
2018/0656

Applicant: Job Centre Plus, c/o Andrew Bailey Architects

Description: Change of use from job centre (A1) to 15 bedroom sui generis HMO (C4)

Site Address: Job Centre Plus, High Street, Goldthorpe, Rotherham, S63 9LQ

Introduction

This application is brought to PRB on the request of a local Councillor. A petition against the scheme has been received with 147 signatures. A single letter of objection has also been submitted.

Site Description

The former Job Centre is located close to the Asda supermarket on the southern edge of Goldthorpe town centre. The two storey flat roofed brick building is on the corner of Lesley Road and High Street. Terraced houses facing on to Melton Avenue overlook the rear of the site which comprises 7 car parking spaces (including disabled parking) and bin storage area. The site, which is slightly elevated from the High Street side, has a small brick boundary wall and some landscaped grounds including mature trees. Immediately to the south is a house that is attached to the Union Jack Memorial Club.

High Street is a bus route and there is also a Railway Station a short distance away off Barnsley Road.

Proposed Development

This is a change of use to create an HMO where there would be 7 bedrooms (11m² to 23m²) a boiler room and shared kitchen dining room (31m²) on the ground floor. On the second floor there would be 8 bedrooms (16m² to 23m²) and a kitchen dining room (18m²).

The existing parking area (approximately 7 spaces) is to be retained and secure bin storage, cycle parking and communal space provided.

Policy Context

Planning decision should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. The development plan consists of the Core Strategy and the saved Unitary Development Plan policies. The Council has also adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes, which are other material considerations.

Core Strategy

CSP19 Employment to be retained
CSP26 Highways issues.
CSP29 Design matters.
CSP31 Town Centres.
CSP40 Pollution protection.

Saved UDP Policies

Housing Policy Area

SPDs/SPGs

Designing New Housing Development

This sets out minimum guidelines for separation distances between windows, room sizes and for gardens areas.

Parking

This sets out parking standards according to numbers bedrooms and site location.

Emerging Local Plan

The emerging Local Plan has now reached a very advanced stage with a consultation on main modification to the plan commencing in July 2018. The consultation follows confirmation from the Local Plan inspector that the plan is capable of being found sound. This by no means represents the Inspectors overall judgement, which will not be known until the final report is issued and the examination closes. However, it does mean increasing weight can be given to the policies contained within the document although, in accordance with paragraph 216 of the NPPF, the extent of this will depend on:

- The extent to which there are unresolved objections to relevant policies (the less significant the unresolved objections, the greater the weight that may be given) and;
- The degree of consistency of the relevant policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF (the closer the policies in the emerging plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

By virtue of the fact the policies have been tested at examination, they have been scrutinised in relation to their degree of consistency with the NPPF and it is therefore highly likely that they are sufficiently compliant. However, it will not be possible to conclude whether many of the objections have been resolved until the inspector has considered the responses to the consultation on modifications and the final report is published. The extent to which weight can be attributed to the Local Plan policies will therefore vary on a case by case basis taking into account the relevant policies and the significance of any unresolved objections.

Policies of relevance are:

SD1 Presumption in favour of sustainable development

GD1 General development

D1 High Quality Design and Place Making

TC1 Town Centres

T4 New Development and Transport Safety

Poll1 Pollution Control and Protection

NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Consultations

Highways Drainage – No objections

Highways- No objections

Representations

There is a petition with 147 signatures and a single letter of objection.

The issues raised are:

- Invasion of privacy from windows in flats looking directly into nearby houses.
- The parking in the street is already over stretched with non-residential people using the street as parking and preventing parking of residents.
- The building in question does not have sufficient parking space to facilitate the 15 rooms mentioned in the application.
- There is also a concern on the effect that the clientele of the site will have on the community if the clientele are of an unsavoury nature, the effect it could have on our house values.
- The safety of the residents including their children on the surrounding streets is of great concern.

Assessment

Principle of development

This is a Housing Policy Area and whilst the building was previously a Job Centre the immediate surroundings are predominantly residential in character. The Job Centre use has been relocated to Mexborough as part of a re-organisation and it is not likely that the site would be used for a similar use in the future. A job centre is classed as an A2 office use (professional and financial services) which includes banks, building societies, estate agents and employment agencies. Any demand that there may be for such town centre office uses can better be accommodated within the nearby town centre. This would accord with national planning policy and Core Strategy policy CSP31 Town Centres, which say that the town centre should be where such uses are located.

This is a Housing Policy Area so the Job Centre being located here was not consistent with the immediate surroundings and residential use would be a better fit. As such Policy CSP19 is considered to be satisfied.

The SPD Designing New Housing Development sets out the various criteria to take in account when considering an HMO. This site is very close to Goldthorpe centre, shopping and other facilities and as such is in a sustainable location. The main issue would be the need to assess the impact on other material considerations such as residential amenity, visual amenity, and highway safety.

Residential Amenity

Local residents raise concerns about loss of privacy and the future occupants. The later concern is not a planning matter that can be considered in making a decision on this application.

The Council's SPD Designing New Housing Development recommends 21m between upper floor habitable room windows. However, this can be reduced to 19m across a road. The plans show that there is about 19.5m from the rear walls and windows in houses facing Melton Avenue to the windows in the former Job Centre. In addition the distance between existing opposing houses on and around Melton Avenue where there are a series of narrow roads is comparable to this distance and as such it is not considered that there would be a significant loss of privacy to neighbouring dwellings.

There is house and garden immediately to the south. There is existing upper floor windows to a communal kitchen and the applicant has agreed that this be obscure glazed to prevent overlooking.

There is existing mature planting associated with the former Job Centre. This would be retained as communal area for future residents and therefore there some amenity provision has been provided. Although this would not meet the Council's requirements for amenity space per bedroom, the recommended standards are generally aimed at new housing estates and are not so applicable to changes of use to an HMO. In addition the type of accommodation provided would be aimed at single occupants whereby the need for amenity space to be directly on site is less essential. The internal standards meet the guidelines apart from one bedroom which is slightly below the recommendations by about 4 square metres but this is not seen as being of significant concerns given that future occupants would be able to view the room and it still provides sufficient space for bedroom and bathroom facilities.

Visual Amenity

There are no significant external alterations proposed to the existing building apart from a new door opening on the north elevation. The existing mature planting associated with the former Job Centre will be retained as communal space and the existing car park used for parking.

Highway Safety

Local residents have raised concerns about the lack of parking in the area and safety of children on the surrounding streets if this application is allowed.

The site is located on a heavily trafficked, classified road with limited parking available within the site boundary. The pattern of narrow roads means that there is little space for existing residents to park, however, there is a small parking area associated with the former Job Centre so this is a better scenario than the adjacent residential area. The existing 7 space car park will be used and provision made for cycle parking. The location is close to the town centre and this is a bus route. In addition, it is unlikely that the proposed development will generate more traffic than the existing use.

Consequently, there are no objections to the proposed development in a highway context.

Conclusion

The proposal is a change of use from a former Job Centre, which is an A2 Office use that would normally be located in a town centre rather than within a predominantly residential area. There are houses close by and the proposal would allow for the conversion of a currently vacant building. The building is sufficient distance from neighbouring properties to ensure neighbouring amenities are adequately protected. There are minimal alterations to the building and the Council's Highways Section are satisfied that the proposal would not raise any highway safety concerns. As such the proposal is recommended for approval.

Recommendation

Grant subject to conditions

- 1 The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.
Reason: In order to comply with the provision of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 The development hereby approved shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the plans P01E and specifications as approved unless required by any other conditions in this permission.
Reason: In the interests of the visual amenities of the locality and in accordance with LDF Core Strategy Policy CSP 29, Design.

- 3 Notwithstanding the submitted plans the windows to the southern side of the first floor kitchen-dining room shall be obscure glazed and shall remain as such thereafter.
Reason: In the interests of neighbouring amenities in accordance with CSP29

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BARNSELY MBC - Regeneration & Property
Service Director: David Shepherd
Westgate Plaza One, Westgate
Barnsley, S70 9FD
Tel. (01226) 772621


NORTH
Scale 1: 1250