

REPORT TO THE WESTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	03.10.2012		
Application Number	W/12/01305/FUL		
Site Address	8 Castle Place Shopping Centre Trowbridge Wiltshire BA14 8AL		
Proposal	Change of Use from Class A1 (retail) to Class A2 (Financial & Professional Services)		
Applicant	Cheque Centres Ltd		
Town/Parish Council	Trowbridge		
Electoral Division	Trowbridge Central	Unitary Member:	John Knight
Grid Ref	385676 157864		
Type of application	Full Plan		
Case Officer	Mr David Cox	01225 770344 Ext 01380 734826 david.cox@wiltshire.gov.uk	

Reason for the application being considered by Committee

Councillor Knight has requested that this item be determined by Committee due to:

“the application not being in accordance with Wiltshire Council Policy – July 2012 – Adopted Motion No 19 re Affordable Credit.”

1. Purpose of Report

To consider the above application and to recommend that planning permission be permitted.

2. Report Summary

The main issues to consider are:

- * Principle of Development.
- * Impact on the conservation area.

3. Site Description

The application site is located within the Castle Place shopping centre located between a Gregg's Café and Wilkinson's. Castle Place is part of the District Plan primary retail frontage designation. The application site is also within a conservation area.

4. Relevant Planning History

There is no relevant planning history.

5. Proposal

The proposal is to change the use of No 8 from an A1 shop into an A2 financial and professional services unit. The unit would be occupied by Cheque Centres Ltd who are a 'pay day' lender

6. Planning Policy

West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration 2004 – SP4 – Primary Retail Frontages; C17- Conservation Areas; C31a – Design; C38 – Nuisance.

National Planning Policy Framework.

7. Consultations

Trowbridge Town Council

Objection: The proposal is contrary to Policy SP4 and would harm the vitality of Castle Place. Further degradation of the Primary Retail Frontages by change of use should not be permitted in the enclosed shopping centre locations.

8. Publicity

The application was advertised by site notice and neighbour notification. Expiry date: 17 August 2012. Two letters of objection were received including one from "Wiltshire Money".

- There are already too many businesses that exploit poor and venerable people. They sell expensive credit and loan arrangements, to the least able to understand the eventual cost.
- This is supported by various survey data from Which magazine.
- Wiltshire Money was established in 2009 to address the lack of access affordable credit, like the West Wiltshire Credit Union.
- Reducing disadvantage and inequality is a key priority identified in the Wiltshire Community Plan 2011-2026. The Core Strategy is also focused on delivering this priority.
- Wiltshire Council in partnership with Wiltshire Money, adopted Motion 19 Affordable Credit and resolved:

"This Council believes that the lack of access to affordable credit is socially and economically damaging with unaffordable credit causing a myriad of unwanted effects such as poorer diets, colder homes, rent, council tax and utility arrears, depression and poor health.

This Council further believes that unaffordable credit is extracting wealth from the most deprived communities.

This Council supports the principle that it is the responsibility of all levels of government to try to ensure affordable credit."

9. Planning Considerations

The application site falls within the primary retail frontage of Castle Place and as such policy SP4 of the West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration 2004 is a primary consideration. This Policy states that:- "changes of use from A1 to A2 and A3 uses at ground floor level will only be permitted having regard to the existing mix of uses, where they do not prejudice the shopping function of the primary retail frontages or individually or cumulatively harm the vitality of the town centre."

Castle Place has 16 units; one A3 café unit, one A4 public house unit with the rest being A1 shops/sandwich bars of which four are vacant including No 8.

The information indicates that there is a strong mix of uses with the majority in retail use and the A1 uses would still constitute approximately 81% of the business types, a fall from 87%, if permission was granted for this proposal.

Officers consider that the proposal would not prejudice the shopping function, nor harm the vitality of the town centre.

The Government's 2012 "National Planning Policy Framework" is a material consideration in planning decisions. In terms of Paragraph 214 in Annex A to the NPPF the saved policies of the West Wiltshire District Plan, 1st Alteration 2004, until March 2013, are to be given weight in decision-making. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance

with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Whilst each case must be treated on its own merits it is considered that the proposal has the potential to add to the mix of uses in the Primary Retail Frontage, whilst not harming what would remain the predominantly A1 function of the area. Officers consider therefore that the proposal complies with policy.

The presence of two similar businesses within the town centre is noted as is the Wiltshire Council Motion to improve access to affordable credit.

New competition is not considered material to this decision.

Impact on the conservation area:

It is not considered that any harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposal does not include any alterations to the shop front which can be further controlled by condition.

Recommendation: Permission

For the following reason(s):

The proposed development conforms to the Development Plan and there are no objections to it on planning grounds.

Subject to the following condition(s):

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

REASON: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 No changes shall be made to the existing shop front and a shop window display shall be maintained at all times.

REASON: To prevent the introduction of dead frontage that would harm the vitality and viability of the Town Centre.

POLICY: West Wiltshire District Plan 1st Alteration 2004 - Policy SP4.

- 3 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans:

Supporting Statement received on 11 July 2012

Site Location Plan received on 11 July 2012

Block Plan 1:500 received on 11 July 2012

Reason: To ensure that the development is carried out in accordance with the approved plans that have been judged to be acceptable by the local planning authority.

Appendices:	
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	