

Application No: 14/0024N

Location: CREWE HALL, WESTON ROAD, WESTON, CW1 6UZ

Proposal: Extension to existing building to provide 46 additional guest bedrooms, with associated external works.

Applicant: Philip King, Marston Hotels Ltd

Expiry Date: 21-Mar-2014

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve with Conditions

MAIN ISSUES

- Impact upon the Historic Park and Garden
- Impact on character and setting of Crewe Hall
- Impact on highways

1. REASON FOR REFERRAL

This application is referred to the Southern Planning Committee as it involves a development of over 1000sq.m

1. DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

Crewe Hall is a Grade I Jacobean Listed Building standing within an Historic Park and Garden in the open countryside about one mile from the settlement boundary of Crewe. There have been recent extensions on land to the west of the main building to form a restaurant, additional bedroom accommodation, and leisure (gym / spa etc.) facilities. The application relates to an extension to the modern part of the hotel on the north side of the existing complex. The site of the proposed extension is close to the recently constructed leisure centre and separated from the old hall by other modern development. The site of the extension is currently laid to lawns with some tree and shrub planting; and beyond that are trees, hedgerows and fields.

2. DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

This application seeks planning permission for an extension to the existing modern bedroom building. The site is located to the north west of Crewe Hall. The proposed extension would have an L-shaped form and would consist of 2 bedroom wings. A single storey extension would link to southern part of the proposed extension which would be two storeys in height. To the north-west would be a three storeys element to the proposed extension. A curved three storeys link element

would link the two parts of the proposed extension. The extension would serve an additional 46 guest bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms.

This development is identical to application 10/3860N which was approved but the permission has now expired.

3. RELEVANT HISTORY

13/4708N - Listed building consent for extension to existing spa facility – Approved 20th December 2013

13/4707N - Extension to existing hotel spa facility – Approved 20th December 2013

10/3861N - Listed Building Consent for Extension to Existing Building to Provide 46 Additional Guest Bedrooms with Associated External works – Approved 4th February 2011

10/3860N - Extension to Existing Building to Provide 46 Additional Guest Bedrooms with Associated External Works – Approved 22nd December 2010

10/1162N - Extension to Existing Spa Facility – Approved 17th June 2010

10/1161N – Listed Building Consent Extension to Existing Spa Facility - Approved 17th June 2010

P07/1353 - Listed Building Consent for Essential Repairs. Stone Repair or Partial Replacement Using Natural Stone Indent. Small Repairs to Masonry with Lime Restoration Mortar Limited Repointing With Lime Mortar - Approved 18th December 2007

P07/1267 - Listed Building Consent for Variation of Condition 6 on Permission P07/0630 to allow Lighting Columns 6m High - Approved 1st November 2007

P07/1266 - Variation of Condition 8 on Permission P07/0276 to allow Lighting Columns 6m High - Approved 1st November 2007

P07/0630 - LBC Two Storey Conference and Leisure Buildings and Associated Landscaping and Car parking - Approved 20th July 2007

P07/0619 - Listed Building application for pedestrian link and water tank - Approved 20th July 2007

P07/0618 - Listed Building Consent for bedroom accommodation - Approved 20th July 2007

P07/0293 - Planning permission for bedroom accommodation - Approved 3rd May 2007

P07/0289 - Planning permission for glazed link between bedroom accommodation and restaurant - Approved 20th April 2007

P07/0276 - Two storey conference and leisure building with landscaping and car parking - Approved 3rd May 2007

P06/1220 - Diversion of Existing Brook, Excavations to reinstate part of historic lake landscaping, planting and other works - Approved 7th April 2008

P06/1221 - Listed Building Consent for Alterations to Boat House - Approved 20th December 2006

P00/0191 - Listed Building Consent for extension for 101 bedrooms, facilities for health fitness and multi activities, restaurant, car parking and landscaping - Approved 27th July 2000

P00/0190 - Planning permission for extension for 101 bedrooms, facilities for health fitness and multi activities, restaurant, car parking and landscaping - Approved 27th July 2000

4. POLICIES

Local Plan policy

NE.2 – Open Countryside

BE.1 – Amenity

BE.2 – Design Standards

BE.3 – Access and Parking

BE.9 - Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extensions

BE.14 - Development Affecting historic parks and gardens
TRAN.9 - Car Parking Standards
S.11 - Leisure and Entertainment
RT.6 - Recreations Uses in the Open countryside

National policy

National Planning Policy Framework

Good Practice Guide on planning for Tourism

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy

Members are aware that the submission version of the new local plan is now in the public domain. This will be presented to the Strategic Planning Board and full Council at the end of February. Subject to this being accepted an update will be provided in relation to this issue.

5. CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)

The Strategic Highways and Transportation Manager: No comment or objection

English Heritage: The introduction of a built form into a part of the landscape which has been designated to be green space constitutes some harm to the significance of the registered park and garden and setting of Crewe Hall. However the proposed location and architectural style as proposed in line with the pre-application discussions is well established within the site in question and therefore will not have a substantial impact upon the significance of the heritage asset in question.

The inclusion of an appropriate landscape assessment as advised in pre-application advice is noted as positively informing the proposed works. The resultant proposal to visually screen the new intervention through the introduction of tree species is noted as a positive aspect of the proposal, however great care must be taken to ensure that the species selected are appropriate in the historic landscape. Similarly the levels must be carefully managed to avoid raising levels which has previously resulted in dieback in the surrounding trees.

In light of the above, English Heritage recommend that the LPA weigh the harm of the proposed works against the associated public benefits, giving great weight to the conservation of the heritage assets in question.

English Heritage urges the LPA to address the above issues and recommend that this application be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance and on the basis of the LPA's own expert conservation advice.

Victorian Society: Objects to the application on the following grounds;

- Crewe Hall is one of only ten Grade I-listed secular buildings in the former Crewe and Nantwich district. It is also on the English Heritage Register of Parks and Gardens of special historic interest. Essentially it is a complete Victorian mansion by EM Barry within a Jacobean shell. It is complemented by a Grade II* Listed stable block containing a tower by Edward Blore. The gardens north of the main house were laid out circa 1860 by WA Nesfield with a complicated

series of terraces, parterres and balustrades; while the planting has become degraded since then most of this scheme survives. Therefore it is deeply unfortunate that an industrial estate has been permitted to develop immediately to the east of the hall. It is even more unfortunate that a large series of hotel buildings which do not relate to the hall architecturally have been permitted in recent years immediately to the west of Crewe Hall. The cumulative result of these piecemeal developments is a landscape and setting that has been degraded, and the historic character of which has been eroded. As a result English Heritage has placed the park and garden on its Heritage at Risk Register

- The Victorian Society deeply regret any further degradation of the setting of this building. Any future developments should be of commensurate quality to that of the Grade I listed building, and should both respond to its character and respect its setting. The Victorian Society feels that the proposed development falls short of this standard. The vigorous articulation and massing of Crewe Hall is not reflected in the standardised blocks of the proposed extension. Crewe Hall's high quality materials - brick, stone, lead and slate - are not reflected in the palette of acrylic render, stainless steel and unspecified architectural masonry chosen for the proposed extension. Above all, the proposed development would impinge further on views from the Nesfield Garden, and would further degrade the historic character of the grounds. Planting screens of trees is not effective mitigation for this. Policy HE10 of PPS5 is clear on the importance that should be given to the effect of proposed developments on the setting of designated heritage assets. There are no benefits to the heritage elements of the estate proposed in these plans; instead there is further erosion of the architectural character of the estate.

- The owners of the hotel should be required to produce a long term Conservation Management Plan for the Hall and grounds in order to safeguard the future of the heritage assets. The Victorian Society feels that the current application would cause significant harm to the setting of one of the major historic buildings of Cheshire.

The Victorian Society urges the LPA to refuse this application.

Garden History Society: No comments received at the time of writing this report.

Cheshire Gardens Trust: No comments received at the time of writing this report.

South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce: Support the application.

Crewe Hall is a fantastic asset for South Cheshire and their plans to expand should be welcomed. The visitor and business tourism economy is important to this area and the economic regeneration plans will see an increased demand for hotel accommodation.

Cheshire East Visitor Economy Development Manager: Cheshire East is well positioned to access markets from other parts of Cheshire and surrounding areas, with the highest proportion of visitors being day visitors. Whilst Day visitors are welcome, overnight visitors spend more per head, putting more money into the local economy. They also create more job opportunities in the area, meaning Cheshire East Council's aim is to get our visitors to stay longer. It means giving reasons for day visitors to dwell longer or stay on into the evening and overnight, and encouraging conference delegates to stay longer or to return to enjoy Cheshire at their leisure.

Working with Marketing Cheshire, the sub-regional place marketing board, Cheshire East is promoting the region as a short breaks destination as well as a location for business tourism. This will be promoted through a series of thematic brands including Cheshire Market Towns and

Nantwich & South Cheshire. This means attracting more high-spending 'Cosmopolitans', and to meet their high standards and expectations, we need to improve the quality and choice of accommodation, including the 4 and 5 star accommodation offer; of which Crewe Hall Hotel is one.

Within Cheshire East Council's Visitor Economy Strategy, there is a strong focus on quality accommodation through supporting the development of tourism infrastructure, an improved environment and a focus on customer service to ensure a quality visitor experience. Also through encouraging and facilitating business sector development in areas such as accommodation, skills training and visitor welcome. There is a requirement to increase jobs directly related to the visitor economy and a key priority set out within the Cheshire East Council Visitor Economy Strategy is to 'Encourage investment in quality tourism product and services in Cheshire East to the benefit of jobs and economic growth'

The applicant is looking to develop the accommodation in line with the stated objectives of Cheshire East's visitor Economy Strategy. The accommodation is of a high standard and this extension will add to its attractiveness to visitors and business users. There is also potential for local traders in Crewe to benefit from the development. Finally it is a stated aim of turning day visitors into overnight visitors; this will increase the value of the visitor economy of Cheshire East. There is potential to widen to scope for activity to the rest of Cheshire East through www.cheshiremarkettowns.co.uk which highlights what is going on in the area at a particular time.

Crewe is based within the Cheshire East Visitor Economy brand of 'Nantwich & South Cheshire'. This means the area is actively promoted as a visitor destination in its own right. In the context of Marketing Cheshire's strategic vision for the sub-region there are a number of relevant points to note including:

- Identification of the need to improve the quality of the destination product offering in terms of accommodation and experiences.
- The key target markets in terms of profile, behaviour and spend for rural Cheshire include 'independent' market segments – especially traditionalists and cosmopolitans.
- Be fully established as a quality, short-break destination.

Quality accommodation for the business market, associated with other hotel facilities is a potential asset for the area. Crewe is a target area for wider economic growth, which will drive business tourism. The business market requires a high quality of establishment, which the application would support.

- Cheshire East STEAM figures for 2012 (latest figures available) show that the proportion of staying visitors is increasing showing a requirement for additional accommodation.
- Marketing Cheshire records show known bed stock in Cheshire East is almost 11,000 beds less than in Cheshire West.
- Of all recorded accommodation within Cheshire East, less than 1% is rated at 5 Star and only 21% is rated at 4 Star. However the 4 Star sector is predominately bed & breakfast accommodation, as there are only 9 hotels within Cheshire East that are classed as 4 Star.

Cheshire East Visitor Economy

- The annual STEAM (Scarborough Tourism Economic Activity Monitor) analysis of the area's visitor economy shows that in 2012 Cheshire East's tourism industry grew by 9% by comparison with the previous year and is now worth £689 million.
- Last year, visitors to Cheshire East spent over £69 million on accommodation, over £24 million on things to see and do, £206 million on shopping, and £112 million on food and drink with the self-catering sector in rural areas also showing significant growth.
- The tourism industry in Cheshire East now employs 9849 (FTE) people directly and indirectly, up 10.5% on the previous year,
- The area attracted well over 13 million visitors in 2012, a 9.4% increase on 2011.

Environmental Health: Contaminated land informative to be attached

6. OTHER REPRESENTATIONS

No representations received

7. PARISH COUNCIL

Crewe Green Parish Council: Supports this application.

Weston & Basford Parish Council: No objection in principle to this proposal and notes the conditions attached to the original Planning Permission 10/3860N.

Notwithstanding this, the addition of 46 bedrooms represents a significant increase in the number of guest rooms. Although the application states that there will be no increase in the numbers of parking spaces, it is logical to assume that the amount of traffic generated will increase as a result of the proposal. In this context the Local Planning Authority is requested to satisfy itself that the existing access on to Weston Road is adequate, given the fact that this is already difficult to negotiate, particularly for right turning traffic leaving the Hall, on account of the high volume of traffic travelling to and from Crewe linking to the A500 / Junction 16 on M6.

8. APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Design and Access Statement (Produced by Brocklehurst Architects)

Planning Statement (Produced by Rollinson Planning Consultancy Limited)

Business Case for the Proposed Extension (Produced by the HIA Hotel Investment)

Historic Landscape Appraisal (Produced by AMEC)

Arboricultural Report; Impact Assessment & Method Statement (Produced by Crown Consultants)

These documents are available to view on the Planning file

10. OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of Development

The site is located within the Open Countryside where according to Policy NE.2 only development which is essential for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, outdoor recreation, essential works undertaken by public service authorities or statutory undertakers, or for other uses appropriate to a rural area will be permitted.

However, Policy RT6 states that development proposals for recreational uses in the open countryside, as defined on the proposals map, will be permitted provided that, inter alia, they do not harm the character or appearance of the countryside; they do not harm sites of historic or archaeological importance; they can be integrated with existing visitor attractions in the borough or in the vicinity. Proposals should re-use existing buildings wherever possible. Any new buildings or structures should be sited close to any existing buildings and should blend into the surrounding landscape in design, siting, materials and landscape.

The proposal involves the extension of an existing hotel and leisure complex. It will therefore be integrated with an existing visitor attraction. The new build elements will be situated adjacent to the existing buildings. As a result there will be no encroachment beyond the curtilage of the hotel. The site is located within close proximity to Crewe Hall which is a Grade I Listed Building and is located within the Crewe Hall Historic Park and Garden. The impact of the development upon these historical assets will be discussed below.

The 'Good Practice Guide on Planning for Tourism' remains extant and states that:

'Tourism, in all its forms, is of crucial importance to the economic, social and environmental well-being of the whole country. The planning system has a vital role to play in terms of facilitating the development and improvement of tourism in appropriate locations'

The NPPF advises that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development. At paragraph 14 it advises that development should be approved, unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

Therefore having regard to the provisions of Policy RT6 and the NPPF, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with the other criteria set out in Policy RT6. Specifically, the proposal should blend into the surrounding landscape in design, siting, materials and landscaping; it should not harm sites of nature conservation; there must be safe vehicular access to the site; the access roads must be suitable for the likely traffic generation; car parking provision should be in accordance with adopted standards; and it should be accessible by a range of means of transport. These issues are considered in more detail below.

Design and impact upon the setting of the Listed Buildings at Crewe Hall and the Historic Park and Garden

Crewe Hall is noted for its Grade II registered landscape featuring mid C19 formal gardens by William Andrews Nesfield which are associated with the Grade I listed country house and the remains of a landscaped park on which Lancelot Brown, William Emes, John Webb and Humphry Repton are all said to have worked.

The proposed extensions would be attached to the rear of the recent modern extensions which are themselves located to the rear of the Crewe Hall. The location of the proposed extensions will serve to minimise their immediate visual impact upon Crewe Hall.

It should also be noted that there are changes in land level between Crewe Hall and the modern extensions (the extensions are constructed at a lower level). The proposed removal of the current made ground/demolition rubble will enable the overall bulk, massing and height of the extension to be constructed at a lower level and to be less prominent in relation to Crewe Hall as a result.

Although some trees would be removed to facilitate the proposed development the proposed landscaping scheme together with the remaining trees would form a screen from the Nesfield Garden.

It is therefore considered that the visual impact of the proposed extension would not readily impact upon the hall, the existing complex of extensions, the historic park and garden and the Nesfield Garden. It will however be important to fully ensure that the landscape works are conditioned and their implementation monitored, together with the recommendations in the management issues section of their landscape appraisal.

The proposal to follow the established architectural style, materials and colours of the current extensions is the most appropriate approach in this context, given the location of the proposed buildings in relation to the recent modern extensions.

The footprint of the new extension has been staggered back, to retain more of the open setting between the new development and the Listed Building, which was requested as part of the pre application negotiations.

The proposed extension would be set down at the same level as the existing extensions, to ensure that they would be visually integrated and less prominent. The window design would also be visually integrated, with the design of the new extensions having less glazing than some of the existing recent extensions. This will serve to present a more sympathetic face to these rear elevations.

The existing ancillary pipes and vents (plant) to the current extension closest to the proposed new extension (east elevation) will be integrated visually by close board screening in order to improve the overall presence of the new extensions.

In this case English Heritage have stated that the development will not have a substantial impact upon the heritage asset and it is necessary to consider the development in line with Paragraph 134 of the NPPF which states that:

'Where a development proposal 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 proposal, including securing its optimum viable use'

In this case there is considered to be public/economic benefits associated with this application as identified within the South Cheshire Chamber of Commerce consultation response which would outweigh the less than substantial harm.

Amenity

There are no residential properties within close proximity to the site. As a result the proposed development would not have a detrimental impact upon residential amenity.

Highways

The views of Weston & Basford Parish Council have been noted. However the Strategic Highways Manager has been consulted and has raised no objection to the proposed development. As a result it is considered that the proposed development would not raise any significant highway safety/parking implications.

11.CONCLUSIONS

In summary, the proposal involves the redevelopment and expansion of an existing tourist/leisure and recreational facility in the open countryside, which is supported, in principle by the provisions of Policy RT6 of the adopted Local Plan and guidance contained within the NPPF. The proposed development will not have a detrimental impact upon the character and setting of the Grade I Listed Crewe Hall and will not detract from the character and appearance the open countryside or the Historic Park and Garden. It has been demonstrated that the proposal is acceptable in terms of its impact on Trees and Landscape, Ecology, Residential Amenity and Highway Safety and it therefore complies with Local Plan Policies NE.2 Open Countryside, NE.5 Nature Conservation and Habitats, NE.9 Protected Species, NE.20 Flood Prevention, BE1 Amenity, BE2 Design Standards, BE3 Access and Parking, BE4 Drainage Utilities and Resources, BE.9 Listed Buildings: Alterations and Extensions, BE.14 Development Affecting historic parks and gardens, TRAN 9 Car Parking Standards, RT6 Recreational Uses in the Open Countryside and RT7 Visitor Accommodation. Therefore in the absence of any other material considerations and having due regard to all other matters raised, the proposal is considered to be acceptable and accordingly is recommended for approval.

12. RECOMMENDATIONS

APPROVE subject to the following conditions

- 1. Standard time 3 years**
- 2. Materials to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in writing**
- 3. Tree protection measures to be carried out in accordance with the submitted Arboricultural Report; Impact Assessment & Method Statement**
- 4. Details of improvements to the surface of the paths around the site to be submitted to the Local Planning Authority and approved in writing**
- 5. Details of landscaping to be submitted prior to the commencement of development. The landscaping scheme shall include additional shrub beds with large ornamental shrubs to replace those being removed as part of the building works and a proposed beech hedge to separate the proposed extension and Nesfield Garden which shall be supplied as a 'ready grown' hedge**
- 6. Implementation and maintenance of the approved landscaping scheme**
- 7. The development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans only**
- 8. Prior to any commencement of works between 1st March and 31st August in any year, a detailed survey is required to check for nesting birds on the application site**

9. Details of existing and proposed levels to be provided prior to the commencement of development

In the event of any changes being needed to the wording of the Committee's decision (such as to delete, vary or add conditions/informatives/planning obligations or reasons for approval/refusal) prior to the decision being issued, the Planning and Place Shaping Manager has delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chair of the Southern Planning Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.



