



**Prior Approval application for conversion of vacant shop premises to 3 flats
1 Chapel Road, Whaley Bridge, SK23 7JZ**

1877.Db.01

27 June 2023

This report is to accompany the Prior Approval application for the conversion of existing vacant shop premises into residential accommodation.

The building is located within the Horwich End Conservation Area, to the south of the centre of Whaley Bridge. It is located within the built up area boundary.

The building is single storey at Chapel Road, with an additional storey below. This application is just for the ground floor at Chapel Road, not the lower floor. The lower floor will remain as general storage space.

The building originally dates from the 1930s and was originally a gas showroom which related to the gas works on the site behind. More recently it was a shop for a dressmaker; Seymour Silks, but has been vacant for a number of years.

The proposal is for three flats, all one bedroomed, and all accessed from Chapel Road.

Principal of Conversion

The most recent changes to the General Permitted Development Order which benefit commercial premises came into being in August 2021. Class MA enables the change of use of buildings and any land within its curtilage from as use falling in the new Class E (Commercial, business and service) of the Use Class Order to Class 3 Dwellinghouses.

- The building has been vacant for a minimum of 3 months prior to the application.
- The building has been used as a shop since 1930's when it was built.
- The floorspace is less than the 1500sqm allowed.
- Conversion is allowed in a Conservation Area. It is not an Article 4 area.

Flood Risk

The building is located in a flood risk area. However, the proposal is for the upper level, 4.5m above the external ground level below. Flood risk will not be an issue.

Contamination

The living accommodation is 4.5m above the external ground level to the rear and there will be no gardens. Contamination will not be an issue.

Parking

There is space in front of the building where two cars can park off the road. The width of the building is 17.95m, which also allows sufficient space to access the building and for motorbike parking. As a location where public transport and facilities are easily accessible, and given the size of the flats, full off street car parking should not be necessary.

As an alternative, if the building were to be used again as commercial premises, the car parking requirement would be significantly greater.

Space Standards

The proposed plan has been submitted with this application. Each habitable room has at least one window and the overall dimensions comply with the Nationally Prescribed Space Standards; flats one and two 1 person dwellings, flat 3 a two person dwelling. The bedrooms have a minimum area of 11.5sqm with minimum width of 2.75m.

Noise

The building is located fronting a main road. It is a residential area with other houses also fronting the road.

The land behind is currently vacant, but has just been granted permission for a commercial development. The commercial development has restrictions on it so its use is suitable for within a residential area.

Between units, the party walls will need to comply with building control requirements for acoustic and fire separation.

External Appearance

A doorway is required to access flats 1 and 2. This is a reinstatement of an existing doorway opening. The windows at the front will be replaced like for like with timber sash. It is also proposed to amend the glazed shop frontage but this will be covered in a separate planning application.

Impact on the Conservation Area / Heritage

The building is constructed with stone walls and has a slate roof, which is typical of the area. It is unusual, given it is just single storey facing Chapel Road, where other buildings are more typically 2 storey. There is stone detailing around the openings and a stone dentil course to support the gutter. There is a metal escape stair at the rear which will be removed.

Currently, the front windows are all boarded up to prevent access by vandals.



At the front there is an existing doorway opening which will be re-used for access to flats 1 and 2. There is also the old shop frontage which has the remains of the 'Angie Seymour' sign above and where it has come off, the 'gas' sign is visible. The sign is deep and sits directly above the boarded up window and the door. There are planted on timber cover strips to the sides of the opening.

The building is important in the Conservation Area in terms of its location , very visible as you enter the town. Its old use is also part of the history and heritage of Whaley Bridge – but the large gas holders on the site behind are now long gone. The building has been empty and boarded up for nearly 5 years. At the moment it is not the best advertisement for Whaley Bridge. Its conversion will mean that the building will be fully maintained and in use which will be a huge benefit to the building and the conservation area.

The proposal will be a re-use of an existing vacant commercial building and provide much needed small flats. Change of use to residential is being encouraged under current planning policy, particularly in town centre locations, and as such, this application should be approved.

High Peak Architects Ltd