

Application No: 16/4136M

Location: County Sessions House, TOFT ROAD, KNUTSFORD, WA16 9ED

Proposal: Change of use from former crown court and jail to hotel and restaurant use class C1 and A3, alterations and extensions to provide 42 hotel rooms

Applicant: Mr P Heywood

Expiry Date: 22-Nov-2016

SUMMARY

The site is within Knutsford Town Centre where the uses proposed along with the extensions are acceptable in this location. The site is sustainably located within the town and the proposals represent an efficient use of an important heritage asset.

The proposal will see a boost in hotel accommodation in the area and the economic benefits this will bring particularly with overnight visits to the area. The proposed restaurant, will increase the choice locally for restaurants, and provides competition in the local area. The uses of hotel and restaurant are traditionally compatible, and the proposals are not likely to have a detrimental impact on the highway network or on residential properties.

Following effective pre-application discussions, a suitable scheme was submitted where various options were explored. It is considered that the final option will have lowest level of impact on the Listed Building and is suitable and acceptable in this setting. Planning conditions are required to ensure that the development is acceptable in planning terms.

On balance, it is considered that the proposal represents sustainable development and accords with the development plan and national planning policy and guidance. The benefits of the scheme far outweigh the dis-benefits of granting approval. Therefore for the reasons mentioned above the application is recommended for approval.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions

REASON FOR REPORT

The application has been called in to Northern Planning committee by Councillor Tony Dean for the following reason: *This is a major change to the most dominant historic building in Knutsford, which is also Grade II * listed. It must be properly scrutinised by members.*

PROPOSAL

The application is a full planning application with accompanying Listed Building Consent application for the former Knutsford County Court, Sessions House. The application proposes the conversion of the existing building which is Grade II* listed, and extension of the building for a hotel and conference facility. The bedrooms associated with the hotel will be located entirely within the proposed extension to the rear of the building and the small extension to the first floor of the northern wing of Sessions House. The application proposes 42 hotel rooms, with use classes C1 and A3 as a restaurant will also be located at the site.

The proposed extension will be located to the rear of the building and the eaves will be no higher than the existing parapet, the extension will be 3 storeys in height.

The extension will face the Booths supermarket and car park to the rear. The main conversion will include the grand hall with bar as a function space which was the original court 1, the larger of the two courtrooms within Sessions House. The restaurant will be in the original court 2 with central bar area, a number of the smaller rooms within the original building will be retained and will function in various roles for the hotel and function room capacity, such as toilets, store rooms and kitchens. The internal structure of the building will be largely unchanged with some later additions such as partition walls removed to allow the original structure of the listed building to be revealed as original.

The extension to the building will be connected to the rear of the main building behind where courtroom 2 was located. The extension will be connected with a glass link which will run the full width of the rear of the building, and will form a glass corridor. The height of the link will be full height where it adjoins the extension, and allows for stairwell and lift access to the upper floors.

There will be a glass corridor fixed to the rear of the building to allow circulation across the rear of the building. This glazed link will extend above the ground floor windows.

An extension is proposed above the rear part of the northern wing of the building, at first floor level to provide bedroom accommodation. This will be set back from the front elevation of the building.

Save for the rear extension and first floor extension to the building along with the glazed link and corridor, the original building will remain largely unaffected by the proposals externally, with the majority of the proposals utilising the internal spaces within Sessions House. Car parking to the site will be provided by the existing car parking area to the front of the building, where 30 car parking spaces will be retained. There will be 4 disabled car parking spaces within the existing courtyard to the side/rear of the building. This will allow for level access into the building, which cannot be achieved using the front elevation.

A small area of the building is proposed to be demolished as part of the proposals. This is the cage area and flat roof office to the rear of the building, the area covers around 84cu.m and was constructed around 1986. This demolition will allow for the rear extension to be constructed.

The proposed extension will have the design of the jail previously located behind the court buildings. The jail was demolished and sat where the car park to Booths supermarket is located today.

Overall the proposal will bring back into active use a redundant Grade II* listed building, for daytime and evening use within the centre of Knutsford.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site extends to approximately 3360sq.m and is occupied by the former crown court and jail building Sessions House. Sessions House is a Grade II* Listed Building which was built between 1817 and 1819 designed by George Money Penny.

The building originally had the jail behind which was demolished. The building has the existing cobbled car park to the front with courtyard and service areas to the rear. The façade of the front elevation is windowless constructed from buff sandstone with main front door and steps leading up to it. The rear of the building is brick built with traditional windows and has had various additions, although most of the southern wing of the rear elevation remains as original.

The location within the town centre means that it has varying built development surrounding it. It has the Booths Car Park immediately to the rear with the supermarket beyond, and fronts onto Toft Road a main thoroughfare through the town.

The building is in a very sustainable location within Knutsford, there are good pedestrian links to the site with a pedestrian crossing immediately at the entrance to the site linking to the main town centre area, along with good accessibility by public transport and private car. It is intended that the venue will host a number of events including weddings and functions, attracting visitors to the area. The town is within the catchment of Manchester Airport giving access for international visitors.

RELEVANT HISTORY

44176P, Upgrading of property, Approved, 10-Mar-1986

03/1840P, internal alterations to include demolition of modern partitions and insertion of new partitions. existing rooflights to be replaced with modern conservation rooflights (listed building consent), Approved, 15-Sep-2003

04/0761P, installation of new handrail to judge's entrance stairway, Approved, 12-May-2004

16/1549M, Investigative work and internal alterations, enabling works for subsequent LBC/planning application for change of use, Approved, 20-May-2016

16/3690M Listed Building Consent for Installation of Commemorative Blue Plaque, Approved, 26-Sep-2016

16/4135M, Listed building consent for change of use from former crown court and jail to hotel and restaurant use class C1 and A3, alterations and extensions to provide 42 hotel rooms, not yet determined.

16/5088M, Advertisement Consent for the erection of 4 flagpoles, not yet determined.

NATIONAL & LOCAL POLICY

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.

The Development Plan for Cheshire East currently comprises the saved policies from the Congleton Borough (January 2005), Crewe and Nantwich (February 2005) and Macclesfield Local Plan (January 2004).

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan Policy:

The site is located within the settlement boundary of Macclesfield, on an employment site.

Therefore the relevant Local Plan policies are considered to be: -

Built Environment Policies:

Policy BE1: Design Guidance

BE2: Preservation of historic fabric

BE3: Conservation Areas

BE4: Design criteria in Conservation Areas

BE15: Listed Buildings

BE16: Setting of Listed Buildings

BE17: Preservation of Listed Buildings

BE18: Design Criteria for Listed Buildings

BE19: Changes of Use for Listed Buildings

T5: Provision for cyclists

KTC1: Conservation of Historic Character

KTC2: Design Guidance

KTC3: Design Guidance

DC1: New Build

DC2: Extensions and Alterations

DC3: Amenity

DC6: Circulation and Access

DC54: Restaurants, Cafes and Hot Food Takeaway

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy – Proposed changes version public consultation ended 19th April 2016.

The following are considered relevant material considerations as indications of the emerging strategy:

Strategic Priority 1 - Promoting economic prosperity by creating conditions for business growth

MP1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

PG1 Overall Development Strategy

PG2 Settlement hierarchy

SD1 Sustainable Development in Cheshire East

SD2 Sustainable Development Principles
EG4 Tourism
SE1 Design
SE2 Efficient Use of Land
SE7 The Historic Environment
CO4 Travel Plans and Transport Assessments

The National Planning Policy Framework

The National Planning Policy Framework came into effect on 27 March 2012, and replaces the advice provided in Planning Policy Guidance Notes and Statements. The aim of this document is to make the planning system less complex and more accessible, to protect the environment and to promote sustainable growth. Local planning authorities are expected to “plan positively” and that there should be a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Since the NPPF was published, the saved policies within the Macclesfield Borough Council Local Plan are still applicable but should be weighted according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF. The Local Plan policies outlined above are consistent with the NPPF and therefore should be given full weight.

Of particular relevance are paragraphs:

14. Presumption in favour of sustainable development.
34-36. Promoting sustainable transport
56-66 Requiring good design
69 Promoting healthy communities
Part 12 Conserving and enhancing the historic environment
186-187. Decision taking
196-197 Determining applications
203-206 Planning conditions and obligations

Supplementary Planning Documents:

Supplementary Planning Guidance provides a more detailed explanation of how strategic policies of the Development Plan can be practically implemented. The following SPGs are relevant and have been included in the Local Development Scheme, with the intention to retain these documents as 'guidance' for local planning purposes.

Other Material Considerations

- Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy 2016-2020
- Ministerial Statement – Planning for Growth (March 2011)
- Cheshire East Design Guide – Consultation Version 2016

CONSULTATIONS (External to planning)

Highways – no objections

Environmental Protection Comments - No objections subject to noise mitigation scheme condition and informative, condition for site specific dust management plan, 1 electric vehicle car charging point, and travel plan.

Cheshire East Visitor Economy team – Cheshire East’s visitor economy is worth £842m per year; employing over 11,000 fte’s. It is an important economic sector that contributes to jobs, growth and prosperity, both in its own right and in its contribution to Cheshire East’s ‘Quality of Place’. The ambition is focussed around continuing to maximise growth of the visitor economy, whilst ensuring greater prosperity across the widest number of communities that will lead to greater wellbeing for both residents and visitors. Tourism can be a force for good both in economic terms but also as an essential contributor to the excellent quality of life and place Cheshire East offers. This is a key factor not only in decisions to visit but also in decisions to settle and to invest.

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 and wedding guests to stay longer or to return to enjoy Cheshire at their leisure.

Working with Marketing Cheshire, the sub-regional place marketing board, Cheshire East Council is promoting the region as a short breaks destination as well as a location for business tourism and weddings. The Cheshire East Visitor Economy Strategy (2016-2020) articulates strategic themes that help to guide the identification of priorities in seeking to maximise the contribution of the visitor economy; including investment in quality hotels. 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.

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’*

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 experiences.
- The key target markets in terms of profile, behaviour and spend for Cheshire include ‘independent’ market segments – especially traditionalists and cosmopolitans.
- Marketing Cheshire say that developments such as County Sessions House require significant private sector investment. Their delivery will make a massive statement about Cheshire as a place to invest. Cheshire is passionate about quality – quality of facilities, experience and service. We want quality to define the experience at every stage in the visitor’s journey. Quality is not about price – it is about exceeding visitor expectations.

Cheshire East Visitor Economy - Volume and Value

Cheshire East STEAM figures for 2015 (latest figures available)

	STEAM 2015	INCREASE SINCE 2009
Economic activity of visitor economy in Cheshire East	£842m	54.8%
Visitor Numbers to Cheshire East	15.23m	29.4%
Visitor Days spent in Cheshire East	16.87m	28.3%
Total fte Employment in Visitor Economy in CE	11,100	28.9%
Economic Impact in Serviced Accommodation	£180m	45.4%

East Cheshire Attractions

County Sessions House falls within an area promoted as 'Cheshire's Peak District', which is supported by both Marketing Cheshire and Cheshire East Council. The area includes tourism hotspots such as Knutsford, Macclesfield & Congleton and attractions such as Tatton Park, Lyme Park, Jodrell Bank, Capesthorpe Hall and Gawsworth Hall as well as the many and varied walking and cycling routes.

Relevant Statistics

- Hotel occupancy is a very good indicator of money directly going in to the visitor economy, and this has also been achieving strong growth of over 10% since 2012 against a UK average of 3.1% for the same period. In addition to this, money earned from each hotel room has also increased significantly up from £51.68 in 2012 to £58.94 in 2015.
- 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.

Knutsford Conservation and Heritage Group -

We would request please that any original setts that are uncovered in the course of the works to the building be preserved and if possible, re-laid.

The glazed corridor to the rear is fine in principle but no details are provided and this appears as simple lines on the drawings. Concerns over level of detail.

Concerns over levels of car parking, design of proposed extension and glazed link.

United Utilities - No objections raised to the development subject to foul and surface water draining on separate systems, and a sustainable drainage hierarchy.

Archaeology - Although outside Knutsford's Area of Archaeological Potential (as defined in the Local Plan of the former Macclesfield Borough Council), does have some archaeological interest as the court building lay in front of Knutsford's gaol which was constructed in the early 19th century and was demolished in the 1930s.

The application is supported by a Heritage Statement which summarises the history of the court and gaol but the study concentrates on the historic built environment and does not consider the archaeological implications of the development. It does, however, include a number of maps including the tithe map of 1848, which appears to show the original layout of the gaol, and a map of 1900, which shows the site after the construction of various extensions. The map evidence is, however, not entirely clear; in particular 25" and 6" Ordnance Survey mapping of the area in the later 19th century does not, in most instances, show the detail of the prison buildings. The only exception to this is the first edition 6" map of c 1880 and this does appear to show buildings within the footprint of the proposed extension.

It is not suggested that the evidence presented above is sufficient to generate an archaeological objection to the development or to require further pre-determination work but it is advised that, if planning permission is granted, it would be reasonable to require a programme of archaeological mitigation. This should be focussed on the footprint of the proposed extension and should involve archaeological oversight of the initial ground clearance and reduction works with provision for the identification and recording of any structures that are revealed. A report would also be required and the work may be secured by condition.

Flood Risk Management Team - The site is located in flood zone 1; however, there is some surface water flood risk in the area of the proposed extension to the existing building, no objections subject to conditions.

Historic England – original comments

The Session House, Knutsford was built in 1817-19 to the designs of George Money Penny. Money Penny was an experienced designer of courts and prison buildings, having previously completed a number of other complexes. He is believed to have been heavily influenced by Thomas Harrison's Shire Hall, Chester (Chester Crown Court), which was built in 1788-1820 and recognised as an important example of Greek revival.

The form of the architecture of the Sessions House reflects its sombre use, presenting a windowless elevation, in buff sandstone, to the high street and using dominating, yet simple ornamentation. To the rear of the building, the elevation formally facing the k-shaped Gaol range is formed from orange brick, with symmetrical and imposing sash windows. The whole building adds considerably to streetscene within which it sits and is one of the town's most significant buildings, both architecturally and historically. Internally, the building has been subjected to alteration, reflecting the changing needs of its former use.

However, the original planned form of the building is still clearly evident and most alterations have been in the form of additions as opposed to demolitions. As a consequence, for example, the main courtroom retains its ornate plasterwork and original stone steps which helped to create the sense of hierarchy of individuals, so important to the atmosphere of the court. Knutsford Sessions House is identified as being of considerable national importance,

reflected in its designation as a grade II* listed building, placing it in the top 5% of England's buildings.

The building is no longer used as a court facility, having been shut in 2010 and is now in private ownership. It is intended that the building will be converted to a conference facility, restaurant and hotel. Both the conference facility and restaurant will be housed in the existing building; however the provision of a hotel will require the construction of additional accommodation on the site, mainly to the rear of the building. We very much welcome the reuse of this significant and high quality building. The proposed plans show that, on the whole, the intended use could be accommodated within the building with limited harm to the significance of the building, suggesting it is a use that the structure lends itself to. Whilst more intensive alterations are proposed to the upper floors, a good percentage of the original floorplan has already been lost, with lightweight temporary partitions added and as a result the impact of the current proposals would also be minimal. We are therefore satisfied that the proposed works are generally well considered and would sustain and enhance the heritage asset (NPPF 131).

With regard to the proposed hotel block to the south east of the site, the location of the new extension is felt to be appropriate as it will obscure an elevation of limited significance, forming the wall of the former cell blocks. There is also historical precedence for development to the rear of the court as a whole Gaol complex was previously located there. We are also of the view that the proposed design solution for this section of the building is appropriate, reflecting the window pattern of the former cell buildings, but in an evidentially modern manner. The overall scale and mass of the new build is also considered to be acceptable.

In order to provide the required number of rooms it is considered necessary for the whole scheme to be viable, it is proposed to construct a two storey extension on the roof of the former cell blocks. We believe that the structure would be visible on the front elevation of the building, however, due to the fact the rooms would be set back and that this section of the complex is located at a distance from the principle court building, we have concluded that the proposed extension would have a minimal impact on the heritage asset and as a result the principle of an extension of the depicted mass is believed to be appropriate.

The only outstanding matter related to the desire to erect a glazed extension to the rear of the building to allow uninterrupted movement between the two ends of the building. We advised that further justification was required to demonstrate that the proposal was necessary and that no alternative options were available. This has now been provided in the form of a circulations option appraisal. We are satisfied that this document demonstrates that all alternative options would result in a greater level of harm occurring to the significance of the asset, than the glazed external circulation space. It is also acknowledged that the Sessions House has been designed to restrict movement around the building and in forming an evidentially modern rear extension, the significance of the planned form of the building will be best sustained. However, the proposed rear extension would have an impact on the appreciation of the symmetry of the rear of the building, which is of evident quality in its own right and therefore would cause some harm to the buildings significance.

This harm is considered to be low, but as a result the application should be considered against paragraph 134 of the National Planning Policy Framework, as well as paragraph 131 which requires local planning authorities to take account of the desirability of

putting heritage assets to viable uses consistent with their conservation and the positive contribution they can make to sustainable communities, including their economic viability. In conclusion, we believe that need for the construction of a glazed rear extension has been sufficiently justified and therefore we raise no objection to the proposals.

Recommendation

The application should be determined in line with national planning policy and your own specialist advisors.

VIEWS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

Knutsford Town Council

Concerns over the design of the building, provision of car parking, impact on the listed building, lack of information on the plans.

No objection to the principle of the re-use of the building for a hotel and restaurant.

REPRESENTATIONS

2 representations have been made with regard to the design of the extension and the lack of car parking with the proposals. Concerns over the work already undertaken to the listed building.

APPLICANT'S SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- Design and access statement
- Heritage Statement

APPRAISAL

Key Issues

- Principle of development
- Sustainability
- Heritage Assets
- Protected Species
- Trees
- Highways
- Accessibility
- Flood Risk
- Amenity
- Leisure and Tourism
- Employment
- Heritage Asset
- Sustainability Conclusions
- Representations
- Recommendation

Principle of development

The site is Sessions House a Grade II* Listed Building located within the centre of Knutsford which is a Key Service Centre as defined in the emerging Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy

where policy PG2 states that development of a scale, location and nature that recognises and reinforces the distinctiveness of the town will be supported to maintain the vitality and viability of the centres.

The application proposes the change of use of the building which is redundant, a former court building. The change of use of existing buildings is an acceptable form of development within town centres, providing the proposal is acceptable taking into account all other material considerations.

The proposed change of use is for a hotel and restaurant use. It is considered that this use within a busy town location is acceptable and will contribute to the vitality and viability of the town. The proposal will increase the number of bedrooms locally for visitors, and provide an independent restaurant. The National Planning Policy Framework and the emerging CELPS encourages traditional town centre uses such as bars and restaurants to increase competition between businesses and to provide greater choices for residents and visitors. These types of uses also inject vitality into an area throughout the day and evening, improving natural surveillance.

As the building is currently vacant, with the empty car parking area to the front, this will reintroduce an active frontage, increasing vitality and improving the security of the area by increasing pedestrian activity.

It is considered that the principle of bringing a redundant building back into an active town centre appropriate use, is an acceptable form of development within this town centre location.

Sustainability

Sustainability is the golden thread running through the National Planning Policy Framework, and proposals for sustainable development should be approved without delay. There are three strands to sustainability, social, economic and environmental.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

Heritage Assets

The site is located within the Knutsford Conservation Area and is a Grade II* Listed Building which is disused.

The application was subject to extensive pre-application discussions with both the Council's Conservation Officer and Historic England regarding the suitability of both the change of use and proposed interventions to accommodate the change of the use. An application was approved for investigative works in early 2016. These works have revealed much of the historic fabric and layout. The proposal seeks to retain the original layout and make good harmful changes where they have occurred, particularly to historic plaster work in both court rooms 1 and 2.

The proposal for the extension has been reconsidered during the application process to provide further information and justification relating to the suitability of the glazed extension in particular. A further report and set of drawings illustrate further consideration has been given to a number of options which removed the need for the glazed external link. These proposals are considered to be more harmful to important fabric of the building which would have an adverse impact on the significance of the heritage asset.

Therefore, the extension, whilst causing some harm, which is considered to be low, is the most sensitive approach to the conversion of the building for reuse. Limited intervention to the listed building is required as a result, but will result in a larger glazed extension to the rear. One of the elements of significance lies in the symmetrical design to the rear; this will be interrupted by the proposed new elements. However, the light weight, high quality glazed extension will allow for views through to the main building and will be fixed by limited means.

The brick extension is sensitive in its scale and massing to the main building, and is consistent with the change in material and design of the main building, and is acceptable due to the presence of additional built form, historically sited to the rear of the building, the Gaol. The extension will not fix to the main building, except for in two small areas, a void will sit between the extension and the rear of the building, allowing clear appreciation and ability to read old and new. This approach is considered sensitive and acceptable.

With regards to the internal changes, the layout and key features of the building will be retained and where necessary be repaired and or relocated within the building. The main area of harm is the temporary loss in the hierarchy of court room 1, which due to new floor levels will not be tangible, but will remain in-situ underneath the new elements. The canopy and panelling around the judge's seat will remain and provide a sense of focus to the room as would have been the case historically. The panelling within court room 1 will be reused within the building, and court room 2 will reuse panelling for separation features. This is also positive, whilst not a contemporary feature to the building, as a later addition it has significance and therefore justifiable retention value, and requires reuse or storage if not able to be reused.

Overall whilst some harm has been identified, it is considered that this is not substantial, and a number of alternative options have been explored, and this proposal is the least harmful. Both the Conservation Officer and Historic England are supportive of the application and the re-use and extension of the building. It is considered that the proposed extension is high quality and allows the original fabric of the building to be read, and reflects the previous Gaol which was located behind the site. The proposed extension will not have a detrimental impact on the Conservation Area, as very little of the extensions will be visible from the front of the premises, in addition to this, the height and the massing of the proposed extension is in proportion, and from the rear will sit alongside the traditional building. The proposals to the rear will not detract from the overall setting of the building within the Conservation Area.

It is therefore considered that subject to suitable conditions and inspection of materials on site, the proposal meets the requirements of the NPPF paragraph 134 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'

It is considered that the proposed use and bringing the building back into a viable re-use which does not require substantial harm to the original fabric of the Listed Building or its setting, is in the wider public benefit along with bringing the building back into the public realm. These factors outweigh the less-than substantial harm caused to the Listed Building.

The application is accompanied by a Listed Building Consent application, which will be processed following the determination of this application accordingly.

Protected Species

The building although not in use, has had substantial works to the interior taking place over the course of recent months, following listed building consent for works to remove features such as false floors and partition walls which were added to the building as part of modern works when the building was used as a courthouse. The works taking place are noisy and are spread throughout the building. The building has remained in good condition externally and is watertight and sealed. The building is in a busy town centre location with the main Toft Road to the front and the Booths supermarket car park to the rear. It is therefore considered that due to these factors, the building is unlikely to support protected species.

Trees

There are no trees directly affected by the works proposed, some trees are around the side boundaries of the site, however these are unaffected by the proposals, therefore there is not considered to be a detrimental impact on trees.

Highways

The application is for the redevelopment of the County Sessions House in Knutsford, the building would be extended to provide a 42 bedroom hotel that includes a restaurant and bar.

The existing access from Toft Road is to be used as primary vehicular access to the site, there are 30 car parking spaces located in front of the building and 3 to rear. Servicing would also take place using the existing access and turning space for refuse collection and coaches has been provided within the site.

The level of parking provision is below the CEC standards by 9 spaces as 1 space per bedroom would normally be required. However, this site is well located in regards to access to sustainable modes and in these circumstances the reduced parking can be considered acceptable.

The applicant has provided traffic generation figures likely to arise for the hotel development and in the traditional peak hours this would be 10 trips, peak traffic generation from hotel in normally during off peak periods such as the evening and I consider that the impact from the proposals would have a minimal traffic impact.

Accessibility

The County Sessions Hotel is located in the centre of Knutsford and does have good access to local services and is within easy walking distance of the railway station and bus stops. The site is well located in terms of accessibility.

The site has previously been used as a Court house and has some traffic generation associated with it, the application uses the existing access to the site with some

improvements. In highway terms, the size of the hotel having 42 rooms is relatively modest and does not result in high levels of traffic generation in a busy section of Toft Road.

Flood Risk

It is important that new developments are not at risk from flooding, or that the development itself would not exacerbate flooding in an area the application site is within flood zone 1; however, there is some surface water flood risk in the area of the proposed extension to the existing building. The flood risk team has raised no objections to the proposal subject to suitably worded conditions. United Utilities have raised no objections to the proposals.

It is concluded therefore that the proposals accord with policy DC17 of the MBLP and the NPPF.

Amenity

In order for the proposals to be acceptable, it is important that they do not have a detrimental impact on the amenities of existing residents and that the development is not located within an area which would harm the amenities of future guests, or the proposals would not cause harm by overlooking, loss of light or loss of privacy to existing residents. Due to the town centre location of the proposals, there are very few neighbouring residents directly affected by the proposals. Therefore it is not considered that the proposals would have a detrimental impact on residents.

Environmental Health has commented on the application and has stated that the site sits within an airport noise contour for Manchester International Airport and is therefore affected by aircraft noise. It is within the following contours:

- 54 - 57 dB LAeq (16 hour, daytime)
- 48-51 LAeq (8 hour, night-time)

In hotels it is desirable to avoid intrusive noise, both airborne and impact in bedrooms, especially when occupants are sleeping (typically assumed to be at night-time). Intrusive noise can arise from other rooms or uses within the building, from external sources through facades and from internal building services, including heating, ventilation and air conditioning plant.

Consideration should be given to adjacencies, both horizontal and vertical, between bedrooms, and between bedrooms and rooms used for other purposes. Particular attention should be paid to noise from corridors, door closers, adjoining bathrooms, stairwells, lifts and lift lobbies.

In order to ensure that aircraft noise is mitigated as much as possible, a noise mitigation scheme is to be submitted as part of a condition. With this measure in place, it is considered that the proposals would not have a detrimental impact on the guests of the hotel.

Environmental Health has commented on air quality at the site, Knutsford Town has one Air Quality Management Area, and as such the cumulative impact of developments in the area is likely to make the situation worse, unless managed. Therefore a travel plan is required to ensure that alternative travel methods, such as public transport are promoted, in addition to this one electric vehicle charging point is required. With regard to the construction phase, a

dust management plan is required to ensure that the construction of the proposal does not have a detrimental impact on air quality.

It is considered that the proposals would not have a detrimental impact on neighbour amenity or on the amenity of the hotel guests, subject to suitable conditions with regard to noise and air quality. Therefore the proposals accord with policy DC3 of the MBLP.

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

Leisure and Tourism

The application proposes a hotel and function venue along with a restaurant. The proposal will include 42 bedrooms as part of the hotel element. The site is within Knutsford which attracts visitors as an historic market town with shops and restaurants and for its links to Tatton Park. The site is well located for international visitors due to its close proximity to Manchester Airport and good transport links.

Cheshire East Council places great emphasis on the tourist economy, with particular emphasis as set out in the Visitor Economy Strategy 2016-2020 published in April 2016 including hotel development, food and drink and wedding venues as its priorities, which this development provides in Knutsford. The visitor economy in Cheshire East is worth £876 million in 2016 and is expected to rise to 1.076bn by 2020, and overnight visitors are three times more valuable to the economy than day visitors.

In particular the strategy aims to '*significantly increase leisure and business visits from international visitors*' in three locations within Cheshire East; Jodrell, Tatton and Knutsford. This proposal will provide a sustainably located hotel within the centre of Knutsford providing linked trips to other restaurants, shops and services in the town and public transport, by being within close proximity to the railway station with regular services to Manchester and Chester and links to Manchester Airport. Therefore it is considered that this proposal will work towards meeting this aim. The strategy also aims to '*increase the demand for food tourism*' in particular in Knutsford. It is considered that the proposed restaurant along with hotel and conference facilities in an historic building such as this will contribute towards meeting these aims, and will make a positive contribution to the immediate local economy and the visitor economy of Cheshire East. Therefore the proposal accords with the aims of the Visitor Economic Strategy and policy EG4 of the emerging CELPS.

Employment

The proposed development will provide employment within this sustainable location, in the hospitality industry an industry which is growing. Employment in this sector has been growing an average of 7% per year and is expected to increase over the coming years. The proposal will provide 30 permanent full time jobs and 20 part time jobs, which are likely to be flexible according to demand for particular events. Due to the mixed use nature of the venue, there will be a variety of employment opportunities locally. It is considered that the proposal will provide an important social and economic function as a local employer.

The site is currently employing contractors carrying out the works to the listed building approved under the previous consent. In addition to this further employment will be required as part of the construction and finishing process of the extension and the building itself, therefore the proposal will provide employment in the short, medium and long term.

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

Heritage Asset

The conversion of the existing court building into a hotel and restaurant with wedding venue is considered to be an acceptable use within this location. The NPPF places great emphasis on the reuse of heritage assets providing this is done in a sensitive way, especially to a use that can be enjoyed by members of the community. A restaurant and hotel use, allows members of the public to enjoy an iconic building within the town and see it restored, with much of the later internal additions removed, and stripped back to its original fabric and carefully restored, especially details such as original plasterwork and timber panelling.

It is considered that the restoration of such a building provides public benefit, and paragraph 17 of the NPPF states Local Planning Authorities must ensure that they conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.

Sustainability Conclusions

It is considered that the proposed development is environmentally sustainable. The proposed design of the extensions, alterations and conversion are acceptable and the impact on the heritage asset is acceptable. This is subject to suitable conditions in regard to the environmental matters raised, it is considered that the proposal is positive environmentally especially in relation to bringing an important listed building back into a vibrant use within this area of public realm within the Town Centre. The proposed access and parking arrangements are acceptable and there are no outstanding environmental issues. It is considered that the proposals will make a positive contribution to the character of the area.

It is considered that the proposal is economically sustainable by bringing back into use a redundant building and providing a restaurant and hotel, this will have a positive impact on the local economy and provide for visitors to the area, from within Cheshire East and from further afield, especially with being in close proximity to Manchester Airport. It is considered that the proposal is positive in terms of the economic sustainability especially through creating and providing both full time and part time jobs in hospitality, and opportunities through the construction and conversion of the Listed Building.

The proposals will result in the re-use of a heritage asset, which brings social benefit to allow the building to be enjoyed by future generations. The proposals will provide employment opportunities in hospitality which is a social benefit, and allow for easy connections to other services within Knutsford. It is therefore considered that the proposal is socially sustainable.

Representations

A small number of representations have been received in relation to the application, the majority of which supportive of the principle of the development with reservations and objections relating to traffic and parking and the impact on the listed building. However, it is considered that the proposals are acceptable in highways terms subject to the location of the proposal and the level of car parking proposed and the wider highway network. Due to the sustainable location of the development, walking and the use of public transport is a realistic option which could reduce the demand of the private car on the site. The design of the proposed extension is considered to be acceptable and Historic England and the Council's

Conservation Officer are satisfied with the proposals, and encourage the re-use of the heritage asset. Those comments relating to this scheme and its merits have been addressed in the main body of the report. Having taken into account all of the representations received including internal and external consultation responses, the material considerations raised have been addressed within the main body of the report.

Paragraph 14 of the NPPF states that should be approved without delay unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

PLANNING BALANCE

The site is within the town and the uses proposed along with the extensions are acceptable in this location. The site is sustainably located within the town and the proposals represent an efficient use of an important heritage asset. The proposal will see a boost in hotel accommodation in the area and the economic benefits this will bring particularly with overnight visits to the area. The proposed restaurant, will increase the choice locally for restaurants, and provides competition in the local area. The uses of hotel and restaurant are traditionally compatible, and the proposals are not likely to have a detrimental impact on the highway network or on residential properties.

Following effective pre-application discussions, a suitable scheme was submitted where various options were explored. It is considered that the final option will have lowest level of impact on the Listed Building. Planning conditions are required to ensure that the development is acceptable in planning terms.

On balance, it is considered that the proposal represents sustainable development and accords with the development plan and national planning policy and guidance. The benefits of the scheme far outweigh the dis-benefits of granting approval. Therefore for the reasons mentioned above the application is recommended for approval subject to the following conditions:

1. Time Limit 3 Years
2. Approved Plan and document condition
3. Method statement to be submitted and agreed with sample for all reinstated and making good of historic plasterwork.
4. All doors to be retained and refurbished within the building, unless specifically stated on the approved plans (unless other side approved). Details of the repair of the two doors of the front elevation to be submitted and agreed in writing.
5. Panelling from court room 1 and 2 to be reused as shown on approved plans, further details to be submitted relating to the reasonable reuse as much of the historic fabric as possible. Where panelling is not to be reused an agreed storage method is to be submitted to the LPA.
6. Permission excludes reuse of the basement, although the plans indicate use as a kitchen, details of this are not included in the LBC and is for future consideration
7. Report to be submitted, and agreed prior to determination, relating to the materials and method of construction for the new extensions is to be conditioned and to be in

carried out in strict accordance with, unless otherwise agreed by the LPA. (water goods, 1:20 window drawings, materials for all new elements, fixings, brick sample panel, mortar colour, joint size, brick size, depth of reveals, depth of brick detail, zinc cladding and glazing construction.

8. Any features of repair not hereby covered by the LBC or planning will be first detailed in a schedule and method statement and submitted to/agreed by LPA.
9. No cleaning is to be undertaken unless first agreed method by LPA
10. Awaiting kitchen plan for Hayes and Partners, this is to be agreed prior to determination of LBC
11. All air conditioning units are to be detailed on plan and submitted to and agreed by LPA.
12. Noise Mitigation Strategy
13. Electric Vehicle Charging Points
14. Car parking spaces to be retained for the lifetime of the development
15. Travel Plan to be submitted.
16. Site Specific Dust Management Plan to be submitted.
17. Traffic Signal pole to be removed prior to occupation.
18. Construction Management Plan
19. No development shall take place within the area indicated until the applicant, or their agents or successors in title, has secured the implementation of a programme of archaeological work in accordance with a written scheme of investigation which has been submitted by the applicant and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The work shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved scheme.
20. No development shall take place until a detailed design and associated management and maintenance plan of surface water drainage for the site using sustainable drainage methods has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The drainage design must also include information about the design's storm period and intensity (1 in 30 & 1 in 100 (+30% allowance for Climate Change)) & any temporary storage facilities included, to ensure adequate drainage is implemented on site.

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 Head of Planning (Regulation) delegated authority to do so in consultation with the Chairman of the Northern Planning Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.

