

APPLICATION REPORT – 23/00073/FULMAJ

Validation Date: 27 January 2023

Ward: Coppull

Type of Application: Major Full Planning

Proposal: Installation of external staircase to northern elevation, widening of existing ground floor fire doors on northern elevation, erection of security fence around site, creation of new car parking spaces and erection of sliding access gates

Location: Coppull Enterprise Centre Mill Lane Coppull Chorley PR7 5AN

Case Officer: Chris Smith

Applicant: The Lowry Partnership

Agent: The JS Design Partnership

Consultation expiry: 22 February 2023

Decision due by: 17 August 2023

RECOMMENDATION

1. It is recommended that planning permission is granted subject to conditions.

SITE DESCRIPTION

2. The application site is located within the settlement area of Coppull as defined by the Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 towards the northern end of Mill Lane. The site contains a Grade II Listed Building, which was historically named Coppull Ring Mill, but which is now known as Coppull Enterprise Centre. The mill which was originally used for cotton spinning is an early C20 three-storey height red and yellow brick building with a very large rectangular plan, tower on its eastern side and engine house on its western side.
3. Immediately to the west of the building there is an unmarked loose surfaced car park for users and visitors of the mill. Beyond this to the west and north of the site there are neighbouring residential properties. The Red Herring public houses is immediately to the south of the site, which itself is also a Grade II Listed Building. To the east the site bounds with a railway line.
4. It should be noted that the proposed development has been amended since being first received by the Council at the request of the case officer. An amended site plan has been submitted showing that the proposed fence would be 2m away from the adjacent carriageway to the south of the site and that the proposed gate would be more than 5m away from the carriageway, in order to maintain adequate sightlines from the vehicular access to the site.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

5. The application seeks planning permission for various external works and alterations to the building as follows:
 - The widening of existing ground floor fire doors on the northern elevation

- The installation of an external staircase to the northern elevation
- The erection of an approximately 2.5m high security fence along the southern site boundary facing towards Mill Lane and along the eastern site boundary
- Erection of a sliding access gate
- Creation of new car parking spaces and formation of new car park hard standing

REPRESENTATIONS

6. 1no. representation has been received citing the following grounds of objection to the proposed development:

- The existing car park is just rubble and dust
- Weeds
- Rubbish and general lack of care of the site
- On-road parking issues
- Noise

CONSULTATIONS

7. Chorley Council's Heritage Advisor – is of the opinion that the proposal would meet the statutory test of the Act 'to preserve' and is acceptable in design terms.
8. Coppull Parish Council – Have stated that the submitted plans are appropriate and proportionate and would have minimal impact on the visual aspect of the mill.
9. Lancashire Highway Services (LCC Highways) – Have stated that they do not have any objections to the proposed development and are of the opinion that it would not have a significant impact on highway safety, capacity or amenity in the immediate vicinity of the site.
10. Network Rail – Have no objections but stated that no works are to commence until they have been agreed with Network Rail.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of the development

11. The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development and for decision making this means approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay, or where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed.
12. The application site is located in the settlement area of Coppull. Policy V2 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026 states that within the settlement areas excluded from the Green Belt, and identified on the Policies Map, there is a presumption in favour of appropriate sustainable development.
13. The principle of the proposed development is, therefore, considered to be an acceptable one, subject to material planning considerations.

Design and impact on the character of the area

14. Policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026 states that planning permission will be granted for new development, including extensions, conversions and free standing structures, provided that the proposal does not have a significantly detrimental impact on the surrounding area by virtue of its density, siting, layout, building to plot ratio, height, scale and massing, design, orientation and use of materials.

15. Whilst it is acknowledged the proposed door alterations and fire escape would alter the external appearance of the building, they would be contained to the northern facing elevation of the building which is not a prominently visible part of the building. Consequently, these elements of the proposal would be well screened from public vantage points to the south of the site by the existing building. Direct and uninterrupted intervisibility between the proposed development and public vantage points at Mill Lane to the north of the site would be prevented by the residential properties which bound with the site to the north. Although the proposed staircase would be of more modern design relative to the traditionally designed mill building, it would have a functional aesthetic which would not appear entirely out of keeping with the existing building which does have a somewhat utilitarian and industrial appearance.
16. It is acknowledged that the proposed security fencing and access gate would be discernible within the adjacent streetscenes from numerous public vantage points to the south located along Mill Lane. However, it is noted that the streetscene immediately to the south of the site lacks any overall prevailing character and is viewed more as a transitional area between the mill site and the residential housing estate to the west of the site. The boundary along the south of the site facing towards Mill Lane is completely open and therefore the proposed boundary treatments would provide a clear visual demarcation between the site and the adjacent public highway. In this respect they would make a positive visual contribution to the character of the immediate locality as would the resurfacing of the car park which is currently in a poor state of repair with uneven cracked surfacing which appears unsightly and detracts from the character of the area and the mill building.
17. The proposal is considered to be acceptable in design terms and accords with Chorley Local Plan policy BNE1.

Impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers

18. Policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 states that planning permission will be granted for new development, including extensions, conversions and free-standing structures, provided that, the development would not cause harm to any neighbouring property by virtue of overlooking, overshadowing or by creating overbearing impacts.
19. The proposed doorway alterations would be very minor changes to the configuration of the northern elevation of the building and they would not be of such size and scale that they would have any unacceptable adverse impacts on neighbour amenity. The proposed staircase would be approximately 13.5m to the south west of the nearest neighbouring residential property at no. 194 Mill Lane. Due to this degree of separation, it is not considered that it would have any unacceptable adverse impacts on the amenity of the occupiers of this property as a result of light loss or a loss of outlook. Nor is it considered that the development would have a significantly greater or more adverse impact on the amenity of neighbouring properties than that which currently occurs as a result of the existing already very sizeable mill building. The staircase would not contain any windows and, therefore, there would be no unacceptable adverse impacts on neighbour amenity from loss of privacy.
20. The proposed fence would be built along the southern and eastern site boundaries and would not run parallel to the rear gardens of any neighbouring residential properties. However, the westernmost end of the fence would be approximately 4m to the south east of the residential property no. 111 Mill Lane and approximately 1.5m away from the side elevation of no. 194 Mill Lane. Despite this degree of proximity, the fence would benefit from a light weight permeable mesh design and as a consequence it is not considered that it would have any unacceptable adverse impacts on neighbour amenity as a result of light loss or a loss of outlook.
21. It is noted that a representation of objection has been received which draws attention to the poor condition of the existing car parking surface and the noise which occurs as a result of vehicles driving over the surface. The re-surfacing of the car park would, therefore, result in an overall benefit to neighbour amenity as the improved surfacing would reduce this noise.

22. The proposal accords with Chorley Local Plan policy BNE1 in respect of amenity considerations.

Impact on a designated heritage asset

23. The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (The Act) sets out the primary duty that a Local Planning Authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses. Great weight and importance is attached to this duty.

24. The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) at Chapter 16 deals with conserving and enhancing the historic environment. It sets out that in determining planning applications LPAs should take account of;

- The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
- The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

25. Paragraph 199 states that when considering the impact of proposals on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. The more important the asset, the greater the weight should be applied. This is irrespective of whether any harm is identified as being substantial, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

26. Paragraph 200 states that any harm or loss of significance to a designated heritage asset (from alteration or destruction or from development within its setting) should require clear and convincing justification.

27. Paragraph 202 states that where a development will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.

28. The adopted Central Lancashire Core Strategy (2012) policy 16 (Heritage Assets) states: Protect and seek opportunities to enhance the historic environment, heritage assets and their settings by:

- a) Safeguarding heritage assets from inappropriate development that would cause harm to their significances.
- b) Supporting development or other initiatives where they protect and enhance the local character, setting, management and historic significance of heritage assets, with particular support for initiatives that will improve any assets that are recognised as being in poor condition, or at risk.
- c) Identifying and adopting a local list of heritage assets for each Authority.

29. Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026 policy BNE8 (Protection and Enhancement of Heritage Assets) states that:

- a) Applications affecting a Heritage Asset or its setting will be granted where it:
 - i. Is in accordance with the Framework and relevant Historic England guidance;
 - ii. Where appropriate, takes full account of the findings and recommendations in the Council's Conservation Area Appraisals and Management Proposals;
 - iii. Is accompanied by a satisfactory Heritage Statement (as defined by Chorley Council's advice on Heritage Statements) and;
- b) Applications will be granted where they sustain, conserve and, where appropriate, enhance the significance, appearance, character and setting of the heritage asset itself and the surrounding historic environment and where they show consideration for the following:

- i. The conservation of features and elements that contribute to the heritage asset's significance and character. This may include: chimneys, windows and doors, boundary treatments, original roof coverings, earthworks or buried remains, shop fronts or elements of shop fronts in conservation areas, as well as internal features such as fireplaces, plaster cornices, doors, architraves, panelling and any walls in listed buildings;
- ii. The reinstatement of features and elements that contribute to the heritage asset's significance which have been lost or damaged;
- iii. The conservation and, where appropriate, the enhancement of the setting of heritage assets;
- iv. The removal of additions or modifications that are considered harmful to the significance of any heritage asset. This may include the removal of pebbledash, paint from brickwork, non-original style windows, doors, satellite dishes or other equipment;
- v. The use of the Heritage Asset should be compatible with the conservation of its significance. Whilst the original use of a building is usually the most appropriate one it is recognised that continuance of this use is not always possible. Sensitive and creative adaptation to enable an alternative use can be achieved and innovative design solutions will be positively encouraged;
- vi. Historical information discovered during the application process shall be submitted to the Lancashire Historic Environment Record.

The policy also states that development involving the demolition or removal of significant heritage assets or parts thereof will be granted only in exceptional circumstances which have been clearly and convincingly demonstrated to be in accordance with the requirements of the Framework.

Assessment

30. The key considerations in respect of the impact of the proposal on the heritage asset are:
 1. Whether the proposed development would harm the significance of the Grade II Listed Building (Coppull Mill) and its setting.
 2. Whether the proposal would harm the contribution made by the setting of the nearby Grade II Listed Building (Red Herring).
31. The main issue from a conservation perspective is whether the proposal would cause any harm to the significance of the listed buildings. The significance of Coppull Mill lies in its aesthetic and historic context; primarily evidenced in the building's fabric and architectural form and appearance. In this regard, as a Grade II Listed Building it can be attributed as having high significance.
32. With regards to the proposal to widen the ground level door, this is located on the north elevation of the building with the most limited views and it is considered that this would be a minor alteration in an appropriate location which would be justified. The proposed external staircase would also be located on the north elevation of the building and visually it is considered that it would be a noticeable addition to the building. However, as mentioned above, views of the north elevation of the building are relatively limited and it is noted that it overlooks a narrow access road which sits between the site and a modern recently built housing estate which reduces intervisibility between the building and public vantage points. Furthermore, the proposed would be built between an existing lift shaft and the protruding north east corner of the building and whilst it would be of modern design, it would be clearly identified as a modern addition when viewed against the more historic fabric of the existing building.
33. The proposed works for the external staircase would also involve some alterations to the fabric of the existing building. Former openings that have been infilled on the side of the lift shaft structure, would be reopened and widened to provide access to the stairway area and small areas of stud walls would be erected to provide new doorways to access the lift and proposed new staircase across all the upper floors. As former openings would be reused, it is considered that these would be only minor alterations. However, it is also noted that existing windows which face towards the area of the proposed staircase would need to be blocked up. An updated heritage design and access statement states that:

“The existing windows that overlook the area proposed for the external staircase would be retained. To prevent fire within the building shattering the glazing and compromising the fire safety integrity of the staircase, it is proposed to construct a fire rated ‘screen’ within the window reveals to give the required fire resistance. This would comprise metal or timber framework with layers of gypsum fireline board and skim. The shape of the window openings would be visible. It is clearly a modern intervention and could if required be removed in the future”.

34. Whilst it would be preferable that the windows are left unblocked, it is accepted that there is a clear need for the proposed works for the purposes of fire safety and in order to ensure that the 2nd and 3rd floors of the building are suitable for modern day uses. Given that the shape of the window openings would remain, and the works would be reversible it is accepted that this element of the proposed development has been suitably justified.
35. The Red Herring Public House was once the office block to Coppull Ring Mill and, therefore, it contributes positively to the group interest and general historic setting of the site. Notwithstanding this, the immediate setting and wider setting has drastically changed throughout the 20th century and the once large mill site was substantially altered following the demolition of Mavis Mill which was a similarly sized mill building located immediately to the west of the existing mill. This facilitated the formation of the existing car park and neighbouring housing development which resulted in physical changes to the immediate setting of the listed buildings.
36. These cumulative changes have overtime contributed to the gradual erosion of the historic setting and have impacted on how the listed buildings are experienced, therefore, reducing the contribution made by the setting to the significance of the listed buildings. Nevertheless, it is considered that the application site contributes to the significance of the listed buildings and can be considered, for the basis of this assessment, to be of a neutral value. Coppull Mill is already encompassed by poorly surfaced car parks and has differing metal fencing that runs adjacent to the railway line and access road. Given the already eroded nature of the setting to the listed building and its limited or neutral importance, it is considered that the car park and fencing proposals would have no impact on the contribution made by the setting on the significance of the heritage assets.
37. It is considered that the proposal would meet the statutory test of the Act ‘to preserve’ and is acceptable in design terms. The proposed development accords with the objectives of Chapter 16 of the Framework, policies and BNE8 of the Chorley Local Plan and Policy 16 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy.

Highway safety

38. Policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 states that developments must not cause severe residual cumulative highways impact or prejudice highway safety, pedestrian safety, the free flow of traffic, or reduce the number of on-site parking spaces.
39. Initially, LCC Highways stated that they had concerns regarding highway safety and in order to support the application, requested that the proposed fence be set back a minimum of 2m from the edge of the carriageway to maintain sightlines. They also requested the gate be set back a minimum of 5m from the back edge of the carriageway to permit vehicles to pull clear of the carriageway when entering and exiting the site and to ensure the swing of the gate does not affect the availability for a car to wait off road. Sight lines of 2.4 x 25m would also need to be provided in both directions from the centre of the access onto Mill Lane.
40. In response to this, an amended site plan has been submitted showing that the proposed fence would be 2m away from the adjacent carriageway to the south of the site and that the proposed gate would be more than 5m away from the carriageway, in order to maintain adequate sightlines from the vehicular access to the site.

41. LCC Highways have reviewed the amended plans and stated that they do not have any objections to the proposed development and are of the opinion that it would not have a significant impact on highway safety, capacity, or amenity in the immediate vicinity of the site. They also advised that the car parking layout (ref: 80880-12 revision D) is acceptable.

CONCLUSION

42. The proposed development is acceptable in principle and would not have an unacceptable adverse impact on the character and appearance of the existing site or the surrounding area, nor would it cause any significant harm to the amenity of neighbouring residents or highway safety and it would not harm the significance of the identified heritage assets. The statutory duty to preserve is met and the application accords with the Framework at Chapter 16, Central Lancashire Core Strategy policy 16 and policies BNE1 and BNE8 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026. Consequently, it is recommended that the application is approved, subject to conditions.

RELEVANT POLICIES: In accordance with s.38 (6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the application is to be determined in accordance with the development plan (the Central Lancashire Core Strategy, the Adopted Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Consideration of the proposal has had regard to guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the development plan. The specific policies/guidance considerations are contained within the body of the report.

RELEVANT HISTORY OF THE SITE

Ref: 23/00074/LBC **Decision:** PCO **Decision Date:**

Description: Application for listed building consent for the installation of external staircase to northern elevation, widen existing ground floor fire doors on northern elevation, erection of security fence around site, creation of new car parking spaces, erection of sliding access gates and installation of new internal fire escape stairs on the second and third floors

Suggested Conditions

1. The proposed development must be begun not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The external facing materials, detailed on the approved plans, shall be used and no others substituted unless alternatives are first submitted to and agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority, when the development shall then be carried out in accordance with the alternatives approved.

Reason: To ensure that the materials used are visually appropriate to the locality.

3. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans below:

Title	Plan Ref	Received On
Proposed First Floorplan	8080-07	12 July 2023
Proposed Second Floorplan	8080-C 8	12 July 2023
Proposed Third Floorplan	8080-O 9	12 July 2023
Site Location Plan	8080-SLP	27 January 2023
Proposed Elevations	8080.11	27 January 2023
Proposed Car Park Layout	8080.12 Rev D	24 February 2023

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

4. No building (or use hereby permitted) shall be occupied (or use commenced) until visibility splays 2.4 metres back from the centre line of the access and extending 25 metres on the

nearside carriageway edge in both directions have been provided at the access, as shown on the approved plans. Nothing shall be erected, retained, planted and / or allowed to grow at or above a height of 0.9 metres above the nearside carriageway level which would obstruct the visibility splay. The visibility splays shall be maintained free of obstruction at all times thereafter for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure adequate inter-visibility between highway users at the site access, in the interests of highway safety.

5. Before the access is used for vehicular purposes, any gateposts erected at the access shall be positioned 5m behind the nearside edge of the highway. The gates shall open away from the highway.

Reason: To permit vehicles to pull clear of the carriageway when entering the site, in the interests of highway safety.

6. Before the development hereby permitted becomes operative, the existing highway frontage of the site to adjacent to Mill Lane shall be reduced to and be permanently maintained henceforth at a height not greater than 1m above the crown level of the carriageway of Mill Lane. The land within 2m of the rear of the carriageway shall be maintained thereafter, free from obstructions such as walls, fences, trees, hedges, shrubs, ground growth or other structures within the splays in excess of 0.9 metres in height above the height at the centre line of the adjacent carriageway.

Reason: To ensure adequate visibility at the street junction or site access in the interest of highway safety in accordance with Quality of Development Policy and Transport Policy in the Local Plan.