) The proposal would not result in an over concentration of non-A1 uses that would be detrimental to the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the local centre.
11. The application site is well within the settlement boundary. It is not considered the proposal would not result in an excess of 50% non- retail uses, particularly as how this is to be determined has not been defined. In any event the site has been actively marketed since it was closed for some 30 months. Attached is a marketing report dated November 2016 which has been updated by the agents in an email dated 7/11/2017. The conclusion as set out in the email is that despite comprehensive marketing at a competitive rate, there is little/no tangible interest from retailers, office occupiers at local level and no demand from multiple retailers given the size of the unit and the demographics of the village. It is considered that 30 months is more than enough to determine that there is little interest particularly as the accompanying text to policy MG15 makes clear that a period of at least 6 months marketing needs to take place.
12. As regards the proposal resulting in an overconcentration of non-A1 uses affecting the vitality, attractiveness and viability of the local centre, it should be noted that there is an existing village store in the centre. The application site has been vacant for over 2 years. It is not considered that a change of use to residential would harm the local centre. Indeed, a change of use to residential would mean that occupiers would patronise the other commercial units thus helping in the viability and vitality of the centre.

13. Consequently, it is considered that the proposal would bring back into productive use currently vacant premises, which would provide another unit of accommodation that would help towards achieving the housing target; and which would not have a detrimental impact on the village centre. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed change of use to residential is acceptable in principle subject to compliance with other design and development management policies as considered below.

#### The impact on the Conservation Area and the character of the area

14. The application property is within the designated Dinas Powys Conservation Area. One of the criteria of Policy MD5 is for development not to unacceptably impact on the character and appearance of the area. Policy MD8 – Historic Environment - requires new development in conservation areas to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the area.
15. Apart from the removal of signage, no other external changes are proposed. Consequently, it is not considered that the proposal would have a harmful impact on the Conservation area or the character and appearance of the area. The proposal would therefore comply with policy on this issue.

#### The quality of conversion and the impact on neighbours

16. One of the criteria of VOGDP Policy MD2 – Design of New Development is to safeguard existing residential amenity with regard to privacy, overlooking, security, noise and disturbance. Additionally, another criterion is to provide private amenity space in accordance council's standards. These are currently contained in Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) – Amenity Standards which for a flat is 20 sqm per person.
17. It is considered the proposal would provide good sized quality accommodation for a smaller household. There is also a good sized rear garden area that would provide sufficient private amenity space that would exceed the 40 sqm that is required by SPG. Finally, it is considered that the residential conversion would not have a harmful impact on neighbouring occupiers including the existing flat above. It would not represent a non-conforming use.
18. Therefore, the proposal would comply with policy and SPG in that regard.

#### Car parking and Impact on Highways

19. One of the criteria of Policy MD2 – Design - requires development proposals not to have an unacceptable impact on highway safety nor cause or exacerbate existing traffic congestion. Another criteria of Policy MD5 permits new development within settlement boundaries provided there is no unacceptable impact on traffic congestion and parking. SPG Guidance on Parking Standards 2015 has categorised various parking zones within the district where different parking requirements apply.

The SPG identifies the site as being within Zone 4 where it is noted that there is at least an hourly bus service to the town centre and there may also be a railway station. Local facilities are within 400m walking distance. The SPG states that for apartments, there is a requirement of 1 space per bedroom and 1 space for visitors per 5 units. Taking into account the 2 bedroom flat above as well, the overall requirement would be 5 spaces.

20. However, it is also noted within the SPG that the standards are maximum standards and that flexibility within the standards allow local circumstances to be taken into account. The fact of the matter is that the application site is located close to the village centre within easy walking distance of nearby facilities. There is also on street parking available. It is also considered that both flats would suit smaller households which are less likely to own more than one vehicle. For all these reasons, it is considered that a more flexible approach to the application of the parking standards is appropriate and the provision of 3 off street parking spaces would be acceptable.

#### Waste Provision

21. A criteria of Policy MD2 – Design – requires development proposals to provide adequate facilities and space for the collection, composting and recycling of waste materials.
22. It is considered that there is adequate room on the site and within the rear garden to undertake this. It is contended that there would be little difference in overall levels of waste generated by the occupants of a new flat compared to that of the commercial operation of a Post Office or other A1 retail use. Indeed, it is likely to be less. Consequently, it is considered that the proposal would comply with policy in that regard.

### Conclusion

23. Despite extensive marketing over a prolonged period, there has been little interest expressed in the continued commercial use of the ground floor premises. The change of use to residential would make productive use of a unit that has been vacant for a considerable period and would provide good quality accommodation for smaller household. It would not harm neighbouring occupiers nor cause traffic congestion. Therefore the proposed change of use from A1 to C3 would not contradict either National or Local Plan policy as it applies to this application.
24. It is hoped the Council will agree and grant planning permission for the proposal.

Jeremy Peter MRTPI  
11 December 2017