

Planning Reference No:	10/1491C
Application Address:	Senate House, 81 Crewe Road, Alsager
Proposal:	Change of Use from Residential to Office, Business Training and Dance Class Accommodation.
Applicant:	Mr P Keeling
Application Type:	Full Planning Permission
Ward:	Alsager
Registration Date:	21-June-2010
Earliest Determination Date:	06-August-2010
Expiry Date:	16-August-2010
Date report Prepared	30-July-2010
Constraints:	Within Settlement Zone Line Principal Shopping Area

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE subject to conditions.

MAIN ISSUES:

- Principle of Development
- Impact on Neighbouring Residential Amenities
- Parking & Highways
- Other Issues Raised by Representation

1. REASON FOR REFERRAL

Councillor D. Hough has called this application in for consideration by the Southern Committee due to *“concerns over the loss of amenity to neighbouring properties with the effect of noise being the main one. Other concerns include;-*

- *Use of offices/dance studio up to 22.30 hours.*
- *More usage and journeys than that generated by the residential properties for which there is current permission.*
- *Parking inadequate for increased use leading to increased displacement parking on Church Road.*
- *Change to commercial use on property edging the Mere, which in this area is residential in character.”*

2. DESCRIPTION AND SITE CONTEXT

This application relates to 2 recently constructed semi-detached residential dwellings situated to the rear of the property known as ‘Senate House’ fronting Crewe Road in the Alsager Town Centre. The surrounding development comprises of residential properties to

each side and a takeaway and restaurant on the opposite side of the road. The property backs onto Alsager Mere and further residential properties stand on the opposite side of the water. The site falls within the Alsager Settlement Zone Line and the Principal Shopping Area as designated in the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review (2005).

3. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Planning permission is sought to change the use of the 2 residential units to the rear of Senate House for use as office space associated with Senate House (a facility for training business delegates) and dance class accommodation. The proposal would involve the removal of an internal subdividing wall at first floor level to form a 'Syndicate Training Room and Dance Floor' measuring approximately 60 square metres. There would be no changes or alterations made to the external appearance of the building.

4. RELEVANT HISTORY

05/1116/FUL - Part demolition of outbuildings and refurbishment of existing apartments into 3 town houses. Construction of 2 new dwellings to rear – Approved 18.01.2006

06/0808/COU - Change of use of existing building from residential to office accommodation, demolition of outbuildings and alterations to roof and elevations – Approved 05.09.2006

06/1175/FUL - Change of use to office accommodation with external alterations – Approved 06.02.2007

5. POLICIES

Local Plan Policy

PS4 Towns

GR1 General Requirements for New Development

GR6 Amenity and Health

S4 Principal Shopping Areas

Other Material Considerations

PPG24 – Planning and Noise

Circular 11/95 'The use of Conditions in Planning Permissions'

6. CONSIDERATIONS (External to Planning)

Environmental Health:

No objection subject to conditions restricting the hours of use to those specified in the application and submission of details of the acoustic enclosure of fans, compressors etc. and ventilation extract systems.

Highways:

No comments received at the time of report preparation.

7. VIEWS OF ALSAGER TOWN COUNCIL

No comments received at the time of report preparation.

8. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

One letter of representation has been received from the occupier of a neighbouring property objecting to this application on the following grounds:

- At the time of the original application for these houses, the objector was assured that they were for residential use.
- The houses have never been completed.
- As office and training space use, the main building at Senate House is infrequently used in the evenings and weekends and so far, they have not caused any disturbance.
- A change of use, particularly to a dance studio would fundamentally change that.
- By its nature a dance studio is noisy, likely to have windows open for ventilation and have most of its business during the evening and weekends thus spoiling the quiet enjoyment of my home.
- This application is wholly unsuitable for a largely residential neighbourhood and the buildings should remain zoned as residential.

9. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

In response to some of the concerns raised by representation, and in order to provide more information about the proposals, the applicants have submitted a Supporting Statement. Within it this states that:

Dance Classes: Dance classes would be delivered to children in the 3 – 4 hours after school finishes on weekdays, and possibly also on Saturdays, but not on Sundays. There may, be some dance classes for older children or adults that go on until 9.30pm on some evenings, in line with the timings of the courses currently delivered in Senate House. The applicants currently deliver courses on weekday evenings and Saturday mornings and have received no complaints. There are other businesses in close vicinity to us (including one delivering percussion/music tuition) who are open to the public later than 9.30pm in the evenings and during weekends. The applicants anticipate that local businesses would benefit from children and their parents visiting this part of the town, particularly during hours when the retail businesses are open.

Mitigation of potential noise: The applicant's would agree to install any soundproofing/noise attenuation as required. The main training room in Senate House is air-conditioned and the same system would be used in the proposed development, avoiding the need for any windows to be open during dance classes.

10. OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The application site is located within the settlement zone line for Alsager where according to Policy PS4 there is a general presumption in favour of development provided that it is in keeping with the town's scale and character and does not conflict with other policies.

Because the site is located within the Principal Shopping Area, policy S4 is also of relevance.

Policy S4 allows for some non-A1 retail uses within the Principal Shopping area provided that they are complimentary to the retail function and character of the town centre and do not lead to an inappropriate concentration of non-A1 uses. In this case, the proposal would serve to expand the existing business operations on the site and would not result in the loss of any retail floor space. Further, owing to its position at the rear of the existing buildings fronting Crewe Road, there are limited opportunities for retail/commercial frontage. Given that the proposal is for a business use and having regard to the other commercial uses near to the site and its designation within the Principal Shopping Area, the principle of use is considered to be acceptable in land use terms and would not detract from the function of the Town Centre.

Impact on Neighbouring Residential Amenities

The site is situated in between 2 residential properties. According to Policy GR6, planning permission for any development adjoining or near to residential property or sensitive uses will only be permitted where the proposal would not have an unduly detrimental effect on their amenity due to, inter alia, loss of privacy, loss of sunlight and daylight, visual intrusion and environmental disturbance (including noise). As there would be no changes to the openings or the external appearance of the building, there would be no greater impact in terms of loss of privacy, loss of sunlight, daylight and visual intrusion.

With regard to the proposed office/training use, such uses are not considered to be intensive and by their nature are less likely to generate noise. It is not anticipated that this element of the proposal would harm neighbouring amenities and this is supported by the fact that the use of the main building as offices has not caused complaint. Conversely, the use of part of the building as 'Dance Class Accommodation' would have the potential to generate noise levels greater than that of the proposed office use and therefore this needs further consideration.

The dance class accommodation would be limited to the syndicate training room located on the first floor contained within the rear northern part of the building overlooking the Mere. Owing to the limited floor space allocated for the dance accommodation (approximately 60 square metres), and the fact that it would not be used continuously for such uses, the intensity of the use would not be significant. Although there are windows that can be opened within the north elevation of the building, a further condition could be imposed requiring them to be shut at all times during operation of the dance classes to minimise any noise discharge for the nearest dwellings. The applicants have confirmed that they would be amenable to the imposition of such a condition as they intend to install air conditioning.

The times of operation sought by the applicants do not appear to be too onerous and do not span outside of the hours of 8.30am to 22.30pm, which is not dissimilar to some of the openings hours of some of the nearby commercial uses. Subject to a condition limiting the hours of use, the building would not be operative during sensitive hours i.e. early mornings or late in the evenings. Consequently, the proposal would not be significantly detrimental to the amenity of local residents or to the overall character or appearance of the area.

Highways & Parking

Given the building's town centre location, ample car parking is available in the surrounding vicinity, namely 'Station Road Car Park' located approximately 35m towards the south (65 metres walking distance). Having regard to this existing provision, the small scale of the proposals and given that the site benefits from 9 off street parking spaces including 1 disabled bay, it is not considered that the uses would give rise to parking problems in the area.

11.CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR THE DECISION

In land use terms the principle of development is deemed to be acceptable, however, the potential impact on neighbouring residential properties needs to be controlled. Subject to compliance with conditions restricting hours of use and closure of windows within the north facing elevation, the proposal would not cause significant detriment to the amenities of neighbouring residents. The proposal would not exacerbate existing parking or highways issues having regard to the small scale of the proposal and as such, it is recommended that the application be approved.

12.RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Commencement of development within 3 years**
- 2. Accordance with approved plans**
- 2. Scheme of Acoustic enclosure of fans/compressors**
- 3. Limit hours of operation to between the hours of 8.30am to 22.30pm**
- 4. All windows and openings contained within the first floor of the north facing elevation of the building shall remain closed during dance classes**

Location Plan: Cheshire East Council Licence No. 100049045

