May 2013

# 835-837 Stockport Road, Levenshulme

## Planning Support Statement for a Full Planning Application for the Change of Use from Use Class A1 (Shops) to Use Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services) and Alterations to Shop Front

On behalf of

Done Brothers (Cash Betting) Ltd

Prepared by

I D Planning
Atlas House
31 King Street
Leeds
LS1 2HL

## CONTENTS


1.0 Introduction and Description of Proposed Development ..... 1

2.0 Assessment Against National Planning Policy ..... 2

3.0 Assessment Against Development Plan Context ..... 6

4.0 Conclusions ..... 8

# 1.0 Introduction and Description of Proposed Development

1.1 This Planning Support Statement has been prepared on behalf of Done Brothers (Cash Betting) Ltd in support of a planning application for the change of use of 835-837 Stockport Road, Levenshulme from Use Class A1 (Shops) to Use Class A2 (Financial and Professional Services). Alterations are also proposed to the shop front with the relocation of a customer entrance.

1.2 BetFred currently occupy premises at 843 Stockport Road and will be relocating as part of the proposals. The existing premises provide a poor quality environment to BetFred's customers and it is too small to meet the level of custom. Betfred has therefore identified the unit at 835-837 Stockport Road as being available and suitable to relocate within the designated district centre.

1.3 External alterations are proposed to the unit, with the existing front access door relocated on the front elevation. Signage will be addressed through a separate application in due course.

1.4 The application site comprises a vacant retail unit which is situated in Levenshulme district centre as identified on the Manchester Unitary Development Plan Proposals Map. The unit lies on the corner of Stockport Road and Chapel Street and was previously occupied by Lloyds Pharmacy. They vacated the premises in May 2012 and the building has been unoccupied since then.

1.5 Planning permission is sought for an A2 use to enable the unit to be occupied as a licensed betting shop by BetFred. BetFred is the world's biggest privately owned betting company and one of the UK's biggest privately owned retail outlets. Licensed betting shops are regarded as being key town centre uses and are seen to maintain the vitality and viability in town and city centres.

1.6 This Statement describes the application site and identifies and examines the policy issues of relevance to the application, referring to both the relevant development plan and the advice of Central Government. In seeking to establish whether the change of use from Use Class A1 to Use Class A2 is appropriate, particular regard has been had to the National Planning Policy Framework ("the NPPF").

1.7 In addition, the proposed change of use has been assessed against the Statutory Development Plan for the area which comprises the Manchester Unitary Development Plan and Manchester Core Strategy.

## 2.0 Assessment Against National Planning Policy

2.1 The NPPF was published in March 2012. The framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

2.2 Paragraph 6 of the NPPF confirms the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It advises at paragraph 7 that:

**"There are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:**

- **An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;**
- **A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community's needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and**
- **An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy."**

2.3 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 14 confirms in relation to decision-taking, this means:

- **"Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and**
- **Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, granting planning permission unless:**
  - **Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole; or**
  - **Specific policies in this Framework indicate development should be restricted."**

2.4 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF advises that at the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as the golden thread running through both plan-making and decision-taking. In this regard, the proposal seeks permission for a main town centre use within

a district centre and therefore there should be a presumption in favour of this sustainable development. In addition, paragraph 14 advises planning permission should be granted without delay where they comply with the development plan. As set out in the following Chapter, the proposed change of use clearly accords with the development plan and planning permission should be granted accordingly.

2.5 Paragraph 17 of the NPPF sets out 12 core planning principles which should underpin both plan-making and decision taking. Of these 12 principles, the third, eighth and eleventh principles are relevant to this change of use application. These principles state that planning should:

- **"Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs. Every effort should be made objectively to identify and then meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond positively to wider opportunities for growth. Plans should take account of market signals, such as land prices and housing affordability, and set out a clear strategy for allocating sufficient land which is suitable for development in their area, taking account of the needs of the residential and business communities;**
- **Encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value;**
- **Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking, cycling, and focus significant development in locations which are or can be made sustainable."**

2.6 Paragraphs 18 to 22 of the NPPF relate to building a strong economy. Paragraph 18 confirms the Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, with paragraph 19 advising the Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. This is of particular relevance to this change of use application which seeks to make effective use of an existing unit and supports the growth of a British business.

2.7 Paragraph 19 states:

**"The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system."**

2.8 In this regard, the proposal seeks permission for an A2 occupier, which is a main town centre use, to expand their business operations within Levenshulme, and as such this proposal comprises sustainable economic growth, to which significant weight can be attached.

2.9 Paragraph 23 of the NPPF is of particular relevance to this proposal which seeks the change of use of a retail unit within Levenshulme district centre, it states:

**"Planning policies should be positive, promote competitive town centre environments and set out policies for the management and growth of centres over the plan period. In drawing up Local Plans, local planning authorities should:**

- **Recognise town centres as the heart of their communities and pursue policies to support their viability and vitality;**
- **Define a network and hierarchy of centres that is resilient to anticipated future economic changes;**
- **Define the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas, based on a clear definition of primary and secondary frontages in designated centres, and set policies that make clear which uses will be permitted in such locations;**
- **Promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer and which reflect the individuality of town centres;**
- **Retain and enhance existing markets and, where appropriate, re-introduce or create new ones, ensuring that markets remain attractive and competitive;**
- **Allocate a range of suitable sites to meet the scale and type of retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, community and residential development needed in town centres. It is important that needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses are met in full and are not compromised by limited site availability. Local planning authorities should therefore undertake an assessment of the need to expand town centres to ensure a sufficient supply of suitable sites;**
- **Allocate appropriate edge of centre sites for main town centre uses that are well connected to the town centre where suitable and viable town centre sites are not available. If sufficient edge of centre sites cannot be identified, set policies for meeting the identified needs in other accessible locations that are well connected to the town centre;**
- **Set policies for the consideration of proposals for main town centre uses which cannot be accommodated in or adjacent to town centres;**
- **Recognise that residential development can play an important role in ensuring the vitality of centres and set out policies to encourage residential development on appropriate sites; and**
- **Where town centres are in decline, local planning authorities should plan positively for their future to encourage economic activity."**

2.10 Paragraphs 186 to 207 of the NPPF relate to Decision Taking. Paragraph 186 requires Local Planning Authorities to approach decision taking in a positive way to foster delivery of sustainable development.

2.11 Paragraph 187 relates to problem solving during the consideration of application. It states:

**"Local planning authorities should look for solutions rather than problems, and decision-takers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. Local planning authorities should work proactively with applicants to secure developments that improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area."**

2.12 BetFred have identified the premises at 835-837 Stockport Road as a suitable and sustainable location from which they will be able to successfully trade and improve their offer in Levenshulme. The proposal will make effective use of this unit and therefore it is maintained the Local Planning Authority should seek to support this application as it accords with the principles of the NPPF. However, should any objections be raised during the consideration of the application, the applicant's agent would welcome further discussion with the Local Planning Authority in order to work towards a positive solution.

2.13 Paragraph 196 of the NPPF confirms the planning system is plan-led and reiterates the contents of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 which requires applications for planning permission to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act does therefore allow for situations where a proposal is not in accordance with the development plan to be supported if there are material considerations which outweigh the conflict with the relevant development plan policies.

2.14 Paragraph 203 relates to planning conditions and states:

**"Local Planning Authorities should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or planning applications. Planning obligations should only be used where it is not possible to address unacceptable impacts through a planning condition."**

2.15 The applicant would welcome discussions regarding any conditions the Local Planning Authority considers it is necessary to impose prior to the grant of planning permission.

2.16 It is evident the effective use of this existing vacant unit which will provide appropriately located premises to support the expansion of an existing business which has premises that are too small to meet the level of custom as well as creating additional jobs in a sustainable district centre location fully accords with the aims and objectives of the NPPF which supports economic growth and a positive approach to the determination of planning applications.

## 3.0 Assessment against Development Plan Context

**Manchester Unitary Development Plan**

3.1 The UDP Proposals Map identifies the site as being situated in the designated district centre of Levenshulme. Whilst the majority of policies within the UDP have been superseded by the Core Strategy some remain in place, including Policy S1.2.

3.2 Policy S1.2 states the Council will encourage, where appropriate, the improvement and re-development of existing district centres in order to ensure that they remain the focus for both shopping and a full range of community facilities. The policy goes on to state new development will be particularly welcome where it replaces obsolete shopping floorspace and is in keeping with the character of the existing centre.

**Manchester Core Strategy**

3.3 Policy C1 of the Core Strategy sets out the centre hierarchy for the Manchester district and reaffirms Levenshulme's position as a district centre. The policy states district centres have an essential role in providing key services to the City's neighbourhoods including shopping, commercial, leisure, public and community functions, ensuring that residents can access such services easily. The policy goes on to state development should recognise the need to support the vitality and viability of other centres.

3.4 Policy C2 provides specific guidance on district centres and states development will support thriving district centres, with distinct local character, providing a good range of accessible key services, including retail, health facilities, public services, leisure activities and financial and legal services. The policy states development should meet a number of criteria including the following:

- Prioritise delivery of key 'visitor' services, including retail, public and commercial services and food and drink. The Council will ensure that retail remains the principal use in Primary Shopping Areas, but also ensure that provision is made in District Centres for commercial and service uses, leisure and community facilities and other uses which make a positive contribution to vitality and viability of centres; and
- Contribute positively to the diversity and mix of uses within centres without undermining their primary retail function.

3.5 Policy C6 deals specifically with South Manchester district centres including Levenshulme and states moderate expansion of retailing and other services will be supported, appropriate in scale to the role and function of the centre.

**Assessment**

3.6 It should firstly be noted the proposal is for the relocation of BetFred to a larger unit in the district centre. The existing unit has operated in the centre with no

impact on the vitality or viability of the centre. It must therefore be assumed the new unit would operate in a similar manner. The proposed BetFred will continue to make a contribution to the diversity of uses in the centre and help to maintain the viability of the centre. The application unit continues to be in a sustainable location and is readily accessible by public transport. Given the economic benefits of the proposal, and as prescribed by the NPPF, the application should be treated favourably.

3.7 It is evident the proposal would have no harm on the vitality and viability of the district centre given the end occupier is already present in the frontage. In any event it is considered a betting shop in this location would have a positive impact on the vitality and viability of the district centre.

3.8 Furthermore the unit is currently vacant and has been for over 12 months. The building is therefore doing nothing to contribute to the retail function of the area. On this basis, this unit is detracting from the vitality and viability of the district centre.

3.9 Finally, it is considered the proposed change of use would in no way have a detrimental impact on the retail function of the wider district centre. In terms of the wider area, this part of Levenshulme is characterised by retail units with only a small number of non-retail units in the locality. The loss of one unit to a retail use will therefore not affect the retail function of this part of the centre.

3.10 In view of the above, it is considered the proposed change of use to 835-837 Stockport Road is clearly in accordance with the requirements of Policy S1.2 of the UDP as well as Policies C1, C2 and C6 of the Core Strategy. On this basis the application can be supported.

## 4.0 Conclusions

4.1 The proposed change of use is considered to accord with both national and local development plan policies.

4.2 The proposal has a number of significant benefits deriving from it and it should be supported by the Local Planning Authority for the following reasons:

- The unit lies within a district centre as defined on the Unitary Development Plan Proposals Map and therefore the principle of retail uses (A1-A5) within the centre is acceptable;
- The proposal supports the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework which supports economic growth and a positive approach to the determination of planning applications;
- The application will provide suitably sized premises for a successful business within the district centre who requires a larger unit and better quality environment to meet the needs of its customers;
- The proposal will provide additional employment opportunities contributing to economic development objectives as set out in the NPPF; and
- The proposal will enhance rather than detract from the vitality and viability of Levenshulme district centre.

4.3 In view of the above, it is considered the scheme satisfies both national and local policy and represents a suitable use for an existing unit that addresses all the relevant material considerations. In this respect, we would invite the local authority to assess the application and offer its support for the proposal.