



Woodford Neighbourhood Forum

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Planning Services
Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Town Hall, Edward Street
Stockport
SK1 3XE

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To: Planning Officer

Reference: DC/080325

Proposal: Change of use from dwelling to office

Location: First Floor Flat, 442 Chester Road, Woodford, Stockport, SK7 1QS

1. General comments

- 1.1. We do not object in principle to the proposed conversion from a dwelling to offices, but have concerns about the number of office spaces, details of the layout, parking arrangements and traffic issues.
- 1.2. The application does not state the use class of the proposed offices, but we assume that the most likely is new Class E of the Use Classes Order: Commercial, Business and Service, which was introduced from September 2020. (See Appendix 1)
- 1.3. In the plans, the office is shown accommodating 39 staff plus 2 visitors. We feel that this is too many for this site for the reasons outlined below.
- 1.4. Only 6 parking spaces are shown at the rear car park. If all the users travelled to the site by car, then there would be insufficient parking on site for their vehicles. See notes under 3.1 concerning use of public transport and cycling.
- 1.5. There could be up to 50 people present at any one time in the offices area. This could mean that the office visitors would be expected (or tempted) to use the front spaces to the detriment of the retail shoppers.
- 1.6. Additional traffic movements associated with the coming and going of customers, and potentially also delivery vehicles, could have a detrimental impact on the amenities of the residential properties in close proximity to the site.
- 1.7. The entrance to the site is nearly opposite one of the entrances into the Redrow Estate, which also leads to the Avro Heritage Museum. The junction to Moor Lane is not far away. This raises traffic safety issues for users of the shop, the offices, the estate and the museum, especially if there is a temptation to park on Chester Road. (see Appendix Fig 2)
- 1.8. We have doubts whether the proposal is compliant with building regulations with regard to the amount of space per person, adequate ventilation, fire escape route, and provision for those with disabilities, including lift and disabled toilet facilities.

2. Policies relevant to the application

We believe that policies relevant to this application are contained within the following:

- **Stockport Development Plan:**
 - Woodford Neighbourhood Plan 2019
 - Saved UDP 2011
 - Core Strategy 2011
- **NPPF 2019**

3. Woodford Neighbourhood Plan

We believe the following WNP policies are relevant:

3.1. EMP1: New Businesses within the Area

“The sustainable growth of local businesses and facilities, including the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses, will be supported, subject to development respecting local character, highway safety and residential amenity. The development of high quality communications infrastructure will be supported, subject to any such development respecting local character through sympathetic design and camouflage, where appropriate.”

Assessment

New office space in Woodford is welcome as it may support local employment and businesses. The proposal to accommodate 39 people is too high for this location, but a much smaller number in a revised layout would be supported.

The site location adjacent to Chester Road is accessible by car, bicycle and by public transport, although bus routes are currently fairly limited and the nearest railway stations are 2.4 k away at Poynton and Bramhall. To constitute sustainable development there should be covered, secure parking for bicycles at the site.

3.2.DEV4: Design of new development

“All new development in Woodford Neighbourhood Area should achieve a high standard of design. New residential development proposals should demonstrate how they respect and respond to the Neighbourhood Area’s rural character, to its ecology and to its landscape. Where appropriate and viable, the development of sustainable drainage systems, the retention and enhancement of landscape, wildlife and ecological networks and the achievement of high environmental and energy standards will be supported.”

Assessment

Assuming that the changes would have little impact on the exterior appearance of the current building, the proposal does not conflict with this policy.

4. SMBC Core Strategy

We believe that the following policy is relevant to this proposal:

4.1. Development Management policy T-1

This seeks to reduce the need to travel by focussing new development in accessible locations and to ensure that new development generating significant numbers of trips will be required to be sustainably accessible by public transport, walking and cycling.

Assessment

The proposal does not comply with this policy because Woodford is not currently well served by public transport. As stated under 3.1, although there is a bus stop on Chester Road outside the site, bus routes are currently fairly limited and the nearest railway stations are 2.4 k away at Poynton and Bramhall. The proposal does not mention inclusion of secure bicycle parking on site.

4.2. Development Management Policy T-2

“Developments shall provide car-parking in accordance with maximum parking standards for each type of land use as set out in the existing adopted parking standards.”

Assessment

With only 6 parking spaces at the rear for office users the proposal does not meet these standards.

5. NPPF

The following policies seem relevant to this application:

5.1. NPPF Paragraph 105, section 9

Assessment

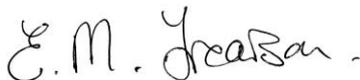
The proposed change of use fails to take account of the type, mix and use of the combination of retail and proposed office use in one building on the busy Chester Road and adjoining streets to the detriment of highway safety. The proposal does not comply with accessibility and sustainability requirements due to the lack of opportunities for use of public transport.

With potentially 39 staff plus visitors and only 6 allocated car spaces, the development does not meet sustainable transport related development objectives, as set out both at national and borough wide level.

Summary

In conclusion we have no objections to the principle of conversion of the flat into office space, but believe that 39 spaces plus 2 visitors is far too many for this site, which is located in a busy part of the village. It does not constitute sustainable development because it is poorly accessible by public transport. In addition, it has the potential to cause disturbance to neighbouring residents and a hazard to traffic. The proposed layout also raises questions about compliance with building and parking regulations.

Yours sincerely,



Evelyn Frearson On behalf of Woodford Neighbourhood Forum Management Committee

Appendix

1. Class E - Commercial, Business and Service

Class E introduced from 1 September 2020 covers uses previously defined in the revoked Classes A1/2/3, B1, D1(a-b) and 'indoor sport' from D2(e):

E(a) Display or retail sale of goods, other than hot food

E(b) Sale of food and drink for consumption (mostly) on the premises

E(c) Provision of:

E(c)(i) Financial services,

E(c)(ii) Professional services (other than health or medical services), or

E(c)(iii) Other appropriate services in a commercial, business or service locality

E(d) Indoor sport, recreation or fitness (not involving motorised vehicles or firearms)

E(e) Provision of medical or health services (except the use of premises attached to the residence of the consultant or practitioner)

E(f) Creche, day nursery or day centre (not including a residential use)

E(g) Uses which can be carried out in a residential area without detriment to its amenity:

E(g)(i) Offices to carry out any operational or administrative functions,

E(g)(ii) Research and development of products or processes

E(g)(iii) Industrial processes

Figure 1: 442 Chester Road, front view of site from Chester Road



Figure 2: Satellite image of location of 442 Chester Road site

