

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL
CAITHNESS, SUTHERLAND & EASTER ROSS PLANNING
APPLICATIONS AND REVIEW COMMITTEE –
21 April 2009

Agenda Item	4.3
Report No	17/09

09/00051/OUTCA – Change of use of shop to house at 97 High Street, Wick

Report by Area Planning and Building Standards Manager

SUMMARY

This application relates to R. G. MacDonalds Bakers shop at 97 High Street, Wick. Formerly the premises consisted of the bakers shop on the ground floor and a café on the first floor. However the café has been closed for some time and the applicant now seeks to close the ground floor shop and convert both parts into a dwellinghouse. The proposal is contrary to Policies in the Wick Chapter of the adopted Caithness Local Plan and has been advertised as such.

The Recommendation is to GRANT outline planning permission.

Ward Number 3 – Wick

Applicant – Mr. David Robertson, 49 Dunnet Avenue, Wick, Caithness, KW1 4DY

1. PROPOSAL

1.1 The application seeks consent in principle to change the existing ground floor bakers shop and the existing vacant first floor café into a single dwellinghouse. The premises are those of R. G. MacDonald, Bakers at 97 High Street, Wick.

2. PLANNING HISTORY

2.1 None

3. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

3.1 The application was advertised as a Departure from the Local Plan but no letters of representation have been received.

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 None required.

5. POLICY

5.1 The following policies are relevant to the assessment of the proposal :-

Highland Structure Plan

- G2 Design for Sustainability
- R5 Town Centre Shopping – retail development in town centres will generally be encouraged. Development proposals which are adjudged to undermine the vitality or viability of town centres will be resisted.

Caithness Local Plan Wick Chapter

- “PP2 – Within the defined commercial core area the Council will..... presume against further ground floor office and other non-retail uses in the main shopping areas of Bridge Street and High Street, where they would interrupt continuous retail frontages.....”

5.2 The proposal requires to be assessed against the following relevant Scottish Planning Policies (SPP's); National Planning Policy Guidelines (NPPG); and Planning Advice Notes (PANs). In this case, in particular, Scottish Planning Policy.

6. PLANNING APPRAISAL

6.1 **Determining issues** – Section 25 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 The proposal requires to be assessed against the appropriate policies of the Development Plan, supplementary guidance and National Planning Policy and Guidelines as referred to in the Policy section. In particular, the proposal requires detailed assessment of the following fundamental issues:

- whether the principle of development is appropriate in terms of policy
- whether the layout of development is appropriate
- the impact on the amenity of the area and residents

6.3 This is a proposal where Members require to make a judgement as to how policy contained in the Structure and Local Plans should be interpreted. Ostensibly, the proposal is contrary to the Local Plan as it proposes a non-retail use in the main shopping area of the High Street. However, that needs to be set against the current economic climate and changing retail patterns.

- 6.4 At present in Wick town centre there are several vacant ground floor shop premises, the most prominent of which, of course, is Woolworths which is virtually opposite the application site. If this application is refused then the likelihood is that the Bakers shop will close down and could lie vacant for some considerable time. If that were to happen and the shop was boarded up for a lengthy period then the Council would be liable to come in for criticism as a boarded up shop could be seen to be adversely affecting the vitality and viability of the existing town centre.
- 6.5 The question, in this instance, is how Policy R5 of the Structure Plan should be interpreted. It could easily be concluded that this proposal would be preventing a potential situation which could undermine the vitality and viability of the existing town centre. In my opinion it would be better to have this property in a productive use, albeit residential, rather than having a shop lying vacant for a lengthy period. It must also be appreciated that units such as this were never designed for the 21st century environment having no rear servicing or delivery areas for example. In the circumstances, on balance, I think that it would be better to allow this application to proceed as it would seem to me to be the lesser of two evils.

RECOMMENDATION

Grant outline planning permission subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard outline conditions.
2. A further application shall be made to the Planning Authority within one year of the date of this permission for the approval of reserved matters and no work shall be commenced on any part of the site until the permission of the Planning Authority has been granted in writing for such proposals.

Reason: No such details have been submitted with the application.

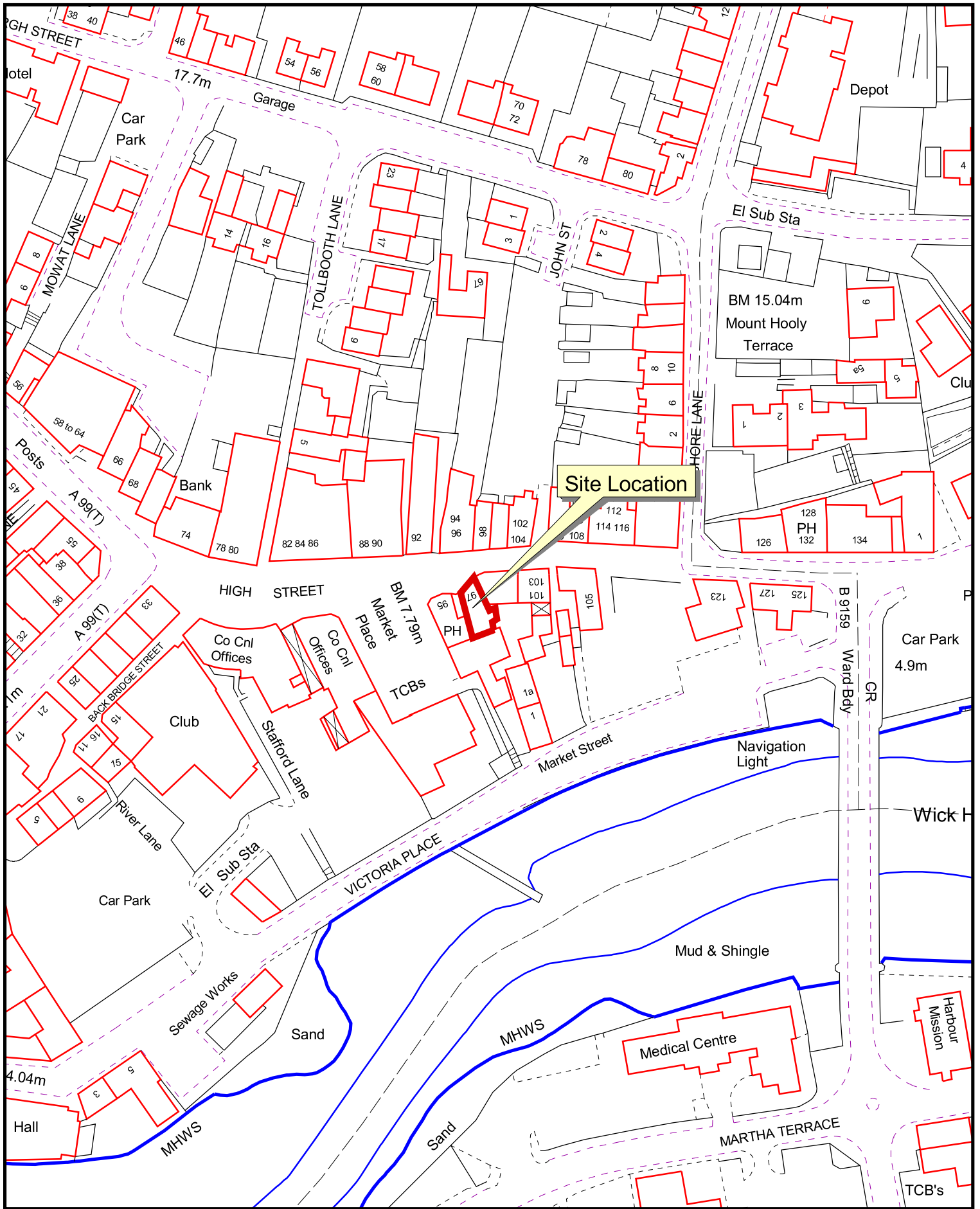
Signature: Allan J Todd

Designation: Area Planning & Building Standards Manager

Author: Iain Ewart (01955 607751)

Background Papers: As referred to in the report above.

Date: 9 April 2009



09/00051/OUTCA
 Change shop to house at
 97 High Street, Wick

Mr D Robertson
 49 Dunnet Avenue
 Wick

Date: 08 April 2009

SUPPLIED BY THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL



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