OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 25/00825/FUL **Full Planning Application**

Proposal: **Proposed conversion of vacant upper-floor office space into 4 residential dwellings, with the existing ground floor retail unit to remain in its current use and unchanged.**

Location: **9 The Pavement St Ives PE27 5AD**

Applicant: **Mr Damian Howard**

Grid Ref: **531443 271239**

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

This application seeks approval for the conversion of upper floor office space into four residential dwellings, with the existing ground floor retail unit (currently a Clothes shop - Use class E(a)) to remain in its current use and unchanged at No. 9 The Pavement, St Ives. The proposal also involves the removal of an existing fire-escape door, the insertion of new windows and doors as well as the alteration and replacement of existing windows.

The site comprises an existing three-storey property of a gable-end design with a modern shopfront and two-storey gables extending to the rear. The application is located within the Primary Shopping Area and Primary Shopping Frontage of the St Ives Town Centre. No. 9 The Pavement is a Grade II Listed Building located within the St Ives Conservation Area. It forms a cohesive group of listed buildings in the immediate vicinity, including Nos. 5 to 10 (consecutive) and No. 12, collectively known as The Corn Exchange, which contribute to the architectural and historical significance of the area. This site is also located within Flood Zone 2.

The accompanying planning statement states that the upper floor of the building have remained vacant since March 2023, despite active marketing efforts over a two-year period. The proposed residential conversion will therefore help to ensure the long-term viability of the building.

Three of the proposed flats, including the two front-facing and one rear unit, will be accessed via the existing entrance located on the right-hand side of the ground floor retail unit, fronting The Pavement. The fourth flat, located to the rear, will be accessed independently from the rear of the property.

The Local Planning Authority is also considering a Listed Building Consent for the same development (Reference 25/00826/LBC).

This application has been accompanied by the following documents:

- Planning Statement;
- Design and Access and Heritage Statement;
- Flood Risk Assessment;
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Roost Assessment;
- Unilateral Undertaking in relation to wheeled bins.

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

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (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, beautiful and safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, 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 May 2019

LP1: Amount of Development
LP2: Strategy for Development
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
LP5: Flood Risk
LP6: Waste Water Management
LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP15: Surface Water
LP16: Sustainable Travel
LP17: Parking Provision and Vehicle Movement
LP21: Town Centre Vitality and Viability
LP25: Housing Mix
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP31: Trees, Woodland, Hedges and Hedgerows
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

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

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) and Guidance:

Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (2024)
Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document 2017
Developer Contributions SPD 2011
Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape SPD (2022)
Cambridgeshire Flood and Water SPD 2017
Annual Monitoring Review regarding housing land supply (2024)

The National Design Guide (2021)

* C1 - Understand and relate well to the site, its local and wider context
* I1 - Respond to existing local character and identity
* I2 - Well-designed, high quality and attractive
* B2 - Appropriate building types and forms
*M3 - Well-considered parking, servicing and utilities infrastructure for all users
* N3 - Support rich and varied biodiversity
* H1 - Healthy, comfortable and safe internal and external environment
* H2 - Well-related to external amenity and public spaces
* H3 - Attention to detail: storage, waste, servicing and utilities

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

RECENT PLANNING HISTORY

25/00826/LBC - Proposed conversion of vacant upper-floor office space into four residential dwellings, with the existing ground floor retail unit to remain in its current use and unchanged - Pending consideration.

CONSULTATIONS

St Ives Town Council - Recommends approval of the application and welcomes the residential development in the town centre. Members noted the proposed design of and changes to the windows, which is valued and appreciated.

Cambridgeshire County Council Highway Authority - No objections to the proposed development. The change from office use to residential in this central location of St Ives in relation to vehicle movements would be a similar quantum. Therefore, no significant adverse effect upon the Public Highway should result from this proposal.

Environment Agency - No objections to the proposal. The Flood Risk Assessment is acceptable for the scale and nature of the proposed development. Recommend the mitigation measures proposed in the submitted FRA are adhered to.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Conservation Officer - No objections to the proposal, subject to the imposition of conditions on any planning permission granted. The scheme would preserve the historic parts of the building while reinstating those areas subject to unauthorised works.

Huntingdonshire District Council's Environmental Health Officer - No objections following the submission of further information subject to conditions regarding the air conditioning units.

REPRESENTATIONS

No third-party representations were received during the course of the application.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.

As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 48 of the NPPF (2024). The development plan is defined in Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as "the

development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area".

In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan consists of:

o Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 (2019)
o Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2021)
o St Neots Neighbourhood Plan 2014-2029
o Godmanchester Neighbourhood Plan (2017)
o Houghton and Wyton Neighbourhood Plan (2018)
o Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan (2019)
o Bury Village Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Buckden Neighbourhood Plan (2021)
o Grafham and Ellington Neighbourhood Plan 2020-2036 (2022)
o Great Gransden Neighbourhood Plan 2021 to 2036 (2023)
o The Stukeleys Neighbourhood Plan 2022 to 2036 (2023)
o Sawtry Village Neighbourhood Plan 2022 to 2036 (2023)

The statutory term 'material considerations' has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.

The main issues to consider are:

o The Principle of Development
o Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets
o Residential Amenity
o Highway Safety
o Flood Risk and Surface Water
o Biodiversity
o Developer Contributions
o Accessible and Adaptable Homes
o Water Efficiency

*The Principle of the Development

The site is located within the built-up area of St Ives, which the adopted Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 identifies as a Spatial Planning Area. As such, Policy LP7 (Spatial Planning Areas) is therefore considered to be relevant in this instance.

This application seeks approval for the conversion of the upper floors of No. 9 The Pavement, St Ives to four residential units, while retaining the retail unit at ground floor.

Policy LP7 of the adopted Local Plan states that a proposal for housing development on a site which is additional to those allocated within the Local Plan will be supported where it is appropriately located within a built-up area of an identified Spatial Planning Area settlement. Given the site is located within the built-up area of a Spatial Planning Area, the principle of residential development is considered to be acceptable in relation to Policy LP7 of the adopted Local Plan.

The site is located within the town centre of St Ives, as well as the Primary Shopping Area of St Ives Town Centre and as such, Policy LP21 (Town Centre Vitality and Viability) is also considered relevant. Given the proposed development would retain the retail use at ground-floor level,

localising the residential uses to the upper floors, the proposed development would be in accordance with Policy LP21 of the adopted Local Plan.

It is also worth noting that paragraph 90 of the National Planning Policy Framework recognises housing often plays an important role in ensuring the vitality of town centres.

As such, the principle of development is considered to be acceptable in this instance, subject to all other matters being addressed.

*Design, Visual Amenity and Impact on Heritage Assets

The Local Planning Authority is required to ensure that special regard is given to preserving the listed buildings and their settings in relation to Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990. The Local Planning Authority is also required to ensure that with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area, through the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 at Section 72. This is also reflected in Policy LP34 of the Huntingdonshire Local Plan to 2036 and Section 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Policy LP11 of the Local Plan states that a proposal will be supported where it is demonstrated that it responds positively to its context. Policy LP12 states that new development will be expected to be well designed and that a proposal will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it contributes positively to the area's character and identity and successfully integrates with adjoining buildings and landscape. This is also reflected in the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).

This application seeks approval for the conversion of the upper floors at No. 9 The Pavement, St Ives from offices to four residential units alongside associated works including the removal of an existing fire-escape door, the insertion of new windows and doors as well as the alteration and replacement of the existing windows. The property is a Grade II Listed Building and is located within the St Ives Conservation Area.

The proposed change of use of upper floors to residential properties is not considered to result in any detrimental impacts to the character and/or appearance of the property, the town centre or the St Ives Conservation Area as the existing shopfront on the front elevation as well as the ground floor retail unit would remain unaltered. It is worth noting there are other instances of upper floor residential units in the immediate vicinity.
The upper-floor areas over the front of the shop have been cleared without consent and are now open plan with very little of architectural or historic interest left, except for the facade. The proposal would see the reinstatement of internal partitions in these spaces which broadly reflect those granted consent under 01333/89LB. The new walls would re-establish the historic floor plan with the new rooms respecting existing chimney stacks, that allow the reinstatement of the fireplaces, which were removed and blocked without consent.

The proposal involves replacing existing glazing to all windows on the front and side elevations to double glazing and the installation of new glazing beads to match the original profiles. On the south-east side elevation, it is proposed to insert a new window (to match that it is adjacent to), insert two new doors and replace windows in the bay window. Alterations to the rear elevation include the installation of two new sash windows and an access door. The proposed alterations to the fenestration across the building are considered to be acceptable as it would match and reflect that of the existing property as well as properties in the immediate vicinity, subject to the imposition of conditions on any consent to agree specific details. Furthermore, the replacement of the uPVC bay window would be of benefit to the Listed Building.

The proposals are considered to be acceptable and a viable use for the Listed Building. The building lends itself to subdivision into residential units which can be accomplished with relatively little additional alteration. The works of alteration proposed should not unduly harm its special interest as existing historic features will be preserved and the reinstatement of historic floor plans will benefit future understanding of the building.

Paragraph 212 of the National Planning Policy Framework states 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. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

The Council's Conservation Officer has concluded that the proposals are acceptable and a viable use for the building. Furthermore, the scheme would preserve the historic parts of the building while reinstating those areas subject to unauthorised works.

As such, the proposal is deemed to be in accordance with Sections 66 and 72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, Policies LP11, LP12 and LP34 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Sections 12 and 16 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) 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.

Amenity of neighbouring properties

Given the site's location within the primary shopping area and town centre of St Ives, with a range of uses in the immediate vicinity, the Local Planning Authority are satisfied that the proposal would not result in any detrimental impacts on any neighbouring residential property. Furthermore, the proposed external and internal alterations are considered to be minor in scale and would not result in any detrimental overbearing, overshadowing, overlooking or loss of light impacts on any neighbouring residential property.

Amenity for future occupiers

The proposal includes a total of 4 No. apartments, 3 No. 1-bed apartments and 1 No. 1-bed apartment ranging in size from 45sqm to 103sqm. The proposed residential units would therefore all accord with the Technical House Standards - National Described Space Standards for 1-bed/1-person, 1-bed/2-person and 2-bed/3-person units.

It is noted that the proposal does not include a private amenity space for future owners/occupiers, however this is typical of development of this nature and it would be unreasonable to refuse planning permission on this basis alone.

The Environmental Health Officer has been consulted on the proposals and initially requested further information regarding the external plant on the south -east elevation. The Agent has confirmed that the external plant consists of air conditioning units for the retail unit on the ground floor and the closest noise sensitive windows are those serving the proposed living area in Apartment B. The statement from the applicant regarding mitigation and/or replacement of the units is noted, however as no details of the units are available at this stage, the Environmental Health Officer recommends conditions limiting the operating hours and sound level of the units to ensure any future resident is protected. BS8233 advises a sound level of 35dB(A) within habitable rooms during the day (16h), however, if the time of use of the units is restricted it is considered that an internal sound level of 40dB(A) would be acceptable in the closest room (living

room) due to these timings and the town centre location (which is still in line with the relaxation guideline within BS8233). It is considered that such conditions are reasonable and necessary and will therefore be imposed on any permission granted in the interests of residential amenity.

Therefore, taking the above factors into consideration, the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on residential amenity and therefore accords with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 12 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Highway Safety

Policies LP16 and LP17 of the Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that new development incorporates appropriate space for vehicle movements, facilitates access for emergency vehicles and service vehicles and incorporates adequate parking for vehicles and cycles.

The site benefits from an existing vehicular access to the rear off White Hart Court, which serves an area of hardstanding for off-street car parking. No alterations are proposed to the existing access arrangements or provision of off-street car parking. Given the town centre location with various sustainable transport links, the provision of parking and access arrangements are considered to be acceptable.

The proposed site plan shows an area for bike storage, however, no further details are provided. A condition would therefore be imposed on any planning permission to ensure the provision of secure cycle parking on the basis of one space per bedroom in accordance with Policy LP17 of the adopted Local Plan and the Huntingdonshire Design Guide.

Therefore, subject to the imposition of a condition, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on highway safety and therefore accords with Policies LP16 and LP17 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036, the Huntingdonshire Design Guide SPD and Section 9 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Flood Risk

The site is located within Flood Zone 2 and partially located within Flood Zone 3 in accordance with Environment Agency mapping. However, it is initially worth noting that the area of the site within Flood Zone 3 is situated to the north-east corner of the site, where no development would take place.

The proposed development seeks to provide residential development (more vulnerable) in Flood Zone 2, which is considered to be compatible in relation to the Planning Practice Guidance Flood Risk Vulnerability Classification. Furthermore, as the proposal seeks approval for the change of use of upper floors and minor alterations, the proposed development is therefore exempt from providing sequential and exception tests.

This application has been accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment which concludes that the proposal will be acceptable in terms of flood risk. The Environment Agency have reviewed the document and have confirmed that they have no objection to the application, but strongly recommend that the mitigation measures proposed are adhered to. Conditions would therefore be imposed on any planning permission granted to ensure that the development is carried out in strict accordance with the submitted Flood Risk Assessment, including flood resilient measures to be incorporated into the development up to 600mm above finished floor levels and no ground floor sleeping accommodation.

It is proposed to dispose of foul sewage via connecting to the mains sewer, which is considered to be acceptable in this instance. Furthermore, the proposal would not result in the increase in floorspace with no extensions or external alterations proposed (other than internal alterations and

alterations to windows and doors) and would dispose of surface water via the existing water course.

Therefore, subject to appropriate conditions the proposal is considered to be acceptable with regard to its impact on both flood risk and surface water and therefore accords with Policies LP5, LP6 and LP15 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Biodiversity

Paragraph 187 of the NPPF (2024) states planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment. Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 requires proposals to demonstrate that all potential adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity have been investigated and ensure no net loss in biodiversity and provide a net gain where possible, through the planned retention, enhancement and creation of habitats and wildlife features, appropriate to the scale, type, and location of development.

This application has been accompanied by a Preliminary Ecological Appraisal which concludes that the proposal would not result in the loss of any habitat or impacts on any notable habitats due to the scale and nature of the proposal as well as the urban location. Recommendations for mitigation and safeguarding measures as well as suggested biodiversity enhancements are provided in the PEA. These are considered to be acceptable and would also be secured by condition on any planning permission granted.

It should be noted that as of the 2nd of April 2024, a mandatory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is applicable, as per Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990. An application for minor development (1 to 9 dwellings) must be accompanied with a statutory biodiversity metric tool which will demonstrate how the application will avoid or reduce any negative impacts on biodiversity. The hierarchy of BNG ensures developers evaluate on-site BNG opportunities before exploring alternative solutions, unless the application is exempt as per the exemptions listed in PPG guidance. In this instance it is considered that the development would be exempt from the requirements of Biodiversity Net Gain Legislation as it involves a change of use where there is no or only a de minimis impact on onsite habitat.

As such, the proposal is considered to be in accordance with Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and Section 15 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024) in this regard.

*Developer Contributions

Part H of the Developer Contributions SPD (2011) requires a payment towards refuse bins for new residential development. A Unilateral Undertaking Form in respect of wheeled bins has been received by the Local Planning Authority dated 27 August 2025. The proposed development is therefore considered to accord with Policy LP4 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 and the Developers Contributions SPD (2011).

*Accessible and Adaptable Dwellings

Policy LP25 of the Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 seeks to ensure that all housing developments in the district offers a genuine choice of Accessible and adaptable dwellings that meet the requirements of residents:

f. ensuring 100% of new dwellings, across all tenures provided, meet Building Regulation requirement M4 (2) 'accessible and adaptable dwellings' (or replacement standards).

In this case, given the constraints of dealing with an existing building it would not be considered reasonable to attach such a condition.

*Water Efficiency

Policy LP12 (j) of the Local Plan to 2036 states that new dwellings must comply with the optional Building Regulation requirement for water efficiency set out in Approved Document G of the Building Regulations. A condition will be attached to any consent to ensure compliance with the above, in accordance with Policy LP12 (j) of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036.

*Other

*Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

The development will be CIL liable in accordance with the Council's adopted charging schedule; CIL payments will cover footpaths and access, health, community facilities, libraries and lifelong learning and education.

*Conclusion

The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as it is:

* Acceptable in principle
* Would not be harmful to the character or appearance of the area;
* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
* Would not be detrimental to highway safety in the locality;
* Is acceptable with regards to the impact on biodiversity;
* There are no other material planning considerations which lead to the conclusion that the proposal is unacceptable.

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.

If you would like a translation of this document, a large text version or an audio version, please contact us on 01480 388424 and we will try to accommodate your needs.

CONTACT OFFICER:
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