

Planning, Design & Access Statement

1-7 Taylor Street, Bury, BL9 6DT

Change of use from existing offices (Class B1(a) to: 3 No. flats and 2 no. retail units (Class E) to ground floor, 4 no. flats to first floor and 3 no. flats to second floor; 7 Bedroom house in multiple occupation (HMO) (Sui Generis) to first/second floors; Conversion of roof space with dormers at front and rear to form second floor; External alterations including new windows/doors and shop front/entrances

October 2023

Introduction & Context

This Statement has been prepared by the Applicant in support of a planning application seeking consent for the change of use of 1-7 Taylor Street, Bury from offices to a mixed-use residential / retail scheme. This Statement should be read alongside the accompanying plans and other supporting documents submitted.

1-7 Taylor Street comprises an underutilised office block located within a readily accessible location, directly opposite from suburban housing as shown below. The restrictions on office-based working due to COVID-19 have made businesses rethink the space they need, with nearly half of UK enterprises with office space planning to shrink their estates within the next five years. The freedom afforded by working from home, according to the research of 1,000 business leaders, is set to permanently alter the way they work. Nearly half of enterprises with office space (45 percent) plan to downsize by the end of 2025, and one in seven (18 percent) have already done so since the pandemic began. It is estimated that about 18 million square feet of office space will become obsolete in the next five years, accounting for 18 percent of all currently occupied square footage.



Figure 1. 1-7 Taylor Street comprises an underutilised office block located within a readily accessible location directly opposite from suburban housing

The Applicant seeks to put the underutilised site to effective use and considers a mixed-use residential / retail development as the most suitable form of development insofar as it would contribute towards local housing land supply whilst also promoting consumer choice and creating jobs during times of great economic uncertainty. More details of the scheme's compatibility with local and national planning policy will be set out subsequently.



Figure 2. 1-7 Taylor Street comprises an underutilised office block located within a readily accessible location directly opposite from suburban housing. The site is located within a readily accessible location with plentiful on-street parking.

Planning Policy

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan taking into consideration any material considerations relevant to the determination of the application. The development plan for the purposes of the application proposal comprises the Bury Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (1997). The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning agenda and is also relevant.

Bury UDP

The following key policies from the document have relevance to the application proposal:

- **Policy EN1 – Built Environment** – The Council will seek to protect, preserve and enhance the character, appearance and amenity of the Borough's built environment.
- **Policy EN1/2 – Townscape and Built Design** – The Council will give favourable consideration to proposals which do not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the particular character and townscape of the Borough's towns, villages and other settlements. Factors to be considered when assessing proposals will include the external appearance and design of the proposal in relation to its height, scale, density and layout; the relationship of the proposal to the surrounding area and the choice and use of materials.

- **Policy S4/1 - Retail Development Outside Town and District Centres** - This policy identifies a number of retailing activities which may, in principle, be acceptable in out of centre locations, subject to compliance with other policies of the Plan.
- **Policy S4/2 - Assessing Out-of Centre Retail Development** - states that proposals (other than those covered by Policy S4/1) will be assessed according to the following criteria: the effect on, and contribution to, urban regeneration; economic effects; environmental and social effects on the locality; the effects on the highway network; accessibility by public and private transport; feasibility of using any alternative site; the need for and suitability of the site for other land uses.
- **Policy S2/5** states the Council will support small scale local shopping provision (within Class A1). In determining proposals for new local shops, the Council will assess the balance of the proposal with regards to the following factors:
 - whether or not there is a local need that cannot be met by existing provision in the area;
 - the effect on the vitality and viability of established local shopping facilities;
 - whether or not the proposed use would be more appropriately located within a recognised shopping centre;
 - the availability of vacant shop premises and/or the level of unimplemented planning permissions in the vicinity that could accommodate the proposed use;
 - the potential nuisance that would be created for neighbouring residents the parking and servicing provision associated with the proposed development and its effects in terms of road safety and traffic generation.

- **Policy EC2/1** states that in EGAs, the Council will only allow development for the uses specified (former B1, B2 and B8). Other uses will only be permitted where they constitute limited development or do not substantially detract from an area's value as an EGA.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF is also relevant and sets out the Government's planning agenda. According to the NPPF, the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The general perspective from the NPPF is that planning should proactively drive growth and support sustainable economic development. It also states that planning should make effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed. It is clear from the NPPF that the delivery of sustainable development must take into account the following aspects:

- *Building a strong, competitive economy*
- *Ensuring the vitality of town centres*
- *Supporting a prosperous rural economy*
- *Promoting sustainable transport*
- *Requiring good design*

'Promoting sustainable transport'; according to the NPPF, decisions should take account of whether safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all people and development should only be refused where the residual impacts of development are severe. Chapter 9 of the NPPF relates to the promotion of sustainable transport. Para 102 stresses the

importance of development proposals addressing transportation issues at an early stage in a development in order to identify the potential impacts of a proposal and look at opportunities to reduce them together with promoting more sustainable methods of transport. Para 103 states that the planning system should actively manage patterns of growth in support of these objectives, focusing on locations that will limit the need to travel offering a genuine choice of travel modes, with the overall aim being to reduce congestion and emissions. Para 105 states that planning policies should support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites, minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities.

The NPPF states that the creation of high-quality 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.

The general perspective of the NPPF is that 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.

Ensuring the vitality of Town Centres is a crucial part of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). At Para 86, the NPPF states that Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning

applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered.

Para 87 goes on to state that, when considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites which are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale, so that opportunities to utilise suitable town centre or edge of centre sites are fully explored.

Paragraph 89 of the NPPF highlights the threshold for an impact assessment for retail development outside town centres, which are not in accordance with an up-to-date local plan, the default threshold is 2,500 sqm of gross floorspace.

Other Relevant Documents / Guidance

National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)

Further guidance on what is within the NPPF regarding town centre uses outside of town a centre is provided by NPPG (Ensuring the vitality of town centres). The guidance recognises that it may not be possible to

accommodate all forecast needs in a town centre: there may be physical or other constraints which make it inappropriate to do so. In those circumstances, planning authorities should plan positively to identify the most appropriate alternative strategy for meeting the need for these main town centre uses, having regard to the sequential tests. This should ensure that any proposed main town centre uses which are not in an existing town centre are in the best locations to support the vitality and vibrancy of town centres, and that no likely significant adverse impacts on existing town centres arise.

Bury Retail Study (Drivers Jonas Deloitte) 2012

The study forms part of the Local Plan evidence base and assesses the need/capacity for additional retail floorspace within the Borough up to 2028. The study assessed the retail capacity for each of the catchment zones of the Borough's main town centres of Bury, Ramsbottom, Radcliffe and Prestwich.

Planning Appraisal

1-7 Taylor Street comprises an underutilised office block located within a readily accessible location directly opposite from suburban housing. The application site is suitably located within an established residential area with good access to public transport, shops and services. The NPPF states that housing applications should be considered in the context of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and the Council have permitted a number of similar conversion schemes within similar circumstances in recent years.



Figure 3. The site is located within a mostly residential area with some commercial entities intertwined

The delivery of the application scheme would make a valuable contribution towards the City's housing land supply whilst also providing

small HMO provision for single occupancy, for those seeking more affordable, flexible forms of accommodation.

Policy EC2/1 states that in EGAs, the Council will only allow development for the uses specified (former B1, B2 and B8). Other uses will only be permitted where they constitute limited development or do not substantially detract from an area's value as an EGA.

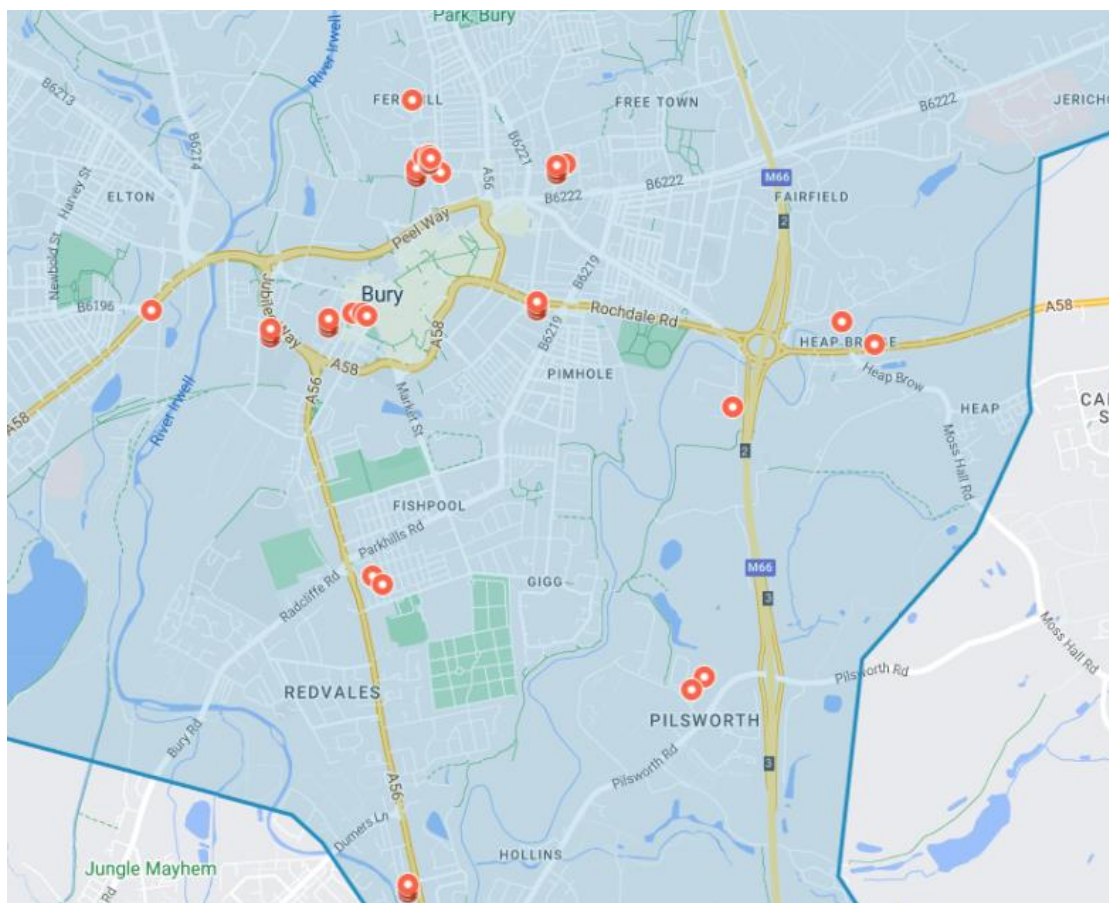
The UDP pre-dates the NPPF. The general message from the NPPF is that planning policies should avoid the long-term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.

In fact, Class O of the GPDO allows for the conversion of offices to any number of dwellings. These can be houses or flats and can be carried out in any part of England as long as it is not a listed building.

The demand for offices has been in decline since Covid-19 restrictions have forced many people to work remotely to mitigate the spread of the virus. But even after the re-opening of the economy, a majority of employees prefer flexible arrangements to continue. The restrictions on office-based working due to COVID-19 have made businesses rethink the space they need, with nearly half of UK enterprises with office space planning to shrink their estates within the next five years. The freedom afforded by working from home, according to the research of 1,000

business leaders, is set to permanently alter the way they work. Nearly half of enterprises with office space (45 percent) plan to downsize by the end of 2025, and one in seven (18 percent) have already done so since the pandemic began. It is estimated that about 18 million square feet of office space will become obsolete in the next five years, accounting for 18 percent of all currently occupied square footage.

As part of the assessment into the market re-use potential of the building for office accommodation, an assessment has been undertaken of office vacancy rates within the local area utilising nationally known commercial property search sites such as Rightmove. As shown below/overleaf, there is an abundance of vacant office accommodation currently available to let within Bury.



rightmove

Buy Rent House Prices Find Agent Commercial Inspire

Bury + 0 miles sq. ft. Min Size to Max Size PCM Min Price to Max

Commercial Properties To Let in Bury, Greater Manchester, including let agreed, business park, office, serviced office

39 results Sort: Relevance List Map

Prioritise properties with... + Add keyword



Hollins Brook Park, Little 66, Bury, Greater Manchester, B...

Serviced office

Flexible short-term contracts Modern business centre offering contemporary workspaces in Greater Manchester, including CCTV,

COMMERCIAL

Marketed by Bizspace Limited, London

Biz Space 020 3840 3780 Local call rate Contact Save

£1,626 pcm From 1,000–42,096 sq. ft.



Hollins Brook Park Little 66, Bury

Serviced office

The modern business Centre is home to seven self-contained office buildings that range from 894 to 7,682 sq ft, with most being around

COMMERCIAL

Marketed by Office Freedom, Office Freedom Regional

OfficeFreedom 020 3907 2767 Local call rate Contact Save

£600 pcm From 150–7,682 sq. ft.



Minerva House Hornby Street, Bury

Serviced office

Modern Flexible Office Space located in a prominent position close to the centre of Bury. All offices have individually controlled air

COMMERCIAL

Marketed by Office Freedom, Office Freedom Regional

There are currently 39 offices available to rent (plus 3 for sale) within a 15 minute drive of the application site, many of which are in more favourable locations with much better quality accommodation than the application site.

As such, permitting the change of use would in no way hinder the Council's ability to cater for office floorspace requirements and instead, each of the retail units would generate a number of full time and part time jobs, supporting the aims of local policy and national guidance on employment.

With regards to the proposed HMO element of the scheme, HMOs play an important role in UK housing supply as they provide affordable and flexible living accommodation, such as for young professionals, students and other workers who prop up the UK's economy. Moreover, following the pandemic and the on-going cost-of-living crisis, the demand for HMO accommodation has notably increased.

HMOs can also provide accommodation for single people on modest to low incomes. Research from ideal flatmate, the UK room share platform, has looked into the ratio of nurses, paramedics and doctors - employed by the UK's National Health Service (NHS) - who are required to flat share in order to afford rental properties within reaching distance of the hospital in which they work. It is estimated that 20% of nurses, paramedics and doctors working in the NHS reside in HMO accommodation.

Both the proposed HMO element and the proposed residential element has an appropriate internal layout to enable good standard of living with plentiful natural light and a good outlook. It is proposed the each room would accommodate 1 person (a total of 7 people), with every room having an en-suite facility and access to a communal kitchen/lounge facility on the same floor. Future occupants of the scheme will be able to utilise open spaces and greenery nearby.

With regards to highways impact, the site is located within a readily accessible, sustainable location and can be accessed by rail, bus, bicycle and on foot. The characteristics of this type of accommodation as summarised in an Inspector's conclusions on Appeal Ref: APP/G4240/W/19/3221352 - relating to a 12-bed HMO:

“...given the generally low car ownership levels amongst residents of HMOs...I am satisfied that the three off-street parking spaces proposed would be enough to serve the development without causing pressure for parking on surrounding streets or affecting highway safety.

Furthermore, the proximity of public transport and local services also reduces car reliance and adds to the sustainability credentials of the scheme. In this regard paragraph 109 of the revised National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) advises 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.”

Appeal Ref: APP/G4240/W/19/3221352

The site is conveniently located to take advantage of sustainable modes of travel to reach the city centre and areas of employment and given the nature of the accommodation, it is unlikely that occupants will own vehicles but will utilise the good public transport links. As such, the proposal is unlikely to give rise to adverse highways impacts.

The retail units are envisaged to be open during typical daytime hours (8am-8pm) to customers and this would not give rise to any harmful effects in terms of noise or other disturbance to surrounding existing and proposed future residential occupiers.

Design and Access

The proposed modifications sought, namely the insertion of the dormers and the shop fronts represent suitable additions that will assimilate to the host building, especially given as there is no ‘fixed’ built style within the locality.

At present, the building is in need of some refurbishment and the proposed development will enhance the property – most of the changes are at ground floor level and to the roof. Along Taylor Street, the rebuilding of the ground floor and the insertion of windows and doors that align with the first floor windows would complement the host property and fit with the rhythm of terraces in the wider surrounding area.

Along Topping Street, the two shop fronts would have a symmetrical appearance, with a centralised doorway and high quality aluminium frame. The replacement brickwork would match the existing and this aspect of the development would also replace a ground floor façade that consists of different sized windows and external roller shutters.

The other key physical element of the development is the proposed insertion of dormers at roof level. One of these would be located to the rear, facing the yard area/rear alley and would not be prominent in views from surrounding roads. The other dormer would face Topping Street – although it would extend across most of the width of the property, it would be set down from the ridge and back from the eaves so it sits comfortably on the roof, and thereby being sympathetic to the existing property. More detailed aspects of the proposal, such as materials can be addressed by planning condition.

Conclusion

On the basis of the above, the proposal receives support from the development policies of the adopted development plan and the NPPF advises that proposals which accord with the development plan should be approved without delay.

If any further information is required, please get in touch with the agent.