



Planning and Transport Committee

Date:	6th January 2021
Title:	Proposed Changes to the General Permitted Development Order.
Purpose of the Report:	To seek Member Direction in respects of the current consultation exercise being carried out by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) on proposed new permitted development rights for the change of use from Commercial Business and Service Use to Residential.
Contact Officers:	Mark Saccoccio, Town Clerk.

1.0 RECOMMENDATION

Should Members be minded, the proposal is:

- 1.1 That the Planning and Transport Committee request that Officers respond to the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government consultation exercise on proposed new permitted development rights for the change of use from commercial business and service use to residential.

2.0 CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government has launched a consultation exercise on substantial changes to the general permitted order. The proposal is for a new right allowing buildings to change use from Class E to Residential without the need for planning permission. Should the proposals come into effect, it would significantly broaden the scope of the existing residential conversion rights as it would not only apply to offices, light industrial, and retail, but also to restaurants, cafes, gyms, medical facilities and creches.
- 2.2 The new right is intended to apply to all Class E buildings, regardless of the size of property in question. It is also intended to apply in Conservation Areas. Therefore, the High Street (Leighton Buzzard) as well as New Road (Linslade) would qualify with both being found within their respective Conservation Areas.

What will be the impact should the proposals come into effect?

- 2.3 The proposed changes are radical and will have a deep and profound impact upon the fabric of society. The rights extend to all businesses be it GP's surgery, retail park, business park, gyms, creche, nursery, light industrial unit, shops, restaurants and cafes in England that existed and was in use on 1st September 2020.
- 2.4 Given the impact that Covid-19 and the associated restrictions have had on the economy, there will be a real temptation for commercial landlords to flip vacant units to residential before considering more traditional uses for them. Unless the Local Authority is to introduce Article 4 Directions which would remove permitted development rights (the ability to change use without the need for planning permission), there is every likelihood that the High Street will change in purpose and character to the detriment of remaining businesses and the public who rely on them for their goods and services.
- 2.5 The public consultation exercise runs from 3rd December 2020 to 28th January 2021. Should Members be minded, it is considered that there is every reason to object to the proposal by virtue of safeguarding the future prosperity of the traditional high street. The reduction in choice be it in retail, food offer or business functions will have a profound impact on footfall as consumers will look elsewhere to meet need. In turn, the future prosperity of the twice weekly market will also be called into question.
- 2.6 A further consideration is the living standards of those occupying the said conversions. In most cases, it is highly unlikely that the conversion of a typical business unit would be able to provide the level of amenities that would reasonably be expected.

END