
2018/1126

Applicant: Mr Roger Beecroft

Description: Change of use from job centre (A2) to 9 apartments with managers office, associated parking and amenity space

Site Address: Job Centre Plus, 68 High Street, Goldthorpe, Rotherham, S63 9LQ

Introduction

This application is brought to PRB on the request of a local Councillor and because a previous application 2018/0656 for a 15 bedroom HMO was considered by Board before it was withdrawn.

A petition against the scheme has been received with 147 signatures. A single letter of objection from a local Councillor 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 modified scheme following the withdrawal of a previous application 2018/0656 for a 15 bedroom HMO.

During the consideration of this scheme further changes have been made to address planning considerations and local objections. This has resulted in the scheme being amended from a 12 bed HMO, through a 10 apartment scheme, to the application that is currently before Members for 9 apartments with manager's office and associated parking and amenity space.

The apartments are mostly described as being studio apartments on the submitted plans with one being a one bedroom flat.

The sizes of the units are as follows.

Flat 4 is 55m².

Studio apartments 9, 8, 7 and 3 are all 37m².

Studio apartments 1 is 36m²

Studio apartment 2, 5 and 6 are 33m².

The existing parking area (approximately 7 spaces) is to be retained but increased in capacity to 9 spaces. A total of 180m² of communal amenity space is to be created within the grounds of the building with secure bin storage provided at the front of the site. The proposed boundary screening would be 1.8m high fencing with facing brick plinth and piers. All the existing trees and landscaping is to be retained.

Obscure glazing is proposed in the first floor secondary bedroom windows in Studio Apartment 9 to prevent overlooking of a nearby garden.

The first floor also includes a communal reading area space. The applicant has stated that they have introduced this space as they are hoping to attract an over 50's tenant group who should make good use of this space.

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.

The Emerging Local Plan

The emerging Local Plan has now reached a very advanced stage with the Council having received the Planning Inspector's report for fact checking. The Final Report is anticipated to be received between this report being written and the date that planning and regulatory board will consider this application. This means that substantial weight can be given to the policies contained within the Local Plan. Strictly speaking, the Core Strategy and Unitary Development Plan remain the development plan for the borough. However, in light of the fact the Local Plan is on the verge of being adopted, these are now afforded less weight, particularly where it is clear that relevant policies within either of the documents are superseded by up-to-date policies within the Local Plan

Relevant Policies would be:

Policy GD1 – General Development
Policy H7 – Housing Mix and Efficient Use of Land
Policy T4 – New Development and Transport Safety

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. For apartments the standard for outside amenity space is a minimum of 50m² plus a further 10m² for each unit. This would equate to 140m² for 9 apartments.

Parking

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

South Yorkshire Design Guide.

This includes room sizes which deal with studio apartments and flats.

The minimum size of a Studio apartment is 33m². Where the rooms are divided up into separate bedroom and living spaces they are classed as flats. These would all need to be at least 46m²

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.

Sections of relevance would be:

Section 5 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes

Consultations

Highways Drainage – No objections

Highways- No objections

Representations

The following comments were received prior to the latest amended plans being submitted showing a reduction in the number of units.

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

The issues raised are:

- Concerns are raised about the adequacy of the proposed parking space to serve the development.
- Concerns are raised about the adequacy of the amenity space.
- Questions are raised about whether the manager's office will be maned 24 hours.
- There is also a concern about anti-social behaviour generated by the occupiers of the HMO and the effect this will have on the community

- Concerns are raised about the adequacy of the proposed bin storage.

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 apartments. 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 the residential amenity of future and existing occupiers, visual amenity, and highway safety.

Stipulations on the size of accommodation

The South Yorkshire Design Guide includes minimum room sizes for studio apartments and other larger flats. This stipulates that the minimum size of a Studio apartment is 33m². Where the rooms are divided up into separate bedroom and living spaces they are classed as flats. These would all need to be at least 46m². The scheme has been designed so that all the units meet the South Yorkshire Design Guides required standards.

Residential Amenity

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 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. In order to prevent overlooking to this near neighbor, the existing upper floor windows facing this property would be obscure glazed and can be conditioned to remain as such.

There is existing mature planting associated with the former Job Centre. This would be retained and the perimeter of the site fenced off to create two private communal areas for future residents and, in total, 180m² of amenity provision has been provided. This would meet the Council's requirements for amenity space per bedroom, of 140m². 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.

Local residents raise concerns about the future occupants. However, who the future occupants will be is not a planning matter. Nevertheless, the plans show provision for, a manager's office within the scheme.

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. The boundary treatment proposed around the amenity space of brick pillars and timber panels, is considered to be in character with the surroundings of which there are similar types of boundary treatment in evidence. As such the scheme will not result in any detriment to the visual amenities of the area.

Highway Safety

Local residents have raised concerns about the lack of parking and the effect 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 with 2 additional spaces created giving 9 spaces in total, which is one for each unit. The location is close to the town centre and is on 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 revised proposal is a change of use from a former Job Centre to a 9 apartments with ancillary facilities. The job centre 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 to a more appropriate residential use.

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.

Sufficient amenity space is provided and one parking space is available for each unit with all rooms meeting the 33m² recommended minimum size for a studio apartments and 46m² for flats.

Given the above the proposal is considered to be in line with the relevant policies and as such 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 R01 Rev L, R02 Rev F 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 The obscure glazing to the first floor apartment 9 shown on plan R01 Rev L shall be installed before the building is occupied and thereafter retained as such.
Reason: In the interests of maintaining the privacy of nearby residents in accordance with Core Strategy policy CSP29 Design.
- 4 The walling and fencing shown on the approved plans shall be erected before the premises are occupied and shall thereafter be retained.
Reason: In order to ensure that the amenity space is private in accordance with SPD Designing New Housing Development and Core Strategy policy CSP29 Design.

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