

<u>Application Number</u>	WND/2021/0635
Location Description	34-36, STATION ROAD, WOODFORD HALSE, NORTHAMPTONSHIRE, NN11 3RB
Site Details	SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION TO GROUND FLOOR TO INCREASE RETAIL FLOOR AREA, NEW SHOP FRONT AND REMOVAL OF RENDER
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Applicant	MR PANCHAL
Agent	MR D SURTI, PLAN MY PROPERTY
Case Officer	S HAMMONDS
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Ward	WOODFORD & WEEDON WARD
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Reason for Referral	CALLED IN BY COUNCILLOR RUPERT FROST
Committee Date	10 JANUARY 2022
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS AND RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDATION: GRANT PERMISSION SUBJECT TO CONDITIONS

Proposal

The two retail units 34 and 36 Station Road are to be knocked together to form a large single unit (which doesn't itself require planning permission as there is no change of use). Planning permission is sought for replacement shop fronts and a ground floor rear extension which would add 15 sqm additional retail floorspace and 15 sqm for a back-office, store and w/c. All existing render would be removed to reveal the original red brickwork. The intended occupier of the retail unit is a well-known high street convenience store / off licence.

Consultations

The following consultees have raised **concerns** with the application:

- Woodford cum Membris Parish Council
- WNC Conservation Officer

The following consultees have raised **no objections** to the application:

- WNC Highways

0 letters of objection have been received and 0 letters of support have been received.

Conclusion

The application has been assessed against the relevant policies in the NPPF, the adopted Local Plan and other relevant guidance as listed in detail in the body of the report.

The key issues arising from the application details are:

- Design and visual amenity
- Impact on Conservation Area
- Impact of traffic and parking

The report looks into the key planning issues in detail, and Officers conclude that the proposal is acceptable subject to conditions.

Members are advised that the above is a summary of the proposals and key issues contained in the main report below which provides full details of all consultation responses, planning policies, the Officer's assessment and recommendations, and Members are advised that this summary should be read in conjunction with the detailed report.

MAIN REPORT

APPLICATION SITE AND LOCALITY

This application relates to two terraced properties on Station Road in Woodford Halse which form part of an unlisted terrace of brick buildings within the designated Conservation Area. This section of Station Road forms the main retail core of the village. The two units in question are presently vacant but most recently accommodated a corner-shop/newsagents and an off-license, with residential uses on the upper floors and in the basement. The adjoining property trades as a butchers shop at ground floor with associated retail storage at first floor and basement level.

The application site is situated on the corner of Station Road and Cherwell Terrace. Cherwell Terrace slopes down steeply to the side of the former newsagents which means that the basement level (that is not at all visible from Station Road) becomes apparent as an additional lower ground storey at the rear. Effectively the ground floor appears like the first floor when viewed from the rear due to the steeply sloping nature of the site.

To the rear (north) of the site is an open green triangle offering a rare sense of openness from the densely developed streets of small Victorian terraced dwellings towards the valley floor. The opposite side of Station Road is slightly more open and accommodates more modern detached buildings in community and residential uses.

CONSTRAINTS

The application site is situated within the designated conservation area.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

It is proposed to combine the two existing retail units by knocking through the internal walls at ground floor level to form one larger format retail unit (this does not require planning permission). Planning permission is sought for the replacement of the existing shop fronts and the addition of a single storey pitched roof rear extension at ground floor level above the existing flat-roofed rear basement extension. All existing render would be removed to reveal the original red brickwork. The new windows at the rear are described as being white upvc to match existing.

In response to the Parish Council's requests for further information about the intended occupier of the "new" unit, the agent has advised that the company taking an interest is a well-known high street brand whose business is a convenience store and off-license.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

There is no planning history for the end terrace newsagents (no.36). The following applications relate to no.34 (the mid-terrace unit):

DA/83/260 – Extension to shop to form store. Approved.

DA/84/0724 – Extension of shop sales area and c/u to extend storage into kitchen and dining area. Approved.

DA/85/0990 – Extension to shop over storage area. Refused.

DA/2004/1195 – C/u of rear part of premises to hot food takeaway. Refused.

DA/2005/0204 – C/u of lower ground floor to provide pizza takeaway and restaurant (main entrance off Station Road). Approved but not implemented.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

Statutory Duty

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development Plan

The Development Plan comprises: the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) which was formally adopted by the Joint Strategic Planning Committee on 15th December 2014 and which provides the strategic planning policy framework for the District to 2029; the adopted Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) (2020); and the Woodford cum Membris Neighbourhood Development Plan. The relevant planning policies of the statutory Development Plan are set out below:

West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1) (LPP1)

The relevant policies of the LPP1 are:

- SA – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- BN5 – Historic Environment
- R2 – Rural Economy

Settlements and Countryside Local Plan (Part 2) (LPP2)

The relevant policies of the LPP2 are:

- RA1 – Primary Service Villages
- ENV7 – Historic Environment
- ENV10 – Design

Woodford Cum Membris Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP)

The relevant policies of the NDP are:

- WH3 (Character Areas)
- WH8 (Good Design)
- WH14 (Local Shops)
- WH18 (Rural Economy)

Material Considerations

Below is a list of the relevant Material Planning Considerations

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Woodford Halse and Hinton Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (CAAMP) 2020

RESPONSE TO CONSULTATION

Below is a summary of the consultation responses received at the time of writing this report.

Woodford Cum Membris Parish Council –

Our Council seeks to encourage the presence and viability of businesses in the Parish and supports the renovation of both these premises for residential and retail purposes but we have grave concerns about parking. Existing on-street (none otherwise available) parking accommodation is extremely limited and the situation is aggravated by the relocation of the Post Office from Church Street to within the Pharmacy (nextdoor to the proposal site). It is further complicated by the increase in traffic from this expanding village and the Council and "Highways" remain unable to solve the problem surrounding Station Road and the adjacent Victorian terraces.

The store would demand significant on-street parking which is not available. We therefore remain very concerned at the potential impact on the residents and businesses in Station Road from customers' vehicles to and from the proposed "new" store.

WNC Conservation Officer –

The site is part of the "railway terraces" that are described in the adopted CAAMP as having uniformity and a strong linear character. They were designed as a distinct grouping, and their industrial character is pronounced further by their placement on the steep slope leading down to the river valley. Red brick is the exclusive traditional building material for these terraces, reflecting their industrial history, and original roofing is Welsh slate.

Removing render to restore brickwork:

The previous introduction of render on the application building is a detracting feature. I welcome the proposal to remove it and restore the original brick face. Depending on the composition of the render, its bond to the face of the brick and the condition of the brick underneath, there may be a requirement for substantial brick replacement as well as repointing. I would suggest that a method statement for the removal of the render and the repair of the brick would be required to ensure that a clean and consistent finish could be achieved. (This could be dealt with as a condition of any consent that is granted).

Rear extension:

"Historically, many properties have been extended to the rear as pitched roof extensions. These are often highly visible due to the steeply pitched gradient of Castle Road and Cherwell Terrace, and any development proposals would need to have careful consideration for the impact on views experienced walking both up and down these streets" (CAAMP).

I have concerns about the proposed rear extension, which would introduce a prominent projection beyond the historic rear building line in this elevated position. This would not be consistent with the character and form of the existing terrace. The existing flat-roofed lower ground floor extension is of no merit, but it has limited impact upon the uniformity of the terraces because it is largely screened by the existing boundary wall/fence and the gradient of

Cherwell Terrace. There is potential for the proposed extension to have a harmful impact upon the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Shop fronts:

- The existing corner entry door and the shop windows on the Cherwell Terrace and Station Road elevations of no. 36 are shown to be retained but the windows would be blocked up internally to allow for the siting of a new internal staircase to provide access to the flats above. I have concerns about this. It would certainly be desirable to retain an active shop frontage on this prominent corner plot.

- It is proposed to replace the existing timber shopfront surrounds with new in a traditional style to match the existing. Existing modern signage would be replaced with traditional signage. It is important that the appearance of the buildings as two separate units is retained in the design of the shopfronts and signage.

- The existing metal roller shutter door on no. 34 is unsightly. I would welcome its removal. Are there any photos to show the shopfront behind it? If it is of traditional design then I would not support a proposal to replace it with new commercial sliding doors and windows in aluminium. If the existing design and materials are modern then, ideally, any proposed changes should seek to restore the traditional character of the shopfront. However, in such a circumstance, a well designed modern shopfront is unlikely to cause further harm to character or appearance.

WNC Highways –

The fact that the 2 units are being combined to make a single retail unit is largely irrelevant from our perspective. The only consideration may be that a national retailer may utilise slightly larger delivery vehicles than the smaller shops may have in the past, but that is not certain. There would have been nothing preventing the smaller shops receiving deliveries by larger vehicles and it could be argued that 2 separate shops have the potential to receive more frequent deliveries than a single combined shop.

On the 15sqm extra retail space, in accordance with our parking standards for retail (food), it falls short of the requirement for a single parking space (1 space per 20sqm). At a push it could be argued that a single parking space could be required to account for the additional 15sqm, but it is not something that we could demonstrate was significant or would have a severe impact on the highway or highway safety. We can only consider the additional retail space and not the existing. This does not mean to say that we do not agree that there may be parking issues along Station Road, but it is not possible for us to secure parking improvements or to object to an application based on already permitted use in the hope of rectifying any pre-existing parking problems. Had this been a complete change of use for the whole site, then the approach and our response may have been different.

RESPONSE TO PUBLICITY

No third party or neighbour responses had been received at the time of writing this report.

APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

This is an application for a small extension to retail premises in the main established retail area of the Primary Service Village of Woodford Halse. The proposal is within the village confines.

LPP2 policy RA1 seeks to ensure that the role of Primary Service Villages is maintained and therefore requires all development to meet criteria i-vii as follows:

- i) of appropriate scale relative to its role as a service centre;
- ii) not result in the loss of existing services or facilities;
- iii) protect the form and character of the village and areas of historic environmental importance (including conservation areas);
- iv) protect integrity of garden land;
- v) accessible by walking and cycling; and
- vii) protect residential amenity.

All of these criteria are considered to be met by the proposal, as outlined further below, and so the proposal complies with RA1. The principle of development is therefore acceptable subject to other detailed matters.

Design, appearance and impact on the conservation area

Rear extension:

The extension proposed is single storey and seeks to extend the ground floor retail area by 30sq.m – this would provide a small staff office, store and w/c together with 15sq.m additional retail space. The rear projection of the extension from the original elevation would be 5.0m. This is a modest extension in terms of its scale and is commensurate to the scale of the plot, particularly as it builds over part of the existing lower ground floor footprint.

The pitched roof design and architectural detailing of the extension is positive and, being single storey only, is visually subservient to all parts of the original building including the original subservient 2-storey outrigger. The design incorporates correctly-proportioned openings that match the existing style and the characteristic red-brick finish will be reinstated which will be a big benefit as the existing render is unsightly and non-traditional.

The conservation officer has expressed concern that the rear extension would introduce a "prominent projection beyond the historic rear building line in this

elevated position. This would not be consistent with the character and form of the existing terrace”.

It is the case that, in views from the side/rear, the ground floor extension would appear in an elevated position, due to the slope of the land. However it can also be said that the extension is sympathetic to and works with the slope of the land, creating a gradual stepped arrangement down the hill. The extension and associated re-facing would blend well with the character of the immediate area and bring an overall visual improvement for the application site itself. The character of the rear of the terrace would be changed but this would not necessarily be for the worse when considering the other advantages of the proposal, including restoring the characteristic red-brick finish for the entire building (and of course getting the unit back into positive use for the community).

Despite introducing change, I feel that the proposals for the rear of the building would, on balance, have a neutral to positive impact on the overall character and appearance of the conservation area. They would be an appropriate scale and would constitute sympathetic design that respects the character of the site and the wider village in line with LPP2 policies RA1(C.(i) and (iii)) and ENV10(A.(iii)) and NDP policy WH8.

Shop fronts:

The design of the shop front for no.36 would remain largely unaltered, and the internal fixing of graphics on the inside of the panes would be very similar to the existing situation and the situation in many stores throughout the country. The existing shop-front for no.34 is already a modern replacement so no original / traditional features would not be lost by this proposal.

The proposed design does follow some of the conservation advice by re-instating a visual delineation between the original units in the form of two traditional style decorative pillars/cornices. The original proposal for full height glazing for no.34 has been amended so that a plinth is retained beneath the shop window and the agent has indicated that he is willing to consider further changes to the detailing of the shop fronts – these discussions are ongoing. There is no mention of external roller shutters on the plans and the agent has confirmed that these are not intended to be a feature of the new unit. The removal of these unsightly features will be a vast improvement to the streetscene and the character of the conservation area.

In the interests of securing an improved best scheme for the conservation area, discussions will continue with the agent about improving the final detailing of the shop fronts. The final version of the plans will be presented in time for committee.

Neighbour amenity

Any impact on neighbour amenity would be felt by the immediately adjacent property, no.32. Although the council's address records suggest there is a flat at this address, the case officer confirmed with the butchers that no-one resides at no.32 and that the upper and lower storeys are all used for storage in association with the butchers shop. The proposed extension will therefore have no impact on residential amenity in respect of no.32. The next nearest neighbours are far enough removed from the site to not feel any direct impact from the extension.

The revised plans remove reference to air conditioning units so this is not part of the current application.

Overall the impact on neighbour amenity is considered acceptable and in line with RA1(C)(vii) and ENV10(A)(viii).

Impact on Traffic and Parking

This is the Parish Council's main concern about the proposal, as outlined above in the summary of representations. Relevant considerations are set out below.

The two existing ground floor commercial units are proposed to be knocked through to become one larger retail unit. This in itself falls outside planning control and could happen at any point in time without reference to planning.

Also without reference to planning, any such combined larger unit could be occupied at any time by any sort of retail use, including the convenience store /off licence that is currently hoping to occupy this site. The units are already authorised for retail use and no change of use is proposed.

The proposed extension will create an additional 15sqm retail floorspace, with the remaining 15sqm being given to back office facilities. It is not anticipated that this slight increase (15sqm) in commercial floorspace would directly result in any significant adverse highway impact.

The flats are to be reconfigured internally, but again this does not require planning permission and in any case the number of bedrooms would remain the same.

Parking is a challenge in the area but it is relevant to note the fallback position. The properties already have a legitimate use for 3 flats and 2 retail units which could be merged into one without planning consent. Given this baseline position I think it would be unreasonable to conclude that the additional 15 sqm retail floorspace would tip the balance on parking and highway safety sufficiently to warrant a refusal of planning permission.

Highways have raised no objections to the proposal, commenting as follows:

- The increased floorspace is below the threshold for requiring additional parking provision (and in any case there is no scope in the area for any such provision).
- The new floorspace would not be regarded as a significant increase nor as having a significant impact on highway safety.
- It is not possible to secure improvements or raise objections to an application based on an already permitted use in the hope of rectifying any pre-existing parking problems.
- Regarding deliveries, 2 separate shops would have the potential to receive more frequent deliveries than a single combined shop.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The net gain in GIA is less than 100sq.m so the proposal is not CIL liable, despite it being for retail.

PLANNING BALANCE AND CONCLUSION

With some further tweaks to the detailing of the shop fronts, it is considered that the design of the proposals can be in keeping with the character of the original building and the surrounding area and acceptable in terms of its visual impact on the conservation area. The proposal will not have an adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties nor will it have a direct impact on highway safety (any highways or parking issues are pre-existing rather than an outcome of the proposed works).

Weighing in favour of the development is the local economic benefits that would be brought to the main retail area of Woodford by having a national retailer presence, and the positive impact that this will have on the vitality and viability of the settlement. This is in line with national guidance in NPPF and LPP1 policy R2.

The proposal therefore accords with the relevant policies of the development plan and so, following the advice in paragraph 11(c) of NPPF, planning permission should be granted without delay.

RECOMMENDATION / CONDITIONS AND REASONS

The proposed development is recommended for approval subject to conditions.

CONDITIONS

- 1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.**
- 2. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the amended drawing no. PA01revA/02 received 15/11/2021.**

- 3. Prior to the removal of any render, a method statement for the removal of the render and the repair of the revealed brick shall be submitted to an approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The render shall then be removed and brickwork repaired in accordance with the agreed methodology before the extension hereby permitted is first brought into use.**
- 4. No externally mounted shutters shall be installed over the shopfronts hereby permitted.**

REASONS

- 1. To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).**
- 2. To ensure development is in accordance with the agreed amendments and to enable the Local Planning Authority to consider the impact of any changes to the approved plans on the Conservation Area and amenity of the surrounding area.**
- 3. In the interests of visual amenity and the character of the conservation area.**
- 4. In the interests of visual amenity and the character of the conservation area.**

NOTES

- 1. As required by Article 35 of the Town and Country (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as Amended) the following statement applies:**

In dealing with this planning application the Local Planning Authority have worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive manner with a view to seeking solutions to problems arising in relation to the consideration of this planning application.

- 2. Shop signage for the unit(s) may require further advertisement consent under the Advertisement Regulations. This permission does not authorise any shop signage.**