

Application No: 20/3628M

Location: ALMA MILL, CROMPTON ROAD, MACCLESFIELD,
CHESHIRE

Proposal: Change of use and extensions to vacant mill into 24 self-contained apartments with associated car parking.

Applicant: Mujahid Afzal

Expiry Date: 19-Nov-2020

SUMMARY:

Alma Mill is a Grade II Listed Building which has been vacant for a long period of time and is in a very poor state of repair. It is accepted that, in order to carry out the conversion significant works are required, which would be extremely costly.

It is considered that there is a real public benefit of facilitating the long-term future of Alma Mill. This is given substantial weight in support of the scheme.

The harm identified to the listed building, setting of the adjacent listed building and the character of the area are given significant weight against the scheme.

It is considered that the substantial benefit of bringing the listed building into use, (after such a considerable amount of time) thereby helping to sustain its future, is outweighed by the negative impacts of the scheme, namely the harm to the listed building and setting of the adjacent listed building on this occasion.

For the reasons set out above, and having taken account of all matters raised, it is recommended that this application is refused.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

Alma Mill is located on the corner of Crompton Road and Pownall Square, approx. 0.6 miles to the west of Macclesfield Train Station. The total site area comprises 560sqm.

Originally constructed as a silk mill in the 19th century, the grade II listed building is situated within a predominantly residential area. The front elevation of the building is set back from Crompton Road

The building has been vacant for some years and is in a very poor state of repair. It has suffered from settlement across the foundations, water ingress and partial collapse of internal floor structures and is therefore not structurally sound. The site lies within a Mixed Use Employment Area.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Listed Building Consent is sought to convert the Mill into 24 apartments comprising of 20 one-bedroom apartments and 4 two-bedroom apartments. The scheme also includes a two-storey roof extension and a full height rear extension.

The existing walls and windows will be retained and repaired whenever possible, retaining the original features and form of the mill. The entrance off Crompton Road would be maintained and the original hoist beam and void restored.

The proposal would structurally strengthen the mill building using an internal steel frame and restore the original building materials.

The design would incorporate the provision of four car parking spaces, short term cycle spaces and plant, bin and cycle stores at basement level.

RELEVANT HISTORY

08/0788P Change of use of existing vacant mill into twelve self-contained apartments and associated garaging
Approved 16 June 2008

06/2775P - Conversion of mill to 12no. self-contained apartments with associated basement level car parking (listed building consent)
Withdrawn 07.12.06

06/2774P - Conversion of mill to 12no. self-contained apartments with associated basement level car parking (full planning)
Withdrawn 07.12.06

06/0370P - Conversion of mill to 12no. self-contained apartments with basement level car parking (full planning)
refused 19.04.06

06/0369P - Conversion of mill to 12 no. self-contained apartments with basement level car parking (listed building consent)
refused 19.04.06

05/1288P - Conversion of mill to 12no. self-contained apartments with basement level car parking (full planning)
Withdrawn 06.07.05

05/1287P - Conversion of mill to 12no. self-contained apartments with basement level car parking (full planning)
Withdrawn 04.07.05

76718P – Change of use of basement to storage area & rehearsal studio, approved 16.3.94.

69958P – Renovation of top floor to provide artist's studio and classroom area,
approved 18.3.92.

POLICIES

By virtue of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, the application should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

For the purposes of considering the current proposals, the development plan consists of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS) and saved policies Macclesfield Borough Local Plan (MBLP).

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS)

CELPS was adopted in July 2017 and sets out policies to guide development across the borough over the plan period to 2030. The relevant policies of the CELPS are summarised below:

SE 7 The Historic Environment;

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan saved policies (MBLP):

Following the adoption of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, a number of policies of the MBLP have been saved. The relevant saved policies are summarised below:

BE 15 Repair or enhancement (listed buildings);
BE 17 Demolition of listed buildings;
BE 18 Alteration extensions and partial demolition (listed buildings);
BE 19 Change if use of buildings;

Other Material Considerations:

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
National Planning Practice Framework (NPPG)
The Cheshire East Borough Design Guide (2017)

CONSULTATIONS (External to planning)

Macclesfield Civic Trust:

“The Civic Society welcomes the conversion of historic buildings to new uses which can secure their future - often this requires a derogation from normal planning requirements such as car parking or space standards - a good example being the fairly recent conversion of Brown Street Mill which has no on-site car parking.

We are concerned in this case that although some relaxation of car parking requirements have to be accepted it does not seem assured that prospective occupiers and their visitors will only use bicycles or public transport or walk. Therefore, we consider the transport assessment a little light on logic. The locality is one where there is extensive on-street parking because of the pattern of built development - the scheme may well increase this.

We note that from the viability assessment the scheme will give a profitable return to the developer but possibly dependent upon the provision of the additional upper floors - and this is the problem.

What is the impact upon the integrity and appearance of the Listed Building and the visual impact on the surrounding townscape?

We are concerned that the additional height and use of metal cladding would not only alter the character of the building but also create a feature of unwelcome prominence in the locality - visible along Crompton road and from nearby residential areas.

In view of this the society cannot support the present scheme but do support the efforts to bring the building back into beneficial use. Perhaps a more modest conversion could still be viable whilst respecting the integrity of the Grade II Listed Building.”

Macclesfield Town Council:

“That the committee does not support this application in its current form and sought the following conditions are made on the application:

- i. Hours of construction are set,*
- ii. Materials used are in keeping with the area with particular reference to the design of the top storey,*
- iii. The apartments are fitted with low emission boilers,*
- iv. Provision is made for all apartments to access waste collection including recycling,*
- v. Sprinklers are included in the design,*
- vi. Electric charging points for vehicles and bicycles are included in the design.”*

OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

Representations from nine properties have been received. A summary of the comments is shown below:

- The building represents a serious health and safety concern.
- The additional floors would negatively impact on the adjacent listed Crompton Mill.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Heritage Impacts

Our historic environment is a finite resource and an integral part of the unique character and distinctiveness of Cheshire East. Key assets include Macclesfield's silk and industrial heritage.

Paragraph 183 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that heritage assets '*...are an irreplaceable resource, and should be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of existing and future generations*'.

Consequently, it is important to the long-term well-being of the borough that there is positive stewardship of its built heritage and that its conservation and management are key priorities in the future place-shaping in Cheshire East.

Alma Mill is a Grade II Listed Building. Originally built as a silk weaving mill in 1823, with early c20 additions. Listed Building Consent 20/3628M accompanies this application.

The Mill has previously received permission for residential conversion, albeit a smaller number of units (12) confined to the existing fabric of the building. This application seeks to increase the number of units which is necessary, according to the applicant, to make the scheme viable. This is achieved by adding a two-storey extension on the roof and seven-storey extension to the rear.

The new additions would inevitably cause harm to the character of the listed building due to the prominence and scale. It is claimed that these changes are necessary in order to make the development viable. The Council's Conservation Officer originally confirmed that the harm could be justified by allowing the building to be retained in a form which can still be identified as the original Alma Mill building. However, due to the condition of the mill there would be nothing retained internally, a steel frame would be inserted internally to support the walls and floors, the roof would be removed and substantial rebuilding would take place, resulting in very little of the original building remaining. Following a re-examination of the information provided, the Council's Conservation Officer confirms that the harm 'should be towards significant harm'.

The application site also lies adjacent to a further grade II listed former mill building, Crompton Road Mill, which is a similar scale to the application property at three storeys on the elevation facing Crompton Road.

Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that *'where the development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposed building including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.'* The scheme must also pay special regard to the desirability of preserving the listed buildings and their setting including the features of special architectural or historic interest in line with s66 of the Planning and Listed Buildings Act.

The extension on the roof would increase the height above the road from the existing height of approx. 11.5m to a height of 15.8m, a significant increase of 4.3m, which extends to an increased height of 6.3m when viewed from the side. This increase would be visible along Crompton Road when travelling from the north and south dominating the listed Alma Mill and the setting of the adjoining listed 'Crompton Road Mill'.

It is considered that the extensions would be an unacceptable form of development, which does not respect the existing architectural features of the building and is not sympathetic to the character of the locality, the adjacent building and the site itself. Although the proposal would retain the shell of the listed building and hence some of the historical fabric, the extent of the extensions would detract from the historic character of the listed building and would also harm the setting of the adjacent listed building.

It is considered under S66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and paragraph 196 of the NPPF that the proposal does not preserve the setting of the listed buildings and has substantial harm to the setting of the grade II listed Alma Mill, and to the setting of the grade II listed Crompton Road Mill. It is considered that this harm would outweigh any benefits of retaining the shell of the application property.

A viability statement has been submitted assessing the different options for converting the mill and explaining why the proposed option is the only viable route for the retention of the building. This has not been independently verified, however, for the reasons stated above the proposal would have a negative impact on the listed building and surrounding area and therefore any viability case would not appear to be sufficient to outweigh this harm to the designated heritage assets.

The scheme is therefore deemed to be contrary to saved Policies BE15, BE17, BE18 and BE19 of MBLP and SE 7 of the CELPS.

CONCLUSIONS AND REASON(S) FOR THE DECISION

Alma Mill is a Grade II Listed Building which has been vacant for a long period of time and is in a very poor state of repair. It is accepted that, in order to carry out the conversion significant works are required, which would be extremely costly.

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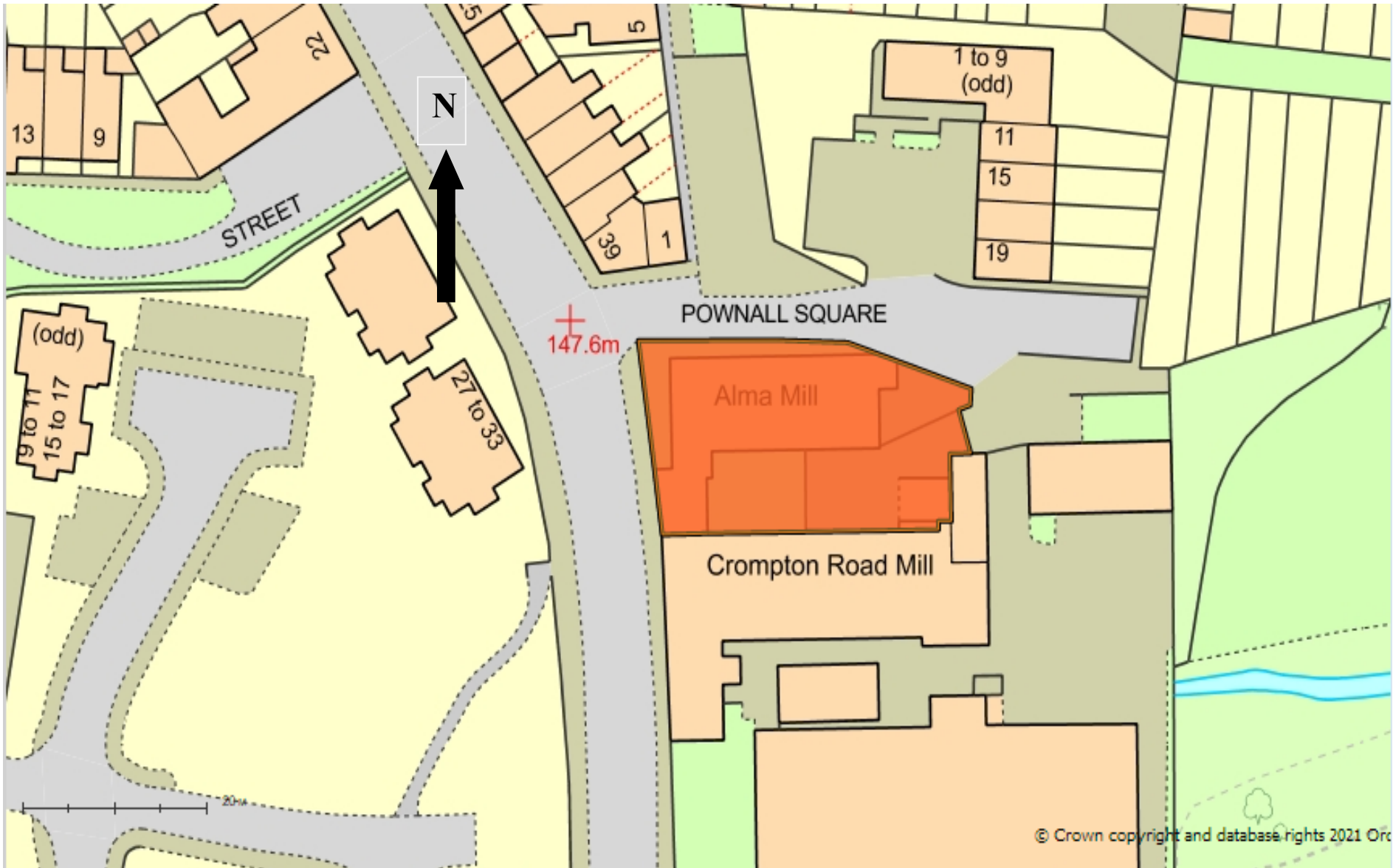
For the reasons set out above, and having taken account of all matters raised, it is recommended that this application is refused.

RECOMMENDATION:

REFUSE for the following reason(s).

- 1. The approval of Listed Building Consent would be contrary to saved Policies BE15, BE17, BE18 and BE19 of the Macclesfield Borough Local Plan and Policy SE7 of the Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy, causing harm to the objectives of those policies due to an adverse impact on the character, appearance and historic interest of the building and setting of the adjacent listed building. The proposal is similarly contrary to national planning policy guidance relating to listed buildings.*

In order to give proper effect to the Northern Committee`s intent and without changing the substance of its decision, authority is delegated to the Head of Planning in consultation with the Chair (or in their absence the Vice Chair) to correct any technical slip or omission in the resolution, before issue of the decision notice.



N

STREET

POWNALL SQUARE

147.6m

Alma Mill

Crompton Road Mill

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20m

(odd)

9 to 11
15 to 17

27 to 33

1 to 9
(odd)

11

15

19

13

9

22

5

5

39

1