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| <b>Agenda Item</b>               | A7   |
| <b>Application Number</b>        | 25/00041/FUL   |
| <b>Proposal</b>                  | Change of use of community centre to dwelling (C3)   |
| <b>Application site</b>          | 11 Alder Grove<br>Lancaster<br>Lancashire<br>LA1 5SD |
| <b>Applicant</b>                 | Mr T Greenwood                                       |
| <b>Agent</b>                     | Mason Gillibrand Architects                          |
| <b>Case Officer</b>              | Mr Sam Robinson                                      |
| <b>Departure</b>                 | No   |
| <b>Summary of Recommendation</b> | Approval, subject to conditions                      |

**(i) Procedural Matters**

This form of development would normally be determined under the Council's Scheme of Delegation. However, the site is under the ownership of Lancaster City Council and as such the application is referred to the Planning Regulatory Committee.

**1.0 Application Site and Setting**

- 1.1 The site which forms the subject of this application is a single storey end unit located at 11 Alder Grove in the Marsh area of Lancaster comprised of a brick exterior under a concrete tiled roof with uPVC windows throughout. The building is located in residential area and its existing use is considered to be for a small community centre which was granted deemed planning consent c.1998. The building faces onto a communal grassed area with small trees and footpaths. The site is also located in flood zones 2 and 3a.

**2.0 Proposal**

- 2.1 This application seeks consent for the change of use of community centre to a dwelling. The proposal requires no external alterations or extensions to facilitate the change of use.

**3.0 Site History**

- 3.1 A number of relevant applications relating to this site have previously been received by the Local Planning Authority. These include:

| Application Number  | Proposal   | Decision       |
|---------------------|--|----------------|
| <b>24/01255/PAC</b> | Prior approval application for the change of use of existing community building (Class E) to 1 dwelling (C3) | <b>Refused</b> |

|                     |   |                  |
|---------------------|---|------------------|
| <b>98/00086/DPA</b> | Change of use and conversion from dwellinghouse to community centre | <b>Permitted</b> |
|---------------------|---|------------------|

## 4.0 Consultation Responses

4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory and internal consultees:

| Consultee           | Response   |
|---------------------|--|
| County Highways     | <b>No objection</b>  |
| Environment Agency  | <b>No objection</b><br>(Subject to compliance with FRA. Consultation response to be attached to any decision notice) |
| Fire Safety Officer | <b>No response</b>   |
| Natural England     | <b>Further information required</b><br>(HRA required to assess impacts of potential recreational disturbance)        |

4.2 No responses have been received from members of the public.

## 5.0 Analysis

5.1 The key considerations in the assessment of this application are:

- Principle of development
- Design and impact on streetscene
- Residential amenity
- Flood risk
- Highways and parking
- Impact on designated sites

5.2 **Principle of development** (NPPF Sections 5 and 8; Part One: Strategic Policies and Land Allocations Development Plan Document Climate Emergency Review (SPLA DPD) policies SP1, SP2 and SP6 and Part Two: Development Management Development Plan Document Climate Emergency Review (DM DPD) policies DM1, DM13 and DM56)

5.2.1 Policy SP1 of the Strategic Policies and Land Allocations DPD (SPLA DPD) states the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) whilst policy SP2 outlines the settlement hierarchy throughout the district. Policy DM1 of the Development Management DPD (DM DPD) states the Council will support proposals for new residential development that meet an evidenced housing need, however, there may be circumstances where this is not practical. Finally, policy DM13 states that proposal that involve residential conversions must provide accommodation that will address local housing needs and satisfy all other relevant planning policy.

5.2.2 The application site lies within a residential estate surrounded by similar styled smaller dwellings immediately adjacent to this site. The wider area consists of other terraced and two-storey semi-detached dwellings. The site is within the urban boundary of Lancaster and is in relatively close proximity to bus stops which connect to the wider district. Consequently, the site is located within a sustainable area where the general principle of residential accommodation can be supported.

5.2.3 As outlined above, the proposal will provide for a single 1-bed residential unit within the existing building. The Council cannot currently demonstrate a 5-year housing land supply and whilst this would only provide a limited contribution in the form of a single residential unit, this still weighs in favour of the scheme.

5.2.4 Policy DM56 discusses the merits of the protection of local services which currently, or have previously, provided the community with a local service. A community facility is defined as any use which provides a wider benefit to the community in economic, environmental and social terms. Such

facilities could, for example, include Public Houses, Local Shops, Post Offices, Village Halls and Community Meeting Spaces.

- 5.2.5 The deemed planning application granted in 1998 saw the conversion of the unit into a community centre and although now vacant, appears to have been used as such since this date. It is recognised that DM56 is a policy which is designed to target smaller settlements and rural villages where local services and shops are in short supply and there is significant benefit in their retention. Notwithstanding this point, the proposal would clearly see the loss of a community centre which provides a wider benefit to the area which it serves.
- 5.2.6 To compensate for this, to the northwest of the site, planning permission has been granted for the demolition of existing managers house and erection of 2 storey building comprising of 4 1-bed flats (C3) and mixed-use community room and office to serve wider sheltered housing scheme. This application was permitted under 21/01522/FUL and is near completion. This building will see a purpose built community room as part of the proposal which will provide a similar use in comparison to this existing building. As such, given there is an alternative provision of the same use adjacent to the site, it is considered that the loss would not result in any adverse impacts upon the community.
- 5.3 **Design and impact on streetscene** (NPPF Section 12 and Part Two: Development Management Development Plan Document Climate Emergency Review (DM DPD) policy DM29
- 5.3.1 DM29 requires all development proposals to make positive contributions to the surrounding landscape or townscape.
- 5.3.2 The proposal does not require any alterations to the external appearance of the property and such a use of the building is entirely appropriate in the context of the surrounding neighbouring residential properties. As such, there will be no adverse visual impacts on the wider area.
- 5.3.3 In light of the climate emergency review, the updated local plan now requires a sustainable design statement as outlined in policy DM30a, where existing buildings are being converted to new uses. In addition, policy DM30b seeks to improve water efficiency for residential development. Whilst the Council would normally look for these details to be provided up front, it is considered that given the application was submitted before the adoption of the updated local plan, securing these details through condition would suffice in this instance. This has been agreed with the agent.
- 5.4 **Residential amenity** (NPPF Section 12 and Part Two: Development Management Development Plan Document Climate Emergency Review (DM DPD) policy DM29
- 5.4.1 In terms of securing an acceptable level of amenity for the proposed units, the Council would expect an open market dwelling to comply with the Nationally Described Space Standards (NDSS) as outlined in policy DM2.
- 5.4.2 The proposal seeks to provide a 1-bed dwellinghouse over a single floor. The NDSS require a single storey dwellinghouse to provide between 37sqm and 50sqm dependent on the number of occupiers. This proposal would provide approximately 50sqm of floor space and therefore is considered to comply with this policy.
- 5.4.3 Policy DM29 outlines recognises the importance that outdoor spaces/gardens provide to the health and well-being of residents. Dwellinghouse should seek to ensure a minimum of 50sqm of private garden space. Whilst this is recognised, given the constraints and layout of the site, this is not possible to achieve. In addition, the existing residential properties adjacent to the site, do not appear to benefit from any private gardens and instead appear to benefit from a wider communal outdoor space used by the residents in the area and this proposal would simply mirror that arrangement. Therefore, considering the site-specific constraints and layout of the area, this is an acceptable arrangement.
- 5.4.4 Considering the impacts of the proposal on the neighbouring properties, as outlined above, the proposal does not involve any external alterations or extensions that may impact a neighbouring property. Similarly, the proposed use of the building is entirely appropriate with surrounding area. Consequently, there will be no adverse impacts upon the amenity of the neighbouring properties.

- 5.5 **Flood risk** (NPPF Section 14 and Part Two: Development Management Development Plan Document Climate Emergency Review (DM DPD) policy DM33)
- 5.5.1 Policy DM33 requires proposals to minimise the risk of flooding to people and property by taking a sequential approach which directs development to the areas at the lowest risk of flooding and the policy notes that consideration should be given to all sources of flood risk.
- 5.5.2 As outlined above, the site is located within flood zone 2 and 3a as identified within the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. As the application is for a change of use, in accordance with paragraph 176 and footnote 62 of the NPPF, the sequential test and exception test are not required. In accordance with the flood risk vulnerability classification, a dwellinghouse is classified as 'more vulnerable'. Notwithstanding the above, the application is still required to demonstrate that it can be made safe for the lifetime of the development, does not pose a risk to future occupiers and does not increase flood risk elsewhere.
- 5.5.3 The application has been submitted with a detailed flood risk assessment (FRA) which has identified the sources and risk of flooding as well as precautionary mitigation measures. The FRA concluded that the evidence and data indicates that if the flood defences remain intact, the development will be safe for its lifetime. After consideration of the FRA, the Environment Agency (EA) were also satisfied that the development would be safe without exacerbating flood risk elsewhere if the proposed flood risk mitigation measures are implemented. Therefore, in light of these comments provided by EA, it is reasonable to suggest the proposal would not result in an adverse impact in terms of flood risk either on or off-site for any existing or future occupiers. The proposal therefore satisfies the requirements of policy DM33.
- 5.6 **Highways and parking** (NPPF Section 9 and 12 and Part Two: Development Management Development Plan Document Climate Emergency Review (DM DPD) policies DM29, DM60 and DM62)
- 5.6.1 Appendix E of the DM DPD outlines the maximum car parking standards for all development. For a 1-bed unit the maximum requirement is one car parking space.
- 5.6.2 Due to the layout of the area, the building does not and cannot provide any off-street parking. However, there is a small area to the west of the site, approximately 40m away, which offers a dedicated parking area. Considering the small scale of the proposed development and one which results in no net increase of floor space, any parking can be absorbed into the area without causing an adverse impact on parking or highway matters.
- 5.7 **Impact on designated sites** (NPPF Section 15; Part One: Strategic Policies and Land Allocations Development Plan Document Climate Emergency Review (SPLA DPD) policy SP8 and Part Two: Development Management Development Plan Document Climate Emergency Review (DM DPD) policy DM44)
- 5.7.1 The application site lies within the median distance travelled of 3.454km (identified through the Recreational Disturbance Study for the Local Plan) to get to the European designated sites of Morecambe Bay and the Lune Estuary which is designated as a Special Protection Area (SPA), Special Area of Conservation (SAC), Ramsar site and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 5.7.2 As a result of the proximity of the residential development to the sensitive site, it is considered that a proportionate Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is required to assess the recreational disturbance impacts on the coastal designated sites resulting from the development, the report is contained within a separate document.
- 5.7.3 The potential impacts from increased recreational pressure are considered to be limited by the small size of the proposed development and the distance from the designated areas and other options for recreation in closer proximity. However, to mitigate any potential increase in recreational pressures caused by the development, a homeowner pack can be provided to the proposed dwelling, as identified within the HRA for the Local Plan. The homeowner pack would be expected to include details of the adjacent designated sites (and the wider Morecambe Bay coastline), their sensitivities

to recreational pressure and promote the use of alternative areas for recreation, in particular dog walking areas. This can be adequately covered by a condition on a planning consent.

- 5.7.4 Natural England have been consulted on content of this HRA but have not provided comment as of yet. Any comments received will be provided by way of an update prior to the application being presented to members.

## **6.0 Conclusion and Planning Balance**

- 6.1 This application would provide for a single dwellinghouse which would make a small contribution to meeting the districts housing need and this would carry moderate weight. The proposal would not result in any adverse impacts on the visual amenity of the street scene, nor would it result in a significant adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties. The proposal would provide a level of accommodation that would meet the internal space requirements as outlined by the relevant policies and any possible impacts on the special designations of Morecambe Bay can be mitigated by the provision of a homeowner pack. Therefore, the proposal is seen to comply with the development and is therefore recommended for approval.

## **Recommendation**

That Planning Permission BE GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

| Condition no. | Description                                  | Type             |
|---------------|--|------------------|
| 1             | Timescales                                   | Standard         |
| 2             | Development to accord with plans             | Standard         |
| 3             | Submission of a sustainable design statement | Pre-commencement |
| 4             | Submission of homeowner pack                 | Pre-occupation   |
| 5             | Development to accord with FRA               | Control          |

## **ADVICE NOTE**

1. BNG not required
2. Consultation response from EA

## **Article 35, Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015**

In accordance with Article 35 of the above Order, your decision notice contains reasons for the imposition of planning conditions (where planning conditions are imposed), and in the case of each pre-commencement condition, a justification for the pre-commencement nature of the condition(s).

Lancaster City Council has made the decision in a positive and proactive way to foster the delivery of sustainable development, working proactively with the applicant to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. The decision has been taken having had regard to the impact of development, and in particular to the relevant policies contained in the Development Plan, as presented in full in the officer report, and to all relevant material planning considerations, including the National Planning Policy Framework, National Planning Practice Guidance and relevant Supplementary Planning Documents/ Guidance.

## **Background Papers**

None