

STRATEGIC PLANNING BOARD

Date of meeting: 8th July 2009
Report of: Head of Planning and Policy
Title: Dale Street Mill, Dale Street, Macclesfield, Cheshire
SK10 1HH – Outline application for 2 no. blocks of 3 no.
terrace cottages (6 no. residential units in total)

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider the planning application 08/2670P.

2.0 Decision Required

- 2.1 To grant or refuse planning permission.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 At the meeting on the 20th May 2009, the Northern Planning Committee resolved that they were minded to grant planning permission in respect of this application contrary to officer recommendation.
- 3.2 Under the adopted Terms of Reference, applications involving a significant departure from policy, which a Planning Committee is minded to approve, must be referred to the Strategic Planning Board.
- 3.3 The proposal is considered to be a significant departure because it involves the demolition of a building which is on the 'Local List' of historically important buildings. Policy BE20 of the Macclesfield Local Plan states, "Non-Listed buildings and other structures of architectural or historic interest do not enjoy the full protection of statutory listing. However, development which would adversely affect their architectural or historic character will only be allowed if the Borough Council is satisfied that the building or structure is beyond reasonable repair."
- 3.4 The Macclesfield Local List of Historic Buildings, was first included into the Local Plan in 2004 as Appendix 11. Dale Street Mill was not part of this list. A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) was then drawn up and consultation was carried out between 17 October and 28 November 2007 to add further buildings to the 'list'. The revised 'list' was adopted in early 2008, and included the addition of Dale Street Mill. The description of the building in the SPD is noted below. This is the only detail noted on the building and this is largely because such a large number of buildings were put forward for inclusion. The description reads as follows: -

“Dale Street Mill is a mill building with a Georgian frontage and a high quality pedimented doorcase. It consists of brick with rendered front, timber sash windows with gauged and rubbed flat arch brickwork and stone sill finished with a slate roof”.

The detail noted in the SPD should not alter the weight afforded to the building in terms of its retention. The Conservation Officers consider that the description attached to the building ought to be enough to emphasise the buildings importance as an industrial building of local interest.

- 3.5 It is considered that it is the buildings “local distinctiveness” that is important to maintain in considering any proposals for change. While there may well be structural problems with the building that should not in itself exclude the refurbishment and reuse of this structure. The building has long been established in the street scene, the proposal to demolish and construct modern terraced cottages would remove a vital historical link to Macclesfield’s past. This building has enough features of local architectural and historic merit to justify its retention. It has character and has interesting features, such as a distinctive mill frontage onto an otherwise residential street; an usual relationship with other properties; and rows of windows on the South Western elevation. These attributes help to provide a reminder of Macclesfield’s industrial past within this local area. One should be sympathetic to the concept of retention of “local distinctiveness” and as such, the Conservation Officer strongly advises that the proposal to demolish this building be rethought and amended to retain elements of the industrial past, perhaps incorporating a row of cottages in the South West elevation to include the current window style.
- 3.6 The structural engineers report submitted by the applicant concludes that the building is beyond reasonable repair and that it would be unviable to adapt the existing building. Although it is accepted that there are structural defects with the building, it is noted in the main agenda report, that the redevelopment of the building is based on the current market conditions and there are examples of similar buildings (buildings in a poor state of disrepair), which have been retained elsewhere.
- 3.7 At the meeting of the Strategic Board on 17th June 2009, Members requested further information in relation to the how the Council’s Structural Engineer carried out his inspection of the building. Unfortunately, it is not possible to provide any further information on this as the Councils’ Structural Engineer is currently absent, on sick leave. Members also questioned the viability of retaining part of the structure. Officers have discussed the viability issue with the applicants’ agent and requested an assessment to be carried out.
- 3.8 At its meeting on 17th June 2009, the Strategic Planning Board deferred this application in order to carry out a site visit.

- 3.9 The full circumstances surrounding the case and reasoning behind the recommendation of the Head of Planning and Policy to refuse the application are set out in the attached report.

4.0 Northern Committee Observations

- 4.1 The Committee's reasons for recommending approval contrary to Policy BE20 and officer recommendation, were: -
- A proposed alternative, which would retain part of the Mill, would not preserve sufficient of the building
 - The development would satisfy housing need
 - The development was appropriate to the local scenery/architecture
- 4.2 In the opinion of the Northern Planning Committee these are material planning considerations which should outweigh the policy presumption against this proposal.

5.0 Officer Response

Alternatives

- 5.1 It is considered that if the building were redeveloped, a substantial proportion could be retained. Officers have illustrated to the developer potential options for retaining part of the existing structure. This would include demolition of part of the front of the building to allow an alternative access and the demolition of part of the building to the rear, which is considered to be structurally in very poor condition. This would potentially provide further space for development at the rear of the site (for up to four new dwellings). Whilst the scheme suggested by Officers would involve elements of rebuilding, it would retain the historical identity of the existing mill. However, the applicant is not willing to consider any alternative solutions.

Housing need

- 5.2 Whilst the proposed scheme would result in the creation of six new dwellings, the alternative scheme could potentially provide for eight dwellings, or more.

Local scenery/architecture

- 5.3 Whilst the design issues were not put forward as a reason for refusal, it is the principle concern that this proposal would result in the loss of a locally distinct building.
- 5.4 The applicant has undertaken a further structural engineer's report which confirms the detail of the original report and outlines the works which would need to be undertaken to retain the building.

- 5.5 It is always regrettable when a building of character is lost. However, it is not considered that local economic factors should be a determining issue when considering the redevelopment of a building which is on the Locally Important Buildings List, and Officers do not accept that the total loss of the building is the only solution in this instance. If the Strategic Planning Board supports the resolution of the Northern Planning Committee, and accepts the conclusion of the applicants' structural engineers report, then the proposed layout of the redevelopment would be considered to be acceptable. However, if the Strategic Planning Board does not accept that the building is beyond reasonable repair, or that the proposal is the only alternative, then the application should be refused as it would be contrary to policy BE20.

6.0 Options

- 6.1 To endorse the recommendation of the Head of Planning and Policy to refuse the application for the reasons set out in the report to the Northern Planning Committee.
- 6.2 To endorse the recommendation of the Northern Planning Committee to approve the application for the reasons set out in paragraph 4.1 above.

7.0 Recommendation

- 7.1 The officer recommendation as set out in the planning report still stands.

8.0 Financial Implications

- 8.1 The applicant may appeal against the refusal and the likely outcome of that is discussed below.

9.0 Legal Implications

- 9.1 The applicant may appeal against the refusal and the likely outcome of that is discussed below.

10.0 Risk Assessment

- 10.1 Refusal of the application carries the risk of an Appeal against the decision by the applicant. However, in view of the policy presumption against the development, it is considered that the Appeal is unlikely to be successful.
- 10.2 In this instance approval of the application would be unlikely to generate an undesirable precedent, as the applicants have submitted a Structural Survey, which concludes that the building is beyond reasonable repair.

For further information:

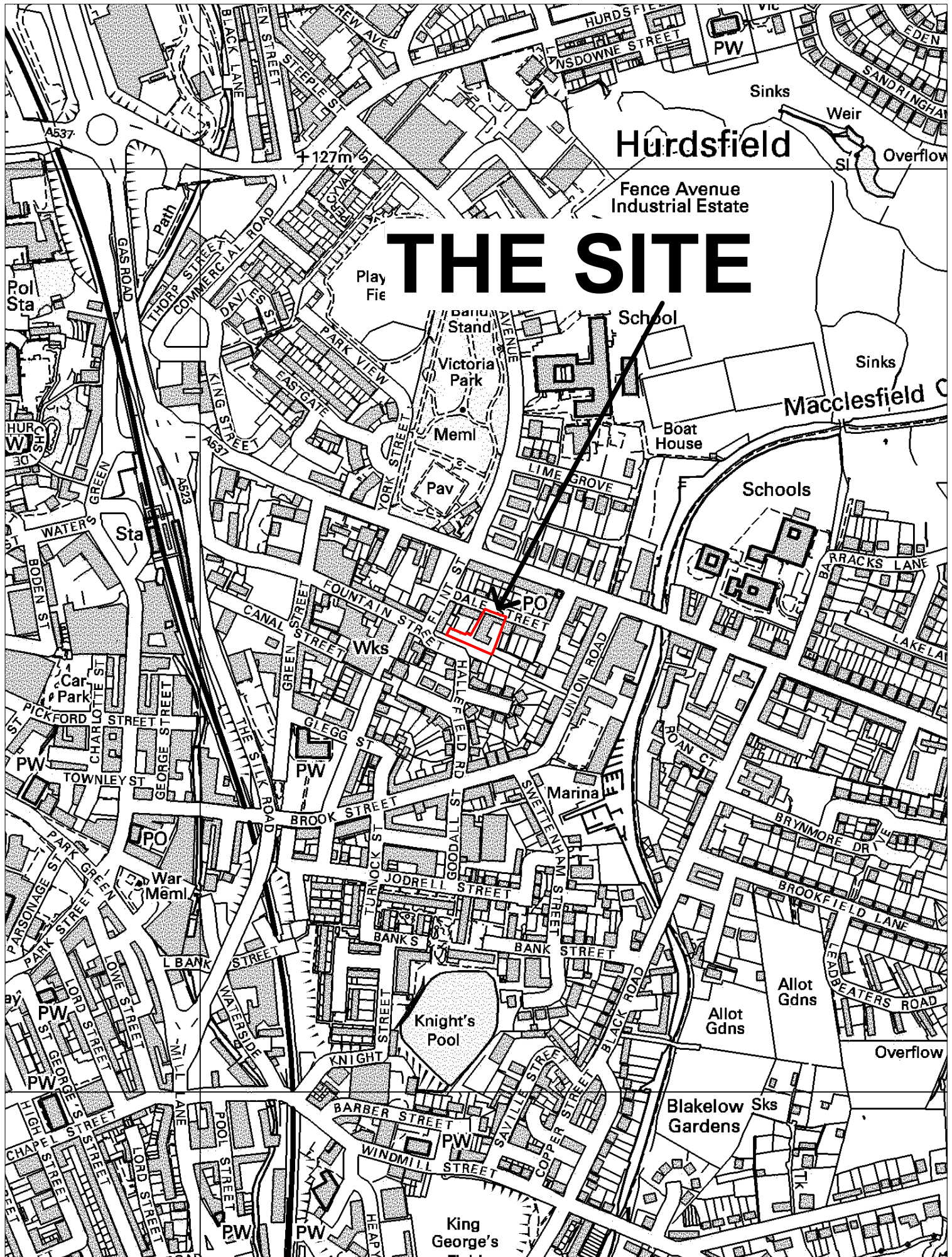
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Jamie Macrae
Officer: Nick Turpin – Principal Planning Officer
Tel No: 01625 504612

Background Documents:

- *North West of England Plan: Regional Spatial Strategy to 2021*
- *Adopted Macclesfield Borough Local Plan*
- *Structural survey and addendum report*

Documents are available for inspection at:

- *Town Hall, Macclesfield*



08/2670P DALE STREET MILL, DALE STREET, MACCLESFIELD, CHESHIRE, SK10 1NH

NGR: 392,300m - 373,490m

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