

Planning Statement

34 Well Street
Cefn Mawr
Wrexham
LL14 3AE

Change of use of ground floor from Hairdressers to Launderette

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared and submitted in connection with a full planning application made to Wrexham County Borough Council ("The Local Planning Authority") for the change of use of the ground floor premises from a Hairdressers (A1) to a Launderette (Sui Generis) at 34 Well Street, Cefn Mawr, Wrexham, LL14 3AE.

1.2 This Planning Statement should be read in-conjunction with the other plans and documents which have been submitted in support of the application, principally comprising:

- Completed Full Planning Application Form
- Green Infrastructure Statement
- Dwg No: 79528 / GH / 001 – Site Location Plan
- Dwg No: 79528 / GH / 002 – Block Plan
- Dwg No: 79528 / GH / 100 – Existing Floor Plans
- Dwg No: 79528 / GH / 101 – Existing Elevations
- Dwg No: 79528 / GH / 102 – Proposed Floor Plans
- Dwg No: 79528 / GH / 103 – Proposed Elevations
- Dwg No: 79528 / GH / 003 – Biodiversity Enhancement Plan

1.3 The information contained within this statement is designed to aid the Planning Officer in making their recommendation.

2.0 The Application Site

2.1 The application site relates to the ground-floor premises at 34 Well Street, Cefn Mawr. The ground-floor commercial premises is currently vacant; having last been in use as a Hairdressers (A1 use class).

2.2 The site fronts onto Well Street, which is a mixed street comprising residential, commercial (A1, A3) and community premises. The site and wider street lies within the 'District Centre' of Cefn Mawr as per the adopted Wrexham Local Development Plan (LDP).

2.3 The premises are accessed via the existing shopfront within the south-eastern elevation, as well as via a rear entrance within the north-eastern elevation.

2.4 The commercial floorspace within the ground floor premises measures approximately 26.5 sq metres in total (GIA).

2.5 The application site is located within the Cefn Mawr Conservation Area as well as within the 'buffer zone' of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site.

2.6 The location of the application site and its wider context is displayed below within Figure 1, with the site location being denoted by the red star.



Figure 1: Location of the application site and its immediate context

3.0 The Proposed Development

3.1 The application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of the ground-floor premises from its current A1 use into a Launderette (Sui Generis).

3.2 No internal or external structural or visual alterations to the building are proposed, and therefore the proposal comprises a 'pure' change of use of the ground-floor premises only.

3.3 Access to the premises would be maintained via the shopfront and the existing side access door.

3.4 No changes are proposed to the use of the first-floor of the building, which would be maintained as an existing self-contained one-bed flat (C3).

4.0 Planning Policy Context

4.1 At a national level, *Future Wales: The National Plan 2040* comprises the national development plan for Wales and sets-out the Welsh Government's

strategic land-use planning objectives for the nation moving towards 2040. Policy 2 of Future Wales recognises the importance of creating sustainable places and neighbourhoods, advising that sustainable places are compact urban neighbourhoods comprising mixed-use developments within walking distance of people's homes. Policy 6 adds to this, stating that ***"it is important for local facilities and homes to be integrated within walkable, mixed-use neighbourhoods, particularly in or adjacent to local centres in accordance with policy 2".***

4.2 Planning Policy Wales (PPW) (Edition 12, 2024) comprises the Welsh Government's primary national planning policy guidance document. Paragraph 4.3.2 relates to retail and commercial centres and advises:

"Retail and commercial centres should be identified in development plans and include established city, town, district, local, village and neighbourhood centres, which provide a range of shopping, commercial and leisure opportunities as well as places of employment, education, civic identity and social interaction. Opportunities to live in these centres, combined with their good public transport links, make them the most sustainable places".

4.3 PPW confirms the planning system must:

- ***"promote viable urban and rural retail and commercial centres as the most sustainable locations to live, work, shop, socialise and conduct business;***
- ***sustain and enhance retail and commercial centres' vibrancy, viability and attractiveness; and***
- ***improve access to, and within, retail and commercial centres by all modes of transport, prioritising walking, cycling and public transport".***

4.4 PPW contains specific policy guidance with regards mixed-use primary and secondary retail and commercial centres. It confirms:

"4.3.30 Although retailing (A1) uses should underpin retail and commercial centres, it is only one of the factors which contribute towards their vibrancy.

4.3.31 Primary areas are typically characterised by a high proportion of A1 retail uses, and their designation requires an understanding of the existing distribution of uses in a centre together with careful consideration of a centre's role and how it relates to the retail strategy for the area. Secondary areas typically contain mixed uses, for example shops, cafes and restaurants, financial establishments and other services and community facilities.

4.3.32 Policies should encourage a diversity of uses in centres".

4.4 Technical Advice Note (TAN) 4 (Retail & Commercial Development) also provides further Welsh Government policy guidance with regards commercial development within Wales.

4.5 In terms of local policy, the Wrexham Local Development Plan (2013-2028) (adopted in December 2023) is of principal relevance.

4.6 LDP Policy R1 confirms the application site is located within the Cefn Mawr District Centre, which is 'second' within the defined retail hierarchy behind Wrexham City Centre.

4.7 LDP Policy R5 relates to District, Local, Village and Neighbourhood Centres and states:

"Retail, office, leisure and community facilities will be encouraged in the defined district, local, village and neighbourhood centres provided it is appropriate in scale and is of a type which will complement and enhance the centre.

Changes of use from retail will only be supported where development would not adversely affect the vitality and viability of these Centres, proposals will need to demonstrate:

- ***i. How they complement the character, appearance and function of the centre;***
- ***ii. Whether, and for how long, the premises have been vacant and actively marketed; and***
- ***iii. The extent of the cumulative loss of retail, office, leisure and community floorspace on the function of the existing centre".***

4.8 In addition, LDP Policy DM1 is a general catch-all development management policy which states the following:

"Development proposals, where relevant, must:

- ***i. Accord with or enhance the character, local distinctiveness and appearance of the site, existing building(s) and surrounding landscape/ townscape in terms of their siting, layout, scale, height, design, density, use of materials and landscaping;***
- ***ii. Not have an unacceptable effect on the amenity of the occupiers of nearby properties/land; and provide a satisfactory standard of amenity for the occupiers/users of the development itself;***
- ***iii. Safeguard the environment from the adverse effects of pollution of water, land, noise, light or air, or land instability, arising from development;***

iv. Take account of personal and community safety and security in their design and layout;

v. Prioritise walking, cycling and public transport use ahead of travel by car;

vi. Not give rise to highway safety, pedestrian safety or parking problems on site or in the locality;

vii. Contribute to low carbon communities through energy efficiency, be designed to minimise the use of non-renewable energy, water and the production of waste both during construction and when in use;

viii. Not increase the risk of flooding but make adequate provision for sustainably dealing with foul and surface water drainage and not result in an unacceptable impact upon the water environment;

ix. On sites which have previously been developed, new development proposals should make use of existing suitable building materials wherever possible for appropriate uses in order to re-use recyclable materials and reduce the amount of imported materials; and

x. Ensure that any risks arising from past coal mining, as indicated on the constraints map, can be adequately managed".

5.0 Principle of Development

5.1 In-line with the above, the principal consideration with regards the principle of development in this instance relates to compliance with LDP Policy R5 (District, Local, Village and Neighbourhood Centres).

5.2 As noted, the application site is wholly located within the Cefn Mawr District Retail/Commercial Centre as per LDP Policy R1.

5.3 At present, the ground-floor premises are vacant, and have been vacant for in excess of a period of 12 months. The last use of the ground-floor premises was as a Hairdressers (A1 use class).

5.4 The building has been actively marketed as a mixed-use building by a number of local and national agencies for a significant length of time (in excess of 12 months) prior to the submission of this planning application. Details of the marketing of the property by a local firm can be found within the following link:

https://www.onthemarket.com/details/13720990/.

5.5 Given the marketing of the property which has taken place over a significant time-period, it is considered that the retention of the current A1 use is not viable.

5.6 In any case, the premises is of a minor scale and the existing surroundings along Well Street are already comprised of a broad mix of different uses including A1, A2, A3, D1 and residential premises.

5.7 It is also important to note that the existing Hairdresser use is not a 'true' retail use and does not involve any element of retailing. It also doesn't include an existing active shop frontage. Therefore, the proposed change of use into a Launderette (Sui Generis) would have no real effect upon the extent of true retailing floorspace within the District Centre.

5.8 The premises has been vacant for an extended period of time, and its current effect upon the viability and vitality of the district centre, and the Cefn Mawr economy more generally, is therefore a negative one. The proposed change of use would provide an economically viable re-use for the ground-floor premises – bringing an existing commercial premises back into use. This would have a positive effect upon the vitality of the district centre.

5.9 It is noted the Local Planning Authority has approved several similar applications within Wrexham City Centre, where a similar policy position exists, from A1/A2 to alternative uses within recent years. These include:

- P/2020/0825 – Change of Use of Shop (A1) to Bar and Restaurant (A3) at 7 High Street, Wrexham
- P/2022/0996 – Change of use from a1 (retail) to a3 (restaurant/takeaway) and construction of new shopfront and security shutter at 7 High Street, Wrexham
- P/2024/0298 – Change of Use of Building from Class A2 (Building Society) to Class A3 (Coffee Shop) at 1-2 High Street, Wrexham

5.10 The above recent approvals within the Primary Shopping Frontage of Wrexham City Centre demonstrate that the LPA has adopted a pragmatic approach to the change of use of existing 'retail' premises within defined retail centres; owing to the positive economic effect the re-use of vacant premises within these areas has upon the economy and the vitality of the street scene. The current proposal within the Cefn Mawr District Centre is no different.

5.11 Therefore, given the fact the ground-floor premises has been vacant for an extended period of time, the existing use is not a true retail use in any case, and the fact the existing street already has a broad mix of non-A1 uses within it, along with the fact the LPA has recently approved several similar applications in similar circumstances, the principle of the proposed change of use is acceptable in this instance.

6.0 Design & Visual Impact

5.1 No changes to the external appearance of the building or the wider application site are proposed as part of this planning application; with it being proposed the existing shopfront would remain in-situ.

5.2 As such, the development would not cause any impact upon the visual amenities of the street scene and wider surroundings.

5.3 Therefore, the requirements of LDP Policy DM1 have been met and the development is acceptable in this regard as the proposal would not cause any adverse visual impact.

7.0 Neighbouring Amenity

7.1 No new built development is proposed and as such there would be no adverse impacts upon neighbouring residents in terms of overbearing and overshadowing effects.

7.2 The proposed Launderette use would not have the potential to cause any new or different impacts upon neighbouring amenity compared to that caused by the existing Hairdresser use. Indeed, there would be no adverse noise or privacy issues caused by the proposed change of use in this instance.

7.3 Therefore, the development as submitted is acceptable in this regard.

8.0 Movement & Access

8.1 The application site and existing premises is not served by any private off-street parking provision. It is noted that on-street parking along this section of Well Street is also prohibited by virtue of double-yellow lines.

8.2 However, the application site is located within a highly sustainable location, within a District Retail/Commercial Centre, where a range of public transport nodes exist within close proximity to the site. Indeed, the application site is located within the centre of Cefn Mawr, where residential premises, a range of shops, services and community facilities, as well as transport nodes, exist within close proximity to the application site.

8.3 It is therefore considered unlikely many of the proposed launderette's potential customers would travel to the site by means of a private motor vehicle.

8.4 However, even should customers travel to the site by car, the application site benefits from several public car parks within very close proximity – with the closest being located approximately 20m away.

8.5 Thus, it is considered there is adequate parking provision within the locality to serve the proposed use and the requirements of LDP Policy DM1 (Criterion vi) have been met.

9.0 Ecology

9.1 As noted, no external alterations are proposed to the host building, and therefore no impacts upon ecology (protected species and sites) would arise as a result of the proposed change of use.

9.2 A Green Infrastructure Statement and Biodiversity Enhancement Plan accompany the application. The development complies with the step-wise approach as prescribed by Chapter 6 of PPW and it would provide a net biodiversity benefit which is commensurate to the scale of the development proposed.

10.0 Heritage

10.1 As noted, the application site is located within the Cefn Mawr Conservation Area and also within the buffer zone of the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site.

10.2 Section 160 (1) of the Historic Environment (Wales) Act 2023 states that in exercising a planning function in relation to a building or other land in a conservation area, a person must have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area.

10.3 As has been explained within this Planning Statement, no external or structural alterations are proposed to the subject building as part of this planning application. Therefore, it is considered the character and appearance of the Cefn Mawr Conservation Area would be preserved in this instance, and the proposed change of use of the ground-floor premises would not cause any harmful effect.

10.4 In the same context, the development does not have the potential to cause any impact upon the setting of the World Heritage Site on this occasion owing to the lack of any proposed external alterations to the building.

11.0 Conclusion

6.1 This application seeks full planning permission for the change of use of the existing ground-floor hairdressers into a Launderette. The development would solely be a change of use, with no external or structural alterations proposed.

6.2 This statement and the supporting reports, plans and drawings submitted alongside it as part of the planning application outline that the development is fundamentally compliant with the requirements of LDP Policy R5 in terms of the principle of development, whilst also providing an assessment of the main material planning considerations of relevance to the development proposal.

6.3 It is clear that the development is fully acceptable in planning terms – providing a viable alternative re-use of the building and helping to contribute towards the future economic viability and vitality of the settlement and district retail/commercial centre. The development is also acceptable in terms of the applicable material planning considerations, including with regards to the impact upon the character of the street scene, conservation area and WHS buffer zone, neighbouring amenity, highway safety and ecology.

6.4 In light of the above, the proposal is compliant with the relevant local and national planning policy, and it is therefore respectfully requested that full planning permission be granted for the change of use.