
12. FULL APPLICATION: CHANGE OF USE OF DOCTORS SURGERY AND FLAT TO SINGLE DWELLINGHOUSE, 14 MAIN ROAD, GRINDLEFORD (NP/DDD/1216/1213, P5851, 1301/2017, 424310/377593, MN)

APPLICANT: Mr Paul Woodger

Site and Surroundings

14 Main Road is a traditional mid-terraced property located on the B6521 through Grindleford village. The property is of gritstone construction under a slate roof and has a small forecourt to the front and a long rear garden that is accessed by a shared side access.

The property has a lawful mixed use of doctor's surgery at ground floor with a separate residential flat at first floor, with shared access through the front door. The property has residential neighbours to each side. The site is outside of the Grindleford Conservation Area.

Proposal

This application seeks planning permission for a change of use of the building from a mixed use of doctor's surgery and residential flat to a single dwellinghouse. Internally, works have already been undertaken to facilitate the change of use.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the application be REFUSED for the following reasons:

- 1. The proposed loss of the doctor's surgery is contrary to policy HC4, as it is a community facility that is not available elsewhere in the settlement and is still required.**

Key Issues

Whether the loss of the doctor's surgery is acceptable under the policies of the Authority's Development Plan.

Planning History

No relevant planning history.

Consultations

Derbyshire County Council – Highways – No objection.

Derbyshire Dales District Council – No response at time of writing.

Grindleford Parish Council – No objections, recommend approval. This property was also used for residential use when the surgery was operating.

Representations

No independent letters of representation have been received.

An email has been received from the Practice Manager at Eyam Surgery in response to a request from Officers for further information regarding their use of the application building. This notes that they used the premises as a surgery from at least 1992 until before its sale at auction

in 2016, that they continue to require and seek a replacement premises in Grindleford, and that they have temporary arrangements in place to serve patients in Grindleford.

Main Policies

Core strategy: GSP3, HC4

Policy GSP3 states amongst other things that development must respect, conserve and enhance all valued characteristics of the site and buildings that are subject to the development proposals.

Policy HC4 states that the provision or improvement of community facilities and services will be encouraged within settlements or on their edges if no suitable site is available within.

Local Plan: LC4

Policy LC4 of the Local Plan states that where development is acceptable in principle it will be permitted provided that its detailed treatment is of a high standard that respects, conserves and where possible enhances the landscape, built environment and other valued characteristics of the area.

Wider Policy Context

Relevant Core Strategy (CS) policies: DS1, GSP1, GSP2, GSP4,

Relevant Local Plan (LP) policies: LT11, LT18

National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 28 of the NPPF states that Development Plans should promote the retention and development of local services and community facilities in villages.

In the National Park the development plan comprises the Authority's Core Strategy 2011 and saved policies in the Peak District National Park Local Plan 2001.

Policies in the Development Plan provide a clear starting point consistent with the National Park's statutory purposes for the determination of this application.

Policy HC4 accords with the requirements of Paragraph 28 of the Framework, and it is considered that there are no significant conflicts between other prevailing policies in the Development Plan and more recent Government guidance in the NPPF with regard to the issues that are raised.

Assessment

Principle

For many years the ground floor of the property operated as the local NHS GP surgery, and was run by the Eyam Surgery. This use ceased when the surgery vacated the building ahead of its sale at auction in 2016.

The building retains a lawful use as a doctor's surgery, which represents a community facility for the purposes of the Authority's planning policies. On that basis it is necessary for the proposal for a change of use to any non-community use to meet the tests detailed in policy HC4. These require that the applicant needs to demonstrate either that the facility:

1. Is available elsewhere in the settlement; or

2. Is no longer required;
3. Or is no longer viable.

Taking each of these in turn:

1. There is no other doctors surgery available elsewhere in Grindleford.
2. The Parish Council have supported the application, which would commonly be an indicator that the facility may no longer be required. However, Officers note that the NHS Choices website states that:

"Grindleford Surgery is now closed because the building we were housed in is no longer available for us to use. We are currently looking at options for new premises in Grindleford."

Officers have contacted the Practice Manager at Eyam Surgery to establish whether this message remains current, and what the view of the Practice is.

It has been established that the Surgery were served notice to vacate the property due to its upcoming sale, that the Surgery consider a premises is still required in Grindleford, and they are still actively looking for premises.

The Practice are presently paying for a mini-bus service to shuttle patients from Grindleford to Eyam, but this is not intended to be a permanent alternative to re-establishing a surgery in Grindleford. By virtue of having no premises available to them in Grindleford they also have to use, by agreement, the Sir William Hill Hotel in Grindleford as a base for handing out medications to patients. Officers consider that it is clear from this that there remains a need for a doctor's surgery in Grindleford.

3. The applicant has advised that they have undertaken internal works that mean the layout of the building is now one of a single dwelling that would not lend itself to use as a separate flat and doctors surgery. Officers consider it likely that these works would be reversible, and no further evidence has been put forward as to why the continued use of the building as a doctors surgery with flat above would not be viable.

In summary, there is no other doctor surgery in Grindleford and one is still considered to be needed. No compelling case has been made as to why the application building could not continue to fulfil this need. The proposal to change the use of the building to a single dwellinghouse is therefore considered contrary to policy HC4.

Visual impacts

The application proposes little change to the external appearance of the building, with just one rooflight being introduced to the front roof slope and one to the rear. Neighbouring properties have similar arrangements and the proposed rooflights are modest in size.

Overall the proposal would therefore have a less than significant impact on the character and appearance of the built environment, and would comply with policy LC4.

Highways impacts

Whilst many people would walk to the surgery due to its central location, some would drive. Use of the building as a single three bedroom dwelling would generate less requirement for car parking throughout the daytime than the surgery use, although would be more likely to require parking at night.

As the property is only served by on-road parking, this reduction in demand would result in a modest improvement to highway amenity.

Amenity

As the property is set within a row of residential houses the removal of a commercial use would generally reduce the amount of noise and disturbance to local residents. However, a surgery use is not inherently noisy, would normally operate only during daytime hours, and the surgery is only small in capacity. It is therefore considered that any improvement in this regard would be less than significant.

Conclusion

A doctor's surgery is not available elsewhere in Grindleford and Officers consider that the views of Eyam Surgery make clear that a doctor's surgery is still a facility that is required by the community in this settlement. It has not been demonstrated that it would be unviable for the building to continue to meet such a purpose and as a result the proposal is contrary to policy HC4.

Officers have also considered the potential modest improvement to highway amenity and the amenity of local residents that is discussed above, as well as all other material matters.

Overall, it is not considered that any planning benefits of the scheme outweigh the loss of the surgery and the conflict with planning policy and the application is therefore recommended for refusal.

Human Rights

Any human rights issues have been considered and addressed in the preparation of this report.

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

Nil