

Application No: 13/2551M

Location: 56-58, MILL STREET, MACCLESFIELD, CHESHIRE, SK11 6LT

Proposal: CHANGE OF USE FROM (A1) SHOPS TO A2 (FINANCIAL & PROFESSIONAL SERVICES) TO GROUND FLOOR & BASEMENT

Applicant: Mr E Taylor, John Taylor (Macclesfield) Ltd

Expiry Date: 13-Aug-2013

Date Report Prepared: 12th September 2013

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approval subject to conditions.

MAIN ISSUES

- Appropriateness of an A2 use in the prime shopping area of Mill Street.

REASON FOR REPORT

This application constitutes a departure from Macclesfield Borough Local Plan policy MTC3 and as such the application is required to be determined by Members of the Northern Planning Committee.

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site occupies a corner plot between Mill Street and Queen Victoria Street and sits within the Prime Shopping Area of Macclesfield Town Centre. The site was formally occupied by the Early Learning Centre who vacated the property 6 months prior to the submission of this application.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Planning approval is sought to change the use of no.56-58 Mill Street from Class A1 (Retail) to Class A2 (Financial and professional services).

RELEVANT HISTORY

13/3064M	Change of use from a B1a (Business Use) to C3 (Dwelling Houses) of the use of the first and second floors of the existing building. The change of use will include internal and external alterations. Awaiting determination.
04/0031P	Replacement shop and projecting sign (Advert Consent) Approved with conditions, 17.02.2004
78991P	Alterations to shop front; change of use of first floor to retail and second floor to coffee shop Approved, 28.09.1994

POLICIES

Local Plan Policy

BE1	High standards of design
DC1	High quality design for new build
DC3	Protection of the amenities of nearby residents
MTC1 & MTC3	Prime Shopping Area (Macclesfield)

National Planning Policy Framework

Chapter 2 Ensuring the vitality of town centres.

CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

None.

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

No representations have been received at the time of preparing this report.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

This application is supported by the following documentation:

- **Design and Access Statement;** this document provides a background and policy context to the proposal;
- **Addendum Supporting Statement;** this document provides more detailed information relating to the prospective tenant; local and national planning policy.

Full copies of each of these documents are available to view on the application file.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of development

Prior to becoming vacant the site was occupied by the Early Learning Centre. It is proposed to change the use of the premises from Class A1 (Retail) to Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services). During the course of the application further information has been gathered on the prospective tenant, which is an insurance company. The prospective tenant provides various forms of insurance that can be purchased on-line or through a face to face meeting with an advisor. The company have confirmed that 65-70% of their business is generated through 'walk-ins' from the high street with no prior appointment.

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan policy MTC3 advises that the change of use from Class A1 to Class A2, A3 and other non shopping uses will normally be allowed provided that the proposed would not 1) cumulatively lead to a loss in the vitality and viability of the shopping area; 2) lie between no.2 and 82, and no.3 and 77 Mill Street; 3) lead to a concentration of non A1 uses in a particular street or part of a street thereby reducing the dominant characteristics.

Paragraph 23 of the National Planning Policy Framework comments that Local Planning Authorities should promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer, existing markets should be retained and enhanced to ensure that markets remain attractive. The Framework suggests that the proposed use would be an appropriate town centre use.

The reasoning behind policy MTC3 recognises that the amount of non retail uses in the prime shopping area is already high and any further losses are *likely* [my emphasis] to undermine the area as a whole. At present 6.7% of the prime shopping area are in non-A1 use. If the Council were to support this application, this figure would increase to 8.5%.

It is noted that within the prime shopping area, between no.34 and no.71 Mill Street there are currently 7 vacant A1 units, namely nos. 24, 34, 36, 38 to 40, 42, 55 to 57 and 56. Unit vacancy was carefully looked at during the recent Wilson Bowden application and it is acknowledged that there needs to be some degree of flexibility in the type of uses within town centres in order to reflect changing market trends.

A2 frontages often lack activity. The application site has a large frontage to both Mill Street and Queen Victoria Street. In the interest of mitigation it is considered appropriate to add a condition to restrict the painting of, or obscuring of the windows without the prior approval of the Local Planning Authority.

Residential Amenity

The use is an appropriate town centre use and will cause no harmful impact on any nearby residential properties.

Other

Members are made aware that the proposed change of use could, in principle, be carried out under the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Amendment Order 2013. However, any change of use implemented would be limited to a period of 2 years, at which point the applicant would be required to apply for planning permission or convert the premises back to its former A1 use.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

Planning approval is sought for the change of use from Class A1 to Class A2. Approval of this application would form a departure from Local Plan policy MTC3(criterion 2); however it is accepted that there needs to be some degree of flexibility to ensure the vitality and viability of the Town Centre, in accordance with the objectives of the NPPF. The application site is on the fringe of the prime shopping area of Macclesfield and it is considered that bringing the unit back into an active use would outweigh the loss of this retail unit and would justify the departure from policy. The proposal will not harm the vitality or viability of the town centre.

RECOMMENDATION: Approve subject to following conditions

1. A03FP - Commencement of development (3 years)
2. A01AP - Development in accord with approved plans
3. Window displays

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