

Application No: 13/2402C

Location: THE WOODLANDS, SHADY GROVE, ALSAGER, STOKE-ON-TRENT, CHESHIRE, ST7 2NH

Proposal: Proposed conversion and extension of former public house into 12 residential apartments

Applicant: Punch Taverns Limited

Expiry Date: 02-Sep-2013

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION:

APPROVE subject to conditions

MAIN ISSUES:

- a) Principle of Development
- b) Highways
- c) Public Open Space Provision
- d) Residential Amenity
- e) Other Considerations

1. REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application proposes the creation of more than 10 residential units and is therefore a small-scale major development.

2. DESCRIPTION AND SITE CONTEXT

The application site comprises the former 'Woodlands Public House', which is positioned on the western side of Shady Grove in Alsager. The site is in a predominantly residential area but is only 350 metres walking distance from the main town centre.

The existing building is a relatively modern two-storey property with a gable apex feature at the front and some flat roof single storey projections at the sides and the rear. The curtilage of the site is given over to hardstanding, with the rear of the site previously used as a car park. The pub has stood vacant since 2012.

The site measures approximately 0.1 hectares and is situated in between residential properties fronting Shady Grove and is bound to the rear by residential properties situated on Wordsworth Way and Wilbrahams Way.

The street is mixed in terms of property types, but is predominantly characterised by post war ex-local authority housing. The site is within the settlement zone line of Alsager as designated in the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review (2005).

3. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

Full planning permission is sought to extend and convert the former 'Woodlands Public House' into 12 residential apartments.

4. RELEVANT HISTORY

1988	(19905/3) Permission for proposed alterations and extensions
1996	(27956/3) Refusal for alterations
1996	(28215/3) Permission for alterations
2000	(32288/3) Permission for new entrance porch pergola with ramp up for disabled access
2001	(33331/3) Permission for variation of condition on permission of 28215/3 that prohibits the use of picnic tables on the forecourt
2005	(05/0507/FUL) Permission side extension to existing building, paved forecourt to form external sitting area, disabled access, fences and gates and planting, front lobby, relaxation of condition 2 of 8/28215/3
2005	(04/0491/FUL) Refusal for alterations to 2no. external window openings to form patio door access and construction of 2no. external, Tudor decked drinking areas

5. POLICIES

Local Plan Policy

PS4	Towns
GR1	New Development
GR2	Design
GR3	Residential Developments of More than 10 Dwellings
GR6&7	Amenity & Health
GR9	Accessibility, servicing and parking provision
GR10	Managing Travel Needs
GR18	Traffic Generation
GR19	Infrastructure
GR20	Public Utilities
GR22	Open Space Provision

H1 & H2	Provision of New Housing Development
H4	Residential Development in Towns
RC12	Retention of Existing Community Facilities
SPG1	Provision of Public Open Space in New Residential Developments
SPG2	Provision of Private Open Space in New Residential Developments

Other Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework

Circulars of most relevance include: ODPM 05/2005 Planning Obligations; and 11/95 'The use of Conditions in Planning Permissions'.

6. CONSIDERATIONS (External to Planning)

Environmental Health:

No objection subject to a condition restricting hours of construction hours and an informative in respect of contaminated land.

Highways:

No objection - The Strategic Highways Manager (SHM) notes that 17 off road car spaces are proposed for 12 flats which are a mixture of 1 and 2 bed format. This level of provision is seen as acceptable in this case against this level of development considering that the residual space available within the development will certainly support visitor parking. The provision of cycle parking is also noted.

7. VIEWS OF ALSAGER TOWN COUNCIL

No objection – any houses built on this site should count towards Alsager's housing allocation.

8. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

Representations have been received from 1 neighbouring property objecting to this proposal on the following grounds:

- The size of the development is too large and will lead to overlooking
- Highway Safety Issues, traffic generation, increased congestion and parking issues
- Layout and density of Building
- The proposal should have fewer flats and be restricted to the current footprint of the building
- Proposal does not encourage families into the area as it is for small flats
- Noise and smells created by the proposed bin storage

9. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Planning Design & Access Statement

9. 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 relevant policies. Of relevance is Policy H4, which states that regard will be had to the location of the site to jobs, shops and services by modes other than the car and Policy RC12 which seek to retain existing community facilities.

The site is in a predominantly residential area and seeks permission for the provision of 12 residential units. In terms of land use therefore, the proposal would conform with the surrounding scale and character of development. The site is in a sustainable location on the edge of Alsager town centre and is easily accessible and well connected to public transport and community facilities and services. Consequently, the proposal is deemed to be compliant with local plan policies PS4 and H4.

Policy RC12 of the Local Plan states that planning permission will not be granted for any proposed development which would result in the loss of any community facility which makes a positive contribution to the social or cultural life of the community, unless suitable alternative provision is made. It goes on to state that any proposals involving the loss of such facility would need to demonstrate that the continued or future use of the facility is unviable and that its loss would not be detrimental to the locality. In the Congleton Borough Local Plan, a public house is considered to be a community facility.

Prior to its closure, the business failed to operate viably. Shortly after it closed, the building was damaged in a fire which destroyed most of the ground floor. Subsequent attempts to try and sell or lease the property for the continued use as a public house has failed to generate any genuine interest and as such the building has remained vacant for the past 12 months. Furthermore, there are a number of other drinking establishments within close proximity. As such, the Council is satisfied that the building is no longer viable as a Public House, is not an existing community facility and does not therefore make a positive contribution to the local community.

Subject to conformance with other relevant material planning considerations, the principle of 12 new residential units on the site is deemed to be acceptable. This is supported by the NPPF which advocates making the most efficient use of land, particularly Brownfield land such as this. The scheme is therefore compliant with national and local policy.

Design & Character of Development

Policy GR2 of the local plan states that planning permission will only be granted where the proposal is sympathetic to the character and form of the site and the surrounding area in terms of the height, scale, form and grouping of buildings, and the visual, physical and functional relationship of the proposal to neighbouring properties, the street scene and to the locality generally.

To accommodate 12 units, it is proposed that the building be extended by erecting a two-storey side extension to the north facing elevation and first floor additions to the south facing side elevation and the rear.

The proposed two-storey side extension to the north facing elevation would introduce a gable apex feature to replicate and mirror the existing gable apex found on the left hand side of the front elevation (as viewed from the street). The introduction of this extension would assist in balancing up the symmetry of the front elevation and would be in keeping with the general style and appearance of the building whilst respecting its scale and proportions.

The proposed first floor side extension would be attached to the south facing side elevation and would be situated above an existing single storey flat roof projection that is set back from the front building line. As such, this extension would be set back and would have a hipped roof matching the pitches of the main roof slopes. The extension would respect the character and appearance of the building.

With respect to the street scene and neighbouring buildings, Shady Grove is fairly mixed in terms of the type and style of properties. The side extensions would have hipped roofs sloping away from the common boundaries and would help to soften the visual transition with the neighbouring properties either side. The apex gables feature would match the neighbouring apex fronted dwellings and would not appear incongruous in the street scene.

At the rear, a number of first floor gable projections would be added above the existing flat roof projections and would help to break up the massing of the rear elevation. It is considered that the removal of the existing flat roof additions would improve the rear of the property and as these would not be visible from the street, they would not materially harm the character or appearance of the area. As such, the design is considered to be acceptable and in compliance with local plan policy GR2.

Highways

Policy GR9 states that proposals for development requiring access, servicing or parking facilities will only be permitted where a number of criteria are satisfied. These include the adequate and safe provision for access and egress by vehicles, pedestrians and other road users to a public highway.

The proposal would make use of the existing vehicular access, which is situated towards the left hand side of the site frontage and runs alongside the common boundary shared with the neighbouring property no. 40 Shady Grove. The access would not be altered as it is already wide enough and achieves adequate visibility. The street is residential in character and speeds are low. The traffic generation would not be significant and therefore the proposed access arrangements are acceptable and would not give rise to highway safety issues.

The existing car park to the rear of the premises would be used to provide 17 no. off-street car parking spaces. This would equate to 1 space per unit with an additional 5 visitor spaces. Given that the proposed units would comprise of only 1 and 2 bed roomed units and having regard to the location of the development close to the town centre, this level of provision is deemed acceptable and would limit the displacement of any parking.

In the absence of any objection from the Strategic Highways Manager, the scheme is found to be acceptable in terms of highways and parking considerations. The requirements of policies GR9 of the local plan are therefore deemed to have been satisfied.

Public Open Space Provision

According to the Council's Supplementary Planning Guidance, developments of 7 or more dwellings will generate a requirement for public open space and children's play space. The necessary level of off-site provision is calculated by assessing the existing provision within an 800m radius against the population demand existing and arising from the new development. However, this scheme is only for 8x no. 1 bedroom and 4x no. 2 bedroom apartments. As such, they are not family dwellings and therefore the demands on local play space and open space will be low.

Given that this scheme is very small, it is deemed to be impractical to provide the open space on site and therefore consideration needs to be given to off-site works at a suitable local facility. A further update on this matter will be provided to Members when the Greenspaces officer has confirmed the exact requirements.

Residential Amenity

The Congleton Borough Council Supplementary Planning Document, 'Private Open Space in New Residential Developments', requires a distance of 21.3 metres between principal windows and 13.8 metres between a principal window and a flank elevation to maintain an adequate standard of privacy and amenity between residential properties.

In respect of the residential amenity afforded to neighbouring properties to the rear found on Wilbraham's Way and Wordsworth Way, the proposals would achieve the minimum interface distances. As such, these properties would not be materially affected by reason of loss of light, visual intrusion or direct overlooking.

Turning to the properties either side of the site, no's 40 and 42 Shady Grove, these properties do not contain any principal windows within their side elevations facing the site. Whilst the proposal would include principal windows at ground floor level within the side elevations facing these neighbours, the existing boundary treatments would be sufficient to prevent any direct overlooking at ground floor level.

The first floor extension to the southern side of the building would terminate part way down the side elevation so that it does not travel too far beyond the rear elevation of no. 40 to the south. The first floor would include 2 windows, but these would be non-principal and could therefore be obscured to avoid any direct overlooking. The proposal would not materially affect this property by reason of loss of light or visual intrusion. The proposed extension to the north facing elevation would not travel significantly beyond the front or rear elevations of no. 40 to the north and as such would not result in any material harm in terms of visual intrusion or loss of light. An application of the 45-degree test would support these conclusions.

The standard of accommodation would be adequate for these 1 and 2 bedroom units and an area of private amenity space would be provided to the rear of the building. As such, the proposals are deemed to comply with local plan policy GR6 and SPG2.

Other Considerations

An objector has expressed concern regarding the proposed bin storage to the rear of the property. The objector feels that the location of the bin storage will affect their amenity due to noise and smells. However, the proposed area would be screened and any noise or odours from bins would not be of an intensity that sustain a refusal of planning permission.

11. CONCLUSIONS AND REASONS FOR THE DECISION

The principle of the development is deemed acceptable as the site is sustainable, is no longer required for community use and would bring forward a vacant Brownfield site. In highways terms, the capacity of the local highway network is deemed sufficient to accommodate the vehicle movements associated with the scale of the proposed development and the level of parking provision is sufficient. The proposal is acceptable in design terms and as such the scheme would not harm the character or visual amenity of the area. There would be no adverse impact on neighbouring amenity and contributions towards public open space would offset the impacts of the development. The applicant has demonstrated general compliance with national and local guidance in a range of areas and the application is therefore recommended for approval.

12. RECOMMENDATION:

Approve subject to the following conditions:

Conditions

1. Standard 3 year time limit
2. Development to be carried out in accordance with approved plans
3. Materials to be submitted to and approved
4. Submission of details of boundary treatments
5. Details of boundary treatments submitted
6. Details of bin storage / waste strategy to be submitted
7. Hours restriction – construction including delivery vehicles
8. First floor windows in south facing elevation to be obscured and fixed shut below a height of 1.7 metres
9. Details of external lighting to be submitted
10. Car parking spaces to be laid out prior to first occupation

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