

Report to: PLANNING COMMITTEE **Date of Meeting:** 16th November 2022

Subject: [DC/2022/00704 - 55 Chapel Street, Southport, PR8 1AL](#)

Proposal: Change of use of the first, second and third floors from retail to residential, to create 2 No. one bed apartments and 1 No. two bed apartment.

Applicant: Mr. Collins

Agent: Mr. M Wakeman
Architectural Designworks Limited

Ward: Dukes Ward

Type: Full Application

Reason for Committee Determination: Chief Planning Officer's Discretion.

Summary

This application seeks approval for the conversion of the upper floors from retail and ancillary retail purposes to form 3 self-contained apartments. With the retention of the ground-floor retail use and given the upper floors have been vacant for some time, it is considered that the proposal will make a positive contribution to the vitality of Southport Town Centre. The use of the upper floors will also support the Lord Street Conservation Area by aiding the longevity of this Non-Designated Heritage Asset. Two of the flats will not be provided with any private outdoor amenity space, contrary to the Council's guidance, but it is considered that the benefits arising from the proposal outweigh this harm. The proposal is therefore recommended for approval with conditions.

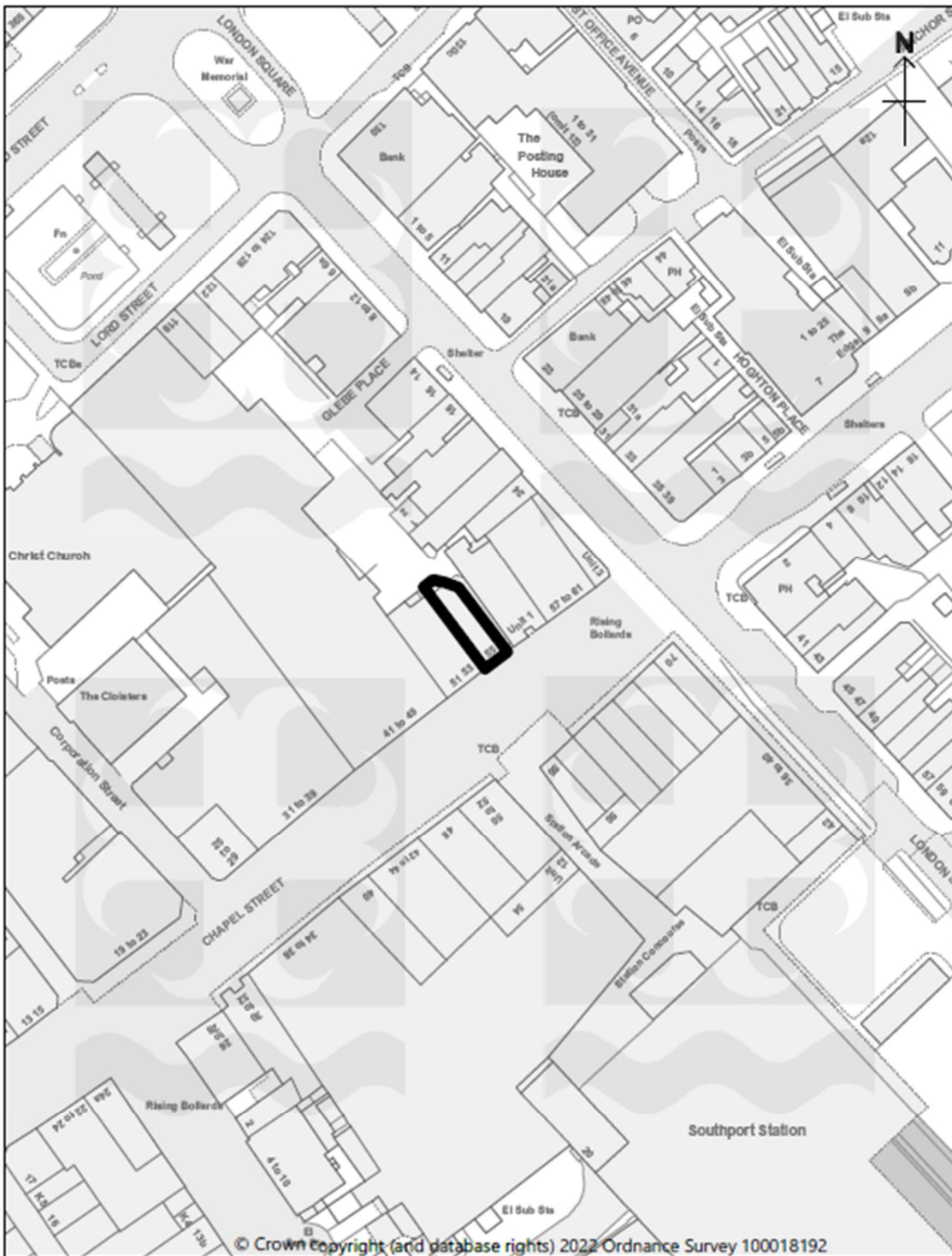
Recommendation: Approve with Conditions

Case Officer Neil Mackie
Email planning.department@sefton.gov.uk
Telephone 0345 140 0845

Application documents and plans are available at:

<http://pa.sefton.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=R9Z5TYNWHRY00>

Site Location Plan



Sefton Council



Reference: Map reference
Date: 07/11/2022
Scale: Scale: 1:1250
Created by: Initials

The Site

A part three and part four-storey property fronting Chapel Street within Southport Town Centre and the Lord Street Conservation Area.

History

Two applications were submitted in 1997 for the installation of a new shopfront, both of which were approved.

Consultations

Conservation Officer - No objection subject to conditions securing appropriate conservation style windows and rooflights.

Natural England - Representation makes reference to a required proportionate assessment of recreational disturbance impacts on the coastal designated sites.

Network Rail London North Western (North) - No comments.

Neighbour Representations

No representations received.

Policy Context

The application site lies within an area designated as Southport Town Centre and Lord Street Conservation Area in the Sefton Local Plan which was adopted by the Council in April 2017.

Assessment of the Proposal

This application seeks approval for the change of use of the upper three floors from a retail use to instead form 2 one-bedroom apartments and 1 two-bedroom apartment.

The main issues to consider in respect of this proposal are the principle of development, the impact of the proposal on the character of the area (particularly in respect of the Lord Street Conservation Area), the living conditions to be provided to future occupiers and matters arising from recreational pressure on designated coastal sites.

Principle of Development

The application site lies within Southport Town Centre and is also designated as being within the Primary Shopping Area and a part of a Primary Retail Frontage. Local Plan policy ED2 'Retail, Leisure and Other Town Centre Uses' states that residential development will be permitted, if it does not compromise the vitality and viability of the town centre, in the upper floors of buildings in the Primary Shopping Area (PSA).

This application will only utilise the upper floors of an existing retail unit within a PSA. While this results in a net overall reduction of the amount of floorspace available for retail purposes, it will still retain the most prominent and easily accessible part: the ground-floor. It is unlikely that the removal of three upper-floors of additional space will give rise to material harmful impacts to the

vitality and viability of Southport Town Centre, while the addition of three flats to the town centre could result in a minor benefit from increased direct spend within the area.

As such the principle of development so far as it relates to the vitality and viability of the Town Centre and the PSA is accepted.

In addition, Local Plan Policy ED7 'Southport Central Area' states that the "use of upper floors for residential development will be permitted where they provide acceptable living conditions." The principle of residential development in this respect is accepted subject to the assessment that follows.

Character of the Area

The existing building contributes positively to the prevailing character of the area and to the Lord Street Conservation Area in which it sits, with the application site recognised as a 'non-designated heritage asset'. As evident from the existing and proposed elevations, no alterations are proposed to the prominent front elevation, which ensures that there will be no material change to this key part of the building.

Existing timber windows to the rear elevation will be replaced with uPVC windows, which has not been objected to by the Council's conservation officers subject to ensuring that they are conservation style windows. Two additional rooflights will be proposed either side of the gabled roof, in a conservation style, which are appropriate given the set back from the frontage and that they will not be readily visible from Chapel Street.

On this matter the proposal is acceptable.

Living Conditions for Future Occupiers

Each of the habitable rooms is served by at least one window that provides an acceptable outlook and will ensure sufficient light is received. The combined living room/kitchens may result in the kitchen areas being darker than the living areas but this is a result of the constraints of this narrow and deep property and such an arrangement is acceptable in this instance.

As evident from the drawings a roof terrace will provide at least 27m² of usable space for the flat at the third floor but the other two flats won't be provided with any private space. This is contrary to the recommendations within the Council's guidance on flat development where it is said that at least 20m² of private outdoor amenity space shall be provided per flat.

The agent for the application has justified this absence, highlighting the length of time the upper floors have been vacant, that the reuse of the upper floors could help to extend the longevity of this building as well as noting the potential detrimental heritage impacts if balconies or 'recessed winter gardens' were provided to the front elevation and highlighting the difficulties with providing such features to the rear elevation. The agent also argues that the sizes of the flats, being in excess of minimum space standards, could also offset the absence of outdoor space.

While the argument in respect of flat sizes is not agreed, as a minimum size should not be a target and benefits for exceeding this shouldn't be given weight, the constraints of the site in respect of heritage matters and the benefits arising from the use of the upper floors are considered to be sufficient to overcome this harm.

On this matter therefore the proposal is acceptable.

Recreational Pressure

As set out in the Council's interim approach to the mitigation and management of recreational pressure, arising from new housing development, on the internationally important nature sites on the coast an application proposing fewer than 10 homes is exempt from detailed consideration. This is the case as such developments are considered to not result in likely significant effects on these nature sites, and falls within the proportionate assessment as proposed by Natural England in their consultation response.

Planning balance and conclusion

It is considered that the proposal is appropriate to Southport Town Centre, complying with Policies ED2 & ED7. It will enhance the Lord Street Conservation Area through the use of vacant upper floors. While the proposal does not offer the recommended amount of private amenity space, it is considered that overall the scheme will provide acceptable living conditions for future occupiers. The shortfall of amenity space needs to be weighed against the benefit of a use which will aid the longevity of the building, a non-designated heritage asset. This is given significant weight in coming to a recommendation.

This application is therefore recommended for approval with the conditions that follow.

Recommendation - Approve with Conditions

Time Limit for Commencement

- 1) The development hereby permitted shall be commenced before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In order that the development is commenced in a timely manner, as set out in Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

Approved Plans

- 2) The development shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:

d409/C/01 'site location plan'
d409/C/05 rev A 'proposed site plan and roof plan'
d409/C/06 rev A 'proposed floor plans'
d409/C/07 rev A 'proposed elevations'

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

During Building Works

- 3) Notwithstanding any details shown on the approved plans, the replacement windows must be of a conservation style, as must the two new rooflights.

Reason: To ensure an appropriate appearance to this non-designated heritage asset and to the wider Lord Street Conservation Area.

Notes for Applicant

- 1) The applicant is advised that the proposal will require the formal allocation of addresses. Contact the Development and Support team on 0151 934 4195 or E-Mail snn@sefton.gov.uk to apply for a street name/property number.