

Application No: 17/1504C

Location: Wheatsheaf Hotel, 1, HIGHTOWN, SANDBACH, CHESHIRE, CW11 1AG

Proposal: Construction of inverted dormer and infill glazing to the existing coaching under-croft of the The Wheatsheaf P.H. New vehicular access off Old Mill Road to rear of building and adjacent land following closing up of existing access. Alterations to existing boundary walls and fences. Creation of new outdoor seating area and terrace in rear courtyard

Applicant: Mr Andrew Pear

Expiry Date: 07-Jul-2017

### **Summary**

The site is within the Settlement Zone Line and Town Centre Boundary of Sandbach where there is a presumption in favour of development.

From an economic sustainability perspective, the scheme will bring economic benefits to Sandbach town centre.

From an environmental and social perspective the proposal is considered to be acceptable in the impact upon local amenities and highway safety. It would be of an acceptable design that would have a minimal impact upon the amenities of neighbouring properties.

The proposals are considered to be a sustainable form of development which would comply with the relevant local plan policies and would not compromise key sustainability principles as set out in national planning policy.

Therefore there is a presumption in favour of the development and accordingly it is recommended for approval.

### **RECOMMENDATION:**

**Approve subject to Conditions**

### **CALL IN**

The application has been called in to Committee by Cllr Barry Moran on the following grounds:

This application raises a number of planning matters that need careful consideration which will be subject to scrutiny by members of the public and Sandbach councillors.

Key matters include:

1. The new vehicle access off the by-pass, in respect of traffic generation and safety – being so close to the Glasshouse roundabout, and potentially creating a ‘rat-run’ through to Hope Street, via the new car park, with inherent visibility issues and possible hazards for pedestrians requiring assessment.
2. The overall Conservation Area impact, with the potential to further erode some of the character of these sensitive residential areas – Hope Street and The Gardens – as a consequence of the proposed development. Potentially, this development could change the existing ‘look and feel’ of the area.
3. The potential to adversely impact on The Gardens area, which is currently an area of town centre contrast, with a landscape character.

These matters should be tested for harm against appropriate policies in the NPPF, Local Plan[s] and Neighbourhood Plan, along with the current Sandbach Conservation Area Character Appraisal. A report to the Southern Planning Committee provides a public forum for debate in front of the decision makers.

## **DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT**

The application site comprises the Wheatsheaf Hotel, a large public house building in Hightown in Sandbach Town Centre, together with a separately owned parcel of land to the immediate rear, which has vehicular access off a private lane known as The Gardens.

The Wheatsheaf is not a listed or locally listed building. The site is partly within the Sandbach Town Centre Conservation Area. The site is bounded (clockwise from north) by NatWest bank, The Gardens (a private lane), a private dwelling, Old Mill Road, The Glasshouse restaurant, and Hightown.

The pub is served by a parking area to the rear of the main building, accessed through a coaching arch. The separate parcel of land is occupied by garages and informal surface car parking, understood to be leased by local businesses. This area is currently accessed via The Gardens.

The site is within the Sandbach Town Centre Boundary as designated in the adopted Congleton Borough Local Plan First Review (2005).

## **DETAILS OF PROPOSAL**

The application is for full planning permission to undertake various alterations to the pub property and the adjoining parcel of land, as follows:

- Glaze and brick-up the front and rear portals of the coaching arch to form a new area of internal floorspace in the archway, which will adjoin the existing bar area to form a ‘cocktail lounge’ by re-opening a boarded up window.

- Formation of a new access off Old Mill Road, to provide access to the rear of the Wheatsheaf and gated access to the adjacent land.
- Creation of five car parking spaces for pub staff on the adjacent land
- Closing up of the existing access to the adjacent land using landscaping, retaining pedestrian access
- Replacement of an existing window set into the rear elevation of the main part of the building with a new inverted dormer window.
- Creation of an outdoor dining area and paved terrace in the enclosed yard area to the immediate rear of the building.

The application as originally submitted included retention of the existing access to the land off The Gardens. The application was later amended to permanently close up the existing access. The application showed car parking spaces formally marked out on the adjacent land, and comments were received expressing concern about the effect of this apparent formalisation of the existing situation. Further details were provided on the formalisation of this parking (surface materials, marking out). It has since been clarified that the owner of this land intends to make no changes to the use or condition of this area. The scope of the proposal relating to this area is therefore only to create the new access, close up the existing access, and form the car parking spaces for staff of the Wheatsheaf.

## **RELEVANT HISTORY**

The Wheatsheaf Hotel  
None relevant

Land off The Gardens  
23990/3 - distribution, storage and administration of specialised motor cars, their components and accessories including associated work on such cars. Approved with conditions, 21/1/1992

## **Policies**

### **National Policy**

The National Planning Policy Framework establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Of particular relevance are paragraphs:

- 14 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development
- 18-22 - Building a strong, competitive economy
- 23 - Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- 56-68 - Requiring good design
- 126-141 - Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

### **Local Plan Policy**

- GR1- New Development
- GR2 – Design
- GR4 – Landscaping

GR5 – Landscaping  
GR6 – Amenity and Health  
GR9 - Accessibility, Servicing and Provision of Parking  
GR18 – Traffic Generation  
NR1 - Trees and Woodlands  
BH8-9 - Conservation Areas  
E3 - Employment Development In Towns  
S3 - Shopping and Commercial Development Within Town Centres

## **Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy Proposed Changes (Final Version) July 2016**

MP1 - Presumption in favour of sustainable development  
PG2 - Settlement Hierarchy  
SD1 - Sustainable Development in Cheshire East,  
SD2 - Sustainable Development Principles,  
EG1 - Economic Prosperity  
EG5 - Promoting a Town Centre First Approach to Retail and Commerce  
SC1 – Leisure and Recreation  
SE1 – Design  
SE4 - The Landscape  
SE5 – Trees, Hedgerows and Woodland  
SE7 – The Historic Environment

## **Cheshire East Design Guide**

### **Sandbach Neighbourhood Plan**

HC1 Historic Environment  
HC2 Protection and Enhancement of the Town Centre

## **CONSULTATIONS (External to Planning)**

### **Sandbach Town Council**

*Object on the grounds of:*

*No listed building consent application* (The application site does not contain any listed buildings).

*Effect on residential privacy of inverted dormer* (The impact on amenity on nearby dwellings is considered to be acceptable, given the distance between the inverted dormer and the nearest houses, and screening provided by mature trees.)

*Loss of parking spaces used by residents on Hope Street and The Gardens;*

*Impact of car park on wildlife.* (No changes are now proposed to the existing car parking).

**Highways** – *The proposed access is an improvement over the existing situation and will provide adequate visibility; no objection subject to informative requiring an S184 licence for the new vehicle crossing and creation of turning pocket on Old Mill Road.*

### **Environmental Health**

Noise – *hours of noise generative construction and demolition should be restricted*

Lighting – *details of any lighting should be submitted and approved before installation*

*Dust – an alternative surface treatment for the car park should be proposed and approved, as crushed limestone can be very dusty if not compacted and applied properly (This issue is resolved as the formalisation of the car parking has been removed from the proposal).*

## **OTHER REPRESENTATIONS**

Seventeen public comments were received, comprising seven objections, four notes of support, and six general observations.

### **Objections and Observations related to:**

- Highways and pedestrian safety of the new access on Old Mill Road
- Previous removal of TPO tree
- Pedestrian and highways safety
- Congestion and residential amenity along The Gardens lane as a result of vehicles driving between Old Mill Road and Hope Street
- Adverse impact upon the Conservation Area
- Inverted dormer causing loss of privacy and noise to dwellings at rear of site
- Wheatsheaf does not have right of easement down The Gardens
- Certificate of Ownership is incorrect
- Sufficiency of turning space for delivery vehicles at rear of Wheatsheaf
- Effect of formalisation of car parking off The Gardens on ecology and drainage

### **Supporting representations:**

- Improved access to the site off The Gardens, which provides parking for local businesses and residents;
- Blocking up of the existing access from The Gardens is supported.

## **OFFICER APPRAISAL**

### **Principal of Development**

The site is located within the Settlement Zone Line and Town Centre Boundary of Sandbach, where there is a presumption in favour of development and of commercial development. The main part of the site is an existing public house/restaurant and the proposed development would allow for the existing business operation to expand.

## **SUSTAINABILITY**

The National Planning Policy Framework definition of sustainable development is:

*“Sustainable means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don’t mean worse lives for future generations. Development means growth. We must accommodate the new ways by which we will earn our living in a competitive world. We must house a rising population, which is living longer and wants to make new choices. We must respond to the changes that new technologies offer us. Our lives, and the places in which we live them, can be better, but they will certainly be*

*worse if things stagnate. Sustainable development is about change for the better, and not only in our built environment”*

The NPPF determines that sustainable development includes three dimensions:- economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles:

**an economic role** – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;

**an environmental role** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy

**a social role** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being;

These roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL ROLE**

### **Design – Alterations to the Wheatsheaf**

The importance of securing high quality design is specified within the NPPF and paragraph 61 states that:

*“Although visual appearance and the architecture of individual buildings are very important factors, securing high quality and inclusive design goes beyond aesthetic considerations. Therefore, planning policies and decisions should address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.”*

The main design issue is the potential effect on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and its setting. The Wheatsheaf itself is a landmark building, noted in the Conservation Area Appraisal as making a positive contribution to the special interest of the Conservation Area.

The Building Conservation Officer raised some concerns with the initial proposals, which have been overcome by amendments to the design, subject to conditions. In particular it was noted that the former coaching arch will still be ‘read’ within the infill glazing, that the reduction in traffic along The Gardens and the landscaping of the boundary will protect the quiet character of this area of the Conservation Area, that alterations to existing boundaries will be acceptable, subject to condition, and overall that the proposals are acceptable subject to further landscaping details and walls/gates details and details of proposed materials.

## **Highways Implications**

### Parking and vehicle turning

The Strategic Highways Manager has advised that the layout plan showing vehicle moving details would be acceptable for light delivery vehicles. The proposal would retain six customer car parking spaces in the rear yard of the Wheatsheaf and create five staff spaces on the adjacent land. This level of provision is considered to be appropriate to the A3/A4 use, given the town centre location of the site. No objection is raised to this parking provision.

### New access – safety and congestion

The Strategic Highways Manager has advised that the proposed new access will be acceptable in terms of highways safety, noting that the new access will be an improvement over the existing access to the Wheatsheaf. In terms of congestion arising from the new access point on Old Mill Road, Highways noted that the expected increase in vehicle movements were not likely to be significant, but suggested that it may be of benefit to form a turning pocket to accommodate vehicles driving north-west up Old Mill Road turning right into the site. This can be controlled by condition.

## **Ecology**

The proposed development would not result in any harm to protected species or natural habitat.

## **Trees**

Although the records show TPO trees adjacent to Old Mill Road in the vicinity of the proposed vehicular access, there is no evidence of the specimens which may have been removed at the time of road construction. No other forestry issues.

## **Landscape**

The proposals now indicate closing up of an existing access to a car park off The Gardens, extension of a length of earth mound with a hedge above fronting The Gardens and the provision of a pedestrian gate. The existing hedge provides a level of screening when the site is viewed from lane. Nevertheless, it is unmanaged and the bank is unsupported. The car park with its light coloured surface does not sit comfortably next to the Conservation Area. In the event of approval, design details and a planting specification for the hedge and bank and details of the surfacing materials should be required by condition.

## **Environmental Role Conclusion**

Subject to appropriate conditions the proposed development would not create any amenity, design, ecology or highway safety issues. It is considered that the proposal's impact upon the streetscene and Conservation Area and the amenity of neighbours would be acceptable. On this basis, the proposal is considered to be environmentally sustainable.

## **ECONOMIC ROLE**

The proposal would potentially provide local employment opportunities in construction and the wider economic benefits to the construction industry supply chain. The proposal would sustain

the existing business use of the site and allow for an increase in business operations which would potentially provide additional employment opportunities.

As such, it is considered that the proposed development would be economically sustainable.

## **SOCIAL ROLE**

### **Amenity**

The proposed development is not considered to raise any issues in terms of residential amenity. An inverted dormer with balcony such as that proposed may raise concerns of overlooking and loss of privacy where residential dwellings are in close proximity, but it is considered that, due to the distance of approx. 40m from the proposed dormer to the nearest residential dwellings in line of sight, the impact will be acceptable. Comments raised concern about noise impact arising from the creation of an outdoor seating/dining area, however, as this area will be mostly enclosed by the form of the existing building, and taking into account the distance to the nearest dwellings, it is not considered that there will be a detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours by virtue of increased noise and disturbance..

It is also considered that closing up the existing access to the land off The Gardens would achieve amenity benefits for residents along the lane, by diverting vehicle movements.

As such it is considered that the development would be socially sustainable.

## **PLANNING BALANCE**

The site is within the Settlement Zone Line and the Town Centre Boundary of Sandbach, where there is a presumption in favour of development, and where proposals for commercial development will be permitted where they accord with the other policies of the local plan.

From an economic sustainability perspective, the scheme will assist in the development of an existing business, bringing economic benefits to Sandbach town centre.

From an environmental and social perspective the proposal is considered to be acceptable in the impact upon local amenities, highway safety, and traffic generation terms. The proposed alterations would be of an acceptable design that would have an acceptable impact on residential amenity, the character of the existing development, and the character of the Conservation Area.

The proposals are considered to be a sustainable form of development which would comply with the relevant local plan policies and would safeguard the amenity of the neighbours and would safeguard the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area.

Therefore there is a presumption in favour of the development and accordingly it is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**APPROVE** subject to the following conditions:



- 1. Standard time 3 years**
- 2. Approved Plans**
- 3. Submission and approval of details of materials**
- 4. Submission and approval of lighting details (EP)**
- 5. Submission and approval of details of boundary treatments and gates**
- 6. Landscaping details including boundary treatment and surfacing materials to be submitted and approved**
- 7. Implementation of landscaping**

**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 Chairman of the Southern Planning Committee, provided that the changes do not exceed the substantive nature of the Committee's decision.**

