

Application No: 20/3684M

Location: Longview Hotel, 51-55, Manchester Road, Knutsford, WA16 0LX

Proposal: Change of use of existing Hotel (C1) to Sui Generis; house in multiple occupation and two residential apartments (C3)

Applicant: Massoud Ahooie, Longview Hotel

Expiry Date: 06-Nov-2020

SUMMARY

The proposal is for the conversion of part of the existing Longview Hotel into a nine-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation, with two self-contained apartments. It is considered that the proposed HMO would not have a materially different impact on the character of the area and residential amenity than the hotel use.

No off-street parking is proposed for the HMO. However, the site lies within a sustainable location, close to services, facilities and public transport. The proposal includes cycle storage.

The proposed internal areas would meet the minimum standards set out within the draft HMO SPD.

SUMMARY RECOMMENDATION

Approve subject to conditions, consultee responses and any further neighbour responses.

REASON FOR REPORT

The planning application has been called to committee by the Local Ward Member, Cllr Gardiner, for the following reasons:

“The proposal would be detrimental to the Character of the Knutsford Town Centre Conservation Area. Furthermore as part of a terrace of buildings the proposal would have detrimental impact upon the amenity of the occupiers of the adjoining residential (C3) properties; especially as the hotel accommodation is in two properties with a private C3 unit in between. As such this proposal would fall foul of the recently adopted Draft SPD on HMOs. Finally there is insufficient parking to accommodate the number of units proposed in an area where on-street parking is at a premium and additional parking pressure would ensue.”

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND CONTEXT

The application site is a terrace property, which forms part of the Longview Hotel. The remainder of the hotel is at 55 Manchester Road and 4 Victoria Street. The current site accommodates 13 hotel rooms over three floors with an additional basement area.

The site lies within a predominately residential area of Knutsford and within the Knutsford Town Centre Conservation Area. The building, along with the remainder of the terrace, is identified as being of townscape merit within the Conservation Area Appraisal.

The Site lies across the road from the Heath and is within the impact zone for the Tatton Mere Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The proposal is for the partial conversion of the existing Hotel (C1) to a nine-bedroom House in Multiple Occupation, with two apartments. The scheme has been amended during the lifetime of the planning application, with the number of bedrooms reduced from ten to nine. Further information has also been provided regarding the cycle and refuse storage.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

20/3505M – pending consideration
Change of use from C1 (hotel) to C4 (HMO)

20/2023M – approved – 28 July 2020
Removal and reinstatement on a like-for-like basis of existing chimney stack to number 51 on health and safety grounds

20/0227M – approved – 6 March 2020
Non-material amendment on approval 17/6467M

17/6467M – approved – 16 November 2018
Existing hotel to be converted into 8no. apartments (within conservation area) 2no. new build town houses to be built on associated parking area (outside of conservation area)

POLICIES

Cheshire East Local Plan Strategy (CELPS)

MP 1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
PG 2 – Settlement Hierarchy
SD 2 – Sustainable Development Principles
SE 1 – Design
SE 3 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
SE 7 – The Historic Environment
SE 12 – Pollution, Land Contamination and Land Instability
CO 1 – Sustainable Travel and Transport
Appendix C – Parking Standards

Macclesfield Borough Local Plan (MBLP)

H6 – Town Centre Housing
DC3 – Amenity
DC6 – Circulation and Access

Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan (KNP)

ER5 – Overnight Accommodation
E3 – Habitat Protection and Biodiversity
E5 – Pollution
HW1 – Health and Wellbeing
HE2 – Heritage Assets
HE 3 – Conservation Areas
H1 – Housing Mix
T2 – Cycling in Knutsford
T4 – Parking

OTHER MATERIAL POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF 2019)

Chapter 12 - Achieving well-designed places
Chapter 15 - Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
Chapter 16 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

Knutsford Design Guide

Revised Publication Draft Site Allocations and Development Policies Document

ENV 13 – Aircraft Noise
HOU 4 – Houses in Multiple Occupation
HOU 10 – Amenity
HOU 11 - Residential Standards

Draft Houses in Multiple Occupation Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)

CONSULTATIONS (EXTERNAL TO PLANNING)

Strategic Housing – No affordable housing requirement

Housing Standards – No objection subject to development being compliant with Planning and Building Control legislation, as well as the Council's adopted standards for Houses in Multiple Occupation. Further information is required, showing how background and rapid ventilation for bedroom 2 and communal lounge would be achieved, as well as natural daylight within these areas. HMO properties containing five or more occupants, forming two or more households are required to obtain a licence under Part 2 of the Housing Act 2004, prior to its occupation as a HMO.

Head of Strategic Transport - No objection

ANSA Greenspace - No comments received

Environmental Health - Aircraft noise is a material consideration and the applicant has not assessed or addressed aircraft noise impact in the submission documents. In the absence of this information, it has not been possible to demonstrate that the proposal would comply with material planning considerations.

Natural England - Awaiting response. To be reported to the Planning Committee.

Knutsford Town Council - Object on the following grounds:

- a. The proposed development would present an unneighbourly relationship with the adjacent property
- b. The proposal is out of keeping of the residential character of the other private residential properties in the area
- c. The proposal fails to meet policies T2 and T4 of the Knutsford Neighbourhood Plan.
- d. The accommodation proposed within the application falls below unit-size requirements outlined by the draft supplementary planning policy on HMOs of Cheshire East Council

REPRESENTATIONS

Two representations received to date objecting to the proposal. The main concerns are summarised below. The consultation period expires on 25 November 2020. Any further responses will be relayed to the committee as written updates.

- bins stored by hotel result in smells during the summer, which causes distress to the next-door funeral home. Increased occupancy proposed would make this situation worse
- Existing parking issues will be made worse
- Increase in noise disturbance from full time occupation.
- Development would create high density, low quality accommodation, not in keeping with the current character of the street.
- In the current COVID pandemic – creating high density housing would create an increased risk of disease spread.

OFFICER APPRAISAL

Principle of development

The application site lies within Knutsford, which CELPS policy PG 2 identifies as a Key Service Centre. This policy supports development within Key Service Centres, where it is of a scale, location and nature that recognises and reinforces the distinctive of the individual towns.

The existing building is currently used as a hotel, along with 4 Victoria Street and 55 Manchester Road. 4 Victoria Street is the subject of a separate planning application (20/3505M refers). 55 Manchester Road would be retained as hotel accommodation.

Planning permission 17/6467M established the principle of converting the building from a hotel to residential accommodation. This permission, which was granted in November 2018, is still extant.

The principle of the proposed development on this site is therefore acceptable, subject to compliance with the other relevant policies of the adopted development plan.

Character and Appearance

Conservation Area

The application site lies within the Knutsford Town Centre Conservation Area. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of Conservation Areas.

The NPPF identifies Conservation Areas as designated heritage assets. NPPF paragraph 193 states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation.

Paragraph 194 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

CELPs policy SE 7 relates to the historic environment. This states that the Council will support development proposals that do not cause harm to, or which better reveal the significance of heritage assets. Conversely, clear and convincing justification will be required, where a scheme would result in harm to a heritage asset and its significant.

KNP policy HE2 relates to Heritage Assets and states that development which causes unacceptable harm to the significance of heritage assets will be resisted. KNP policy HE 3 relates to Conservation Area. It requires developments to comply with design principles.

The Hotel is identified as being a building of townscape merit within the Knutsford Town Centre Conservation Area Appraisal.

The proposal is for the change of use of the existing building and internal alterations. It does not propose any changes to the exterior of the building.

The proposal has been reviewed by the Council's Heritage Officer. On the basis that the works are internal only, they have raised no objections.

It is considered that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, complying with the requirements of the 1990 Act. The development would not cause harm to the significance of the Conservation Area. It would comply with CELPS policy SE 7 and KNP policies HE2 and HE3.

Impact of use

CELPS policy SD 2 requires developments to contribute positively to an area's character and identity, creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness. This includes its relationship to neighbouring properties, streetscene and the wider neighbourhood.

The application site lies within an area that is classified as predominately residential. However, the site is not in a residential use. It is currently occupied as a hotel, which falls within a C1 use class. The nature of hotels means that residents are transient, coming and going for short periods of time. A hotel would typically function in a different way to a C3 residential property, generating greater levels of activity and movement.

It is not considered that the proposal for a house and multiple occupation, with two separate flats would be materially different to the current use as a hotel or would result in an increase of movement that would be detrimental to the area.

An HMO of the size proposed would require a licence. This would cover the management of the HMO and the maximum number of residents, who could live at the property.

There is nothing within the submission to indicate a conflict with CELPS policy SD 2, particularly having regard to its current use as a hotel.

Neighbour amenity

NPPF paragraph 127f) requires developments to have a high standard of amenity for existing and future users. As above, CELPS policy SD2 requires proposals to contribute positively to an area's character, including its relationship with neighbouring properties.

Saved MBLP policy DC3 states that development should not significantly injure the amenities of adjoining or nearby residential property or sensitive uses due to, amongst other matters, noise, smells, traffic generation, access and car parking.

As above, the baseline for assessing the impact of the development on the amenities of neighbouring properties, is its current use as a hotel. Hotels are likely to generate more activity than would typically be expected in a residential dwelling, due to the presence of employees and a regular turnover of guests.

The part of the hotel to be converted currently has 14 bedrooms. This would be converted to a 9-bedroom HMO and two self-contained flats. While it is acknowledged that the hotel is unlikely to be fully occupied at all times of year, the proposed HMO would provide two less bedrooms than the hotel. Residents are also likely to be living at the property for longer periods than hotel guests would be. Similarly, it would be unlikely to require the same number of employees to maintain the premises. It is not considered that the development would result in an increase in activity or noise which would be detrimental to the amenities of neighbouring residents.

With the exception of a privacy screen, no changes are proposed externally to the building. The relationship between the built form of the property and neighbours would be maintained.

Concerns have also been raised regarding an increase in unpleasant odours, as a result of additional bins being stored on the property. The proposed site plan indicates that the bins would be stored to the rear of 55 Manchester Road, which is also owned by the applicant. Further details of this storage should be required by condition.

Given the current use as a hotel it is not considered that the proposed use would result in such an increase in refuse storage as to adversely affect the amenities of nearby properties.

The Local Ward Member has raised concerns that the proposal would fall foul of the requirements of the draft SPD on HMOs. Specifically, that it would result in a C3 residential use being sandwiched between two HMOs.

This SPD is only in draft form so carries only very limited weight. The consultation on the draft document will conclude on 23 December 2020. In any case, 53 Manchester Road is already sandwiched between a hotel to both sides. As a result of this proposal, this neighbour would be between a hotel and an HMO. It is not considered that this would be materially different in terms of impact. It is not considered that there would be a conflict with this draft SPD.

Residential amenity standards

As with neighbouring properties, NPPF paragraph 127f) requires a high standard of amenity. This is reiterated within CELPS policies SC 2 and SE 1.

The draft local plan includes policies relating to amenity, including HOU 4, which is specific to houses in multiple occupation and HOU 10 and 11, which relate to amenity and residential standards respectively.

The LPA is also producing a Supplementary Planning Document, for Houses in Multiple Occupation. The draft form of this document is currently out for consultation.

The draft SADPD policies and the SPD only carry very limited weight, as they have not yet been adopted.

The Town Council have raised concerns that the proposed rooms would not meet the minimum room sizes as set out within the draft SPD. This requires a double room to have a minimum size of at least 10.22sqm, along with access to at least one opening window.

Of the rooms proposed, the smallest would have an area of 12.4sqm, including the ensuite. This is in excess of the minimum size required within the draft SPD. One of the bedrooms (former bedroom 2) has been omitted and is now proposed to be an additional communal lounge area for residents. All of the bedrooms would have access to opening windows. To ensure an acceptable degree of privacy between bedroom 3 and apartment 2, a privacy screen is proposed. To ensure that this is of an acceptable design and still lets light in, a condition requiring details is recommended. It is considered that the internal amenity space for the inhabitants would be acceptable.

Externally a communal amenity space is proposed. A landscaping plan for this area will be required by condition.

Aircraft Noise

CELPS policy SE 12 relates to pollution land contamination and land instability. It states that amongst other matters, development for new housing will not normally be permitted where existing noise levels are unacceptable and there is no reasonable prospect that these can be mitigated against.

Saved MBLP policy T18 deals with new development in areas affected by aircraft noise. In areas subject to daytime noise levels between 57 and 66 LAeq 16hr (0700-2300), and/or night-time noise levels between 48 and 57 LAeq 8 hr (2300 -0700), planning permission for residential development, will only be granted if soundproofing is provided to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

The Council's Environmental Health Team has advised that the application site lies within the following noise contours:

- 54 to 57 LAeq 16 hr (daytime)
- 48 - 51 LAeq 8 hr (night-time)

They have advised that a Noise Impact Assessment is required to demonstrate that adequate soundproofing can be provided, in accordance with saved MBLP policy T18.

However, it is noted that a Noise Impact Assessment was not submitted as part of the extant permission 17/6467M. The officer report states that:

“Environmental Health initially requested that an acoustic assessment be submitted as the site lies within the Manchester Airport aircraft contours map. However, they have subsequently advised that a planning balanced approach be taken. Therefore, as the sites are close to The Heath, which is large open public area available for recreation and the site is within the lower end of the dba contours 54-57, as is most of the town centre, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable.”

The extant permission for the conversion of the building to apartments is a material consideration. Given that a noise impact assessment was not requested for this previous scheme, it is not considered that it could now reasonably form a reason for refusal.

Parking and highway safety

CELPS policy CO1 relates to sustainable travel and transport. It seeks to deliver a safe, sustainable and high-quality transport system. This includes by ensuring developments provide secure cycle parking facilities. CELPS appendix C sets out the Council's Adopted Parking Standards. This states that for hotels (C1), one parking space should be provided per bedroom. Smaller HMOs, which fall within use class C4 (i.e. up to six residents), require the same amount of parking spaces as a residential property. There is no standard set for larger HMOs.

KNP policy T2 requires all new developments to show how they will seek to support cycling within the Town. It also requires new developments to provide appropriate cycle infrastructure and parking.

KNP policy T4 requires all new developments to provide parking to meet needs in line with the CELPS, Design Guide and the Knutsford Design Guide.

No on-site parking is proposed as part of the proposal. As such this would not meet the requirements set out within the adopted Parking Standards. Highways Officers were consulted on the proposal. They highlighted the sustainability of the location, in terms of its proximity to local shops and services, as well as public transport routes. They have also advised that the car parking demand for HMOs is generally very low. Taking these factors into account, they have not raised any objections to the lack of parking provision associated with the scheme.

The proposal has been amended during the lifetime of the application to include cycle parking. This is required to ensure compliance with CELPS policy CO1 and KNP policy T2. A condition is necessary requiring details of the cycle storage and its installation, prior to first occupation.

Nature Conservation

CELPS policy SE 3 relates to biodiversity and geodiversity. It seeks to protect and enhance areas of high biodiversity and geodiversity. It states that development proposals likely to have an adverse impact on a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) will not normally be permitted.

The application site lies within one of the Impact Zones for the Tatton Meres SSSI. Natural England and the Council's Nature Conservation Officers have been consulted on the proposal. Their response will be reported once received. However, it is noted that Natural England has raised no comments to the related application 20/3505M.

Other matters

Concerns have been raised that the permitting of a large-scale HMO could pose a potential risk during the Covid-19 pandemic. While these concerns are noted, it is not considered that this would be a valid reason for withholding planning permission, particularly given that any national or local restrictions would apply to future residents.

Conclusions

It is considered that the proposed HMO would not have a materially different impact on the character of the area and residential amenity than the hotel use.

While no off-street parking is proposed, it is considered that this could not reasonably form a reason for refusal, given the sustainability of the location. The proposal would comply with the relevant planning policies and is recommended for approval subject to the following conditions:

- 1. Commencement of development within three years**
- 2. Development in accordance with the approved plans**
- 3. Details and implementation of cycle storage (prior to first occupation)**
- 4. Details and implementation of refuse storage (prior to first occupation)**
- 5. Details and implementation of privacy screen (prior to first occupation)**
- 6. Details of landscaping for amenity space and implementation within first planting season following occupation**

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

