OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00948/FUL **Full Planning Application**

Proposal: **New fire door to be fitted in existing location, secondary glazing to the shop windows on the ground floor and like to like repair to existing timber façade of shopfront, filling fixed holes, surface repairs and redecorating to match existing.**

Location: **57 High Street St Neots PE19 1JG**

Applicant: **Mr J Bispham**

Grid Ref: **518521 260360**

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The property was formerly a department store on St Neots High Street and is currently vacant. The proposal relates to adjoining buildings 53 to 57 High Street, with no. 57 a Grade II Listed building. The buildings are within the St Neots Conservation Area and within Flood Zone 2. The listing describes the Listed Building at 57 High Street as the former Town Assembly Rooms dating from the later 18th century, of three storeys and a regular façade and a hipped, tile roof, of gault brick with moulded stone cornice and continuous stone bands at head and cill levels of first and second floor windows and a second floor, centre bay with Venetian window.

The proposed works are for a new fire door to be fitted in existing location, secondary glazing to the shop windows on the ground floor and like to like repair to existing timber façade of shopfront, filling fixed holes, surface repairs and redecorating to match existing.

Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives - economic, social and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'

The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):
* delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
* building a strong, competitive economy;
* achieving well-designed places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website: https://www.gov.uk

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (Adopted 15th May 2019)
LP5: Flood Risk
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

Planning Practice Guidance is also relevant and a material consideration.

Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017):
* Place Making Principles - Parts 3.7 Building Form and 3.8 Building Detailing

St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 (2016)
* Policy A3 – Design

St Neots Conservation Area Character Assessment (October 2006)

Local policies are viewable at https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

PLANNING HISTORY

Numerous – more recent applications:
00/01305/FUL & 00/01306/LBC - Bricking up of shop window – consent granted 17.10.2000
00/01579/FUL - Change of use of part of warehouse to shop floor – permission granted 25.10.2000
01/00167/FUL & 01/00168/LBC - Alterations and extension including provision of fire escape staircases – consent granted 19.06.2001
0901132LBC - Refurbish and repair of existing cladding and change from grey to white finish. Removal of fascia signs and replacement with new design – consent granted 12.11.2009
0901133ADV - Remove existing fascia signs and replace with new design – consent granted 12.11.2009
19/01172/FUL - 3 no. pay & display machines, 2 no. cameras, column protector and external cabinet (Retrospective Application) – permission granted 14.08.2019
19/01173/ADV - Application to regularise existing signage comprising: 5x wall mounted signs and 9x pole mounted signs – consent granted 14.08.2019
23/00875/LBC - Installation of new lobbied double entrance and rear fire door – permission granted 31.07.2023
23/00565/FUL - Installation of new lobbied double entrance and rear fire door – permission granted 31.07.2023
25/00949/LBC - New fire door to be fitted in existing location, secondary glazing to the shop windows on the ground floor and like to like repair to existing timber façade of shopfront, filling fixed holes, surface repairs and redecorating to match existing – pending consideration
25/01255/FUL - Replacement entrance door to rear elevation, installation of external plant to rear elevation with enclosure, insertion of louvres to side elevation and associated works – pending consideration
25/01256/LBC - Listed Building Consent for a replacement entrance door to rear elevation, installation of external plant to rear elevation with enclosure, insertion of louvres to side elevation and associated works – pending consideration
25/01277/ADV & 25/01392/LBC - 3x illuminated fascia signs to front, side and rear elevations, vinyl signage to front and side elevations and installation of 5x poster cases to side and rear elevations – pending consideration

CONSULTATIONS

St Neots Town Council recommends approval. It is considered that the proposal will assimilate itself to the existing part of the town. Members referred to SNTC Neighbourhood Plan, Policy SS2: The Town Council will support the re-use of historic buildings within the Town Centre for town centre uses. Any alterations to historic buildings will need to be sympathetic to the historic and architectural significance and character of the building. Members request that any signage coming forward for the
listed building should be in keeping with the nature of the High Street – St Neots.

HDC Conservation Team have been consulted on the proposal and have no objections. Their comments are given in the main body of the report below.

REPRESENTATIONS

No objections received at time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

The main issues to consider in the determination of this application are:
- Design, Visual Amenity and impact on Heritage Assets
- Residential amenity
- Flood risk.

* Design, Visual Amenity and impact on Heritage Assets

Policies LP11 and LP12 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 state that developments should respond positively to their context, draw inspiration from the key characteristics of its surroundings and contribute positively to the area's character and identity.

Policy LP34 states that a proposal within, affecting the setting of, or affecting views into or out of, a conservation area should preserve, and wherever possible enhance, features that contribute positively to the area’s character, appearance and setting as set out in character statements or other applicable documents.

The Council will consider the significance of a designated heritage asset and where there is less than substantial harm, this will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Where there is deemed to be substantial harm, then the proposal would need to achieve substantial public benefits to outweigh that harm.

Section 16(2) of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 (as amended) requires special regard to be had to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 66 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Section 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 (as amended) states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Para. 212 of the NPPF set out that 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'. Para. 213 states that 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification…'.

Local Plan policy LP34 aligns with the statutory provisions and NPPF advice.

The proposed works are for a new fire door to be fitted in an existing location, secondary glazing to the shop windows on the ground floor and like to like repair to existing timber façade of shopfront, filling fixed holes, surface repairs and redecorating to match existing.

The Conservation Team has been consulted on the proposals and have visited the site in relation to a previous planning application. It is noted that the historic building survives as the three storey rectangular brick building at the corner of the junction of High Street with Huntingdon Street and it is adjoined by modern extensions to the north constructed of concrete block and modern brick with modern structural beams and pillars internally on the ground floor. This current application relates only to the ground floor modern shopfront. The proposal removes and replaces the existing modern shopfront door, which opens onto High Street, and installs secondary glazing onto the existing glazed shopfront. Also proposed is the installation of a small internal lobby at the front door and minor repairs to and redecoration of the modern shopfront, which is to be redecorated as existing. The proposed replacement door design is to match the existing front door. Overall, the proposals retain the existing appearance of the modern shopfront and front elevation of the building. The proposal is considered to preserve the character and significance of the Listed Building and also the character, appearance and significance of the Conservation Area, therefore recommendation is to support the proposal.

Officers have had special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Officers have given special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. It is considered that harm will not be caused to either of these designated heritage assets because the works will preserve the character and significance of the Listed Building and the character, appearance and significance of the Conservation Area.

The proposal, therefore, accords with ss. 16, 66 & 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990, paragraphs 202-221 of the NPPF (2024), Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019) and Policies A3 and SS2 of the St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029 (2016) in this regard.

*Residential Amenity

Policy LP14 of the Local Plan to 2036 states a proposal will be supported where a high standard of amenity is provided for all users and occupiers of the proposed development and maintained for users and occupiers of neighbouring land and buildings.

Due to the nature of the works, there will be no impact in terms of residential amenity on neighbouring properties. Therefore, the development is considered acceptable in terms of overshadowing, overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of light and would not have a significant impact upon residential amenity. The proposal, therefore, accords with LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019) in this regard.

*Flood Risk

National guidance and Policy LP5 of the Local Plan to 2036 seek to steer new developments to areas at lowest risk of flooding and advises this should be done through application of the Sequential Test, and if appropriate the Exceptions Test (as set out in paragraphs 172-184 of the NPPF (2024)).

The land that the application site forms part of is liable to flood. The proposed development is considered 'minor development' and therefore is not subject to the Sequential or Exception Tests as detailed in the NPPF. Due to the nature of the proposal, for a new fire door to be fitted in an existing location, secondary glazing to the shop windows on the ground floor and like to like repair to existing timber façade of shopfront, filling fixed holes, surface repairs and redecorating to match existing, it is accepted that there is no increased risk of flooding on the site due to the works and therefore a flood risk assessment is not required in this instance. As such, the development is considered compliant with LP5 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the NPPF in this regard.

*Conclusion
The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as it:
* Is of an appropriate scale and design;
* Would not have a harmful impact upon the designated heritage asset(s);
* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
* Would not adversely affect flood risk in the locality.

Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

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CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Olivia Manton**