

APPLICATION REPORT – 24/00917/FUL

Validation Date: 29 October 2024

Ward: Chorley North West

Type of Application: Full Planning

Proposal: Change of use of existing office (Use Class E) to a 6no. bedroom house in multiple occupation (Use Class C4)

Location: Lancashire Care NHS Trust 1 Ashfield Road Chorley PR7 1LH

Case Officer: Chris Smith

Applicant: Brick & Beam Limited

Agent: Ashall Town Planning

Consultation expiry: 21 November 2024

Decision due by: 24 December 2024

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 Chorley as defined by the Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 on the eastern side of Ashfield Road. The site is a vacant, two storey, end terrace property which previously accommodated offices. The immediate locality is mainly residential and is characterised by a variety of traditionally designed property types including terraced, semi-detached and detached dwellings although there is a large office building directly adjacent to the site on the opposite side of Ashfield Road. The site is also located within an area that is designated as a 'Locally Important Area' under the Council's Local Plan.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3. The application seeks planning permission for the change of use of no. 1 Ashfield Road from offices to a 6no. bedroom house in multiple occupation (HMO).

REPRESENTATIONS

4. Seven representations have been received citing the following grounds of objection to the proposed development –
 - Too many HMOs in the immediate locality.
 - Noise
 - Parking
 - Highway safety
 - The proposed development would provide cramped poor-quality accommodation.
 - Anti-social behaviour.
 - Introduction of an HMO would disrupt the family friendly atmosphere of the area.

- Lack of infrastructure to support the development.
- Questions regarding how rubbish will be stored prior to collection.

CONSULTATIONS

5. 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.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of the development

6. The application site is located in the core settlement area of Chorley. 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.
7. The application site is an employment premises as it has been used as offices. The adopted Central Lancashire Core Strategy 2012 sets the overall employment requirement for Chorley as 112 ha to 2026. Table 2 within Chapter 6 of the Local Plan provides an employment land supply in Chorley for the period 2010 – 2026 as 100.61ha. This figure does not take into account vacant stock in the Borough.
8. The proposed use of the building would result in the loss of approximately 148 square metres of employment land supply. Given that this is a very small loss, it is not considered that the proposed development would result in an unacceptable reduction in the type, quality or quantity of employment land supply.
9. Policy 10 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy states that all existing employment premises and sites last used for employment will be protected for employment use. There will be a presumption that 'Best Urban' and 'Good Urban' sites will be retained for B use class employment use. Proposals on all employment sites/premises for re-use or redevelopment other than B use class employment uses will be assessed under the following criteria:

(a) There would not be an unacceptable reduction on the type, quality or quantity of employment land supply:

It is not considered that the loss of such a small area of office floorspace would result in an unacceptable reduction in the type, quality or quantity of employment land supply in the borough. There remains an ample choice of employment land offering various sizes, types and tenures.

(b) The provision and need for the proposed use:

The planning statement submitted with the application states that the proposed development would provide a highly sustainable form of development. It is also considered that there would be social and economic benefits through the provision of 6no. new dwelling units, which is in accordance with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework. Paragraph 60 of the Framework states that to support the Government's objective of significantly boosting the supply of homes, it is important that a sufficient amount and variety of land can come forward where it is needed.

(c) The relative suitability of the site for employment and for the alternative use:

The application site is an end terrace property which has been used for offices for a considerable period of time although it is noted that the Planning Officer's notes relating to planning application ref: 92/00480/FUL, which sought planning permission for car parking spaces to the rear of the site, describe the site as comprising "3 former houses which have been in commercial office use since 1987". This clearly demonstrates that prior to its use as

offices, the site was a residential dwellinghouse. It is considered, therefore, that the site would be suitable for the proposed residential use which would also be in keeping with the residential character of the immediate locality.

(d) The location of the site and its relationship to other uses:

The use would not have any impact on other uses within the area. It is considered that it would complement the other uses.

(e) Whether the ability to accommodate smaller scale requirements would be compromised;

The application site currently provides a small amount of office floorspace and therefore its loss would compromise smaller scale requirements to some extent. The impact would, however, be limited and the ability to re-use the building for employment uses in future would not be compromised as the building would require very little alteration to accommodate the proposed use.

(f) There would be a net improvement in amenity:

It is considered that the proposed development would be a less intensive and more low-key use of the site than the current lawful use of the site as offices, and, therefore, it is not considered that the proposed development would have a significantly greater or more adverse impact on neighbouring amenity than the previous use of the site. Furthermore, it is considered that there would be a net improvement in amenity, particularly during daytime hours, on the basis that the proposed use would generate less vehicular traffic and fewer comings and goings during these hours than the previous office use.

10. Whilst it is acknowledged that there would be some loss of allocated employment space, an ample choice of employment land would remain in the immediate locality including a large office building adjacent to the site at no. 10 Ashfield Road, and given that the application site is a small-office premises, its loss would be limited and the ability to use the building for employment uses in the future would not be comprised. It is considered, therefore, that the development is in compliance with policy 10 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy.

Design and impact on the character of the area

11. 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:

a) 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.

12. Proposed external alterations would be limited to the removal of a door within the side (south) elevation of the existing property. However, this alteration would be completely screened from any public vantage points by the neighbouring property at no. 3 Ashfield Road. It is not considered, therefore, that the resultant building would have a significantly greater or moder adverse visual impact upon the character of the immediate locality than the existing building.

13. A bin storage area and cycle store would be located to the rear of the proposed building and, therefore, they would be screened from public vantage points.

14. On the basis of the above the proposed development would not be harmful to the character of the area, thereby complying with Chorley Local Plan policy BNE1.

Impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers

15. 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:

b) the development would not cause harm to any neighbouring property by virtue of overlooking, overshadowing or by creating overbearing impacts.

16. To the rear (east) the site is bounded by neighbouring terraced residential properties at nos. 4, 6 and 8 Bank Street and whilst there would be a habitable room window at first floor level within the rear elevation of the resultant building, it is not considered that there would be a significantly greater or more adverse impact on neighbour amenity in respect of privacy loss than that which has occurred as a result of the current lawful use of the building as offices.
17. The proposed bicycle store would be a very modestly proportioned and low-profile structure with a maximum height of just 2m and, therefore, it would have no unacceptable adverse impacts on neighbour amenity as a result of overbearing or light loss.
18. To the south, the site is attached to an existing retail premises and to the west on the opposite side of Ashfield Road there is an office building. It is not considered that the proposed development would have a greater impact on the amenity of neighbouring residential occupiers than these existing non-residential uses.
19. Having regard to the above, the proposal is considered to accord with Chorley Local Plan policy BNE1 b) in respect of amenity.

Parking and highway safety

20. Policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 -2026 stipulates that planning permission will be granted for new development, including extensions, conversions and free-standing structures, provided that:
 - d) the residual cumulative highways impact of the development is not severe and it would not prejudice highway safety, pedestrian safety, the free flow of traffic, and would not reduce the number of on-site parking spaces to below the standards stated in Site Allocations Policy – Parking Standards, unless there are other material considerations which justify the reduction.
21. Policy ST4 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 requires that proposals for development need to make parking provision in accordance with the standards set out in Appendix A of the Local Plan. Appendix A identifies the Council's minimum parking standards for residential (Use Class C3) in all other areas outside Chorley Town Centre as being 1 space per bedroom. However, the policy does provide some flexibility in the parking standards and locations that are considered to be more sustainable and well served by public transport may be considered appropriate for lower levels of provision.
22. The application site does not contain any parking provision, and the application does not propose any. However, LCC Highways have stated that they do not have any objections to the proposed development and that they 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 stated that the site is located within a sustainable location, and they do not, therefore, request that any off street car parking is provided and the proposed cycle provision would support social inclusion and sustainable forms of transport.
23. Whilst it is acknowledged that there is limited off-street car parking availability within the immediate area, the site is positioned within a sustainable location approximately 160m to the south west of the Chorley Town Centre boundary and it is, therefore, within walking distance of a wide range of shops, services, amenities and public transportation links including Chorley bus and railway stations.
24. Overall, it is not considered that the proposed development would prejudice highway or pedestrian safety or have any adverse impact on highway amenity or capacity.

Impact on a locally important area

25. The site is located within an area that is designated as a 'Locally Important Area'. Paragraph 7.32 of the Local Plan states that "not all of Chorley's heritage is nationally designated and it is important that we recognise the value of our 'local' historic environment in planning for the future" and paragraph 7.34 states that "there may be areas that are considered to be historically significant on a more local level, in effect being 'Locally Important Areas'. These include, for example, areas of lower density housing where the character and distinctiveness of the houses and private residential gardens is worthy of extra protection from development pressures".
26. However, as mentioned earlier in the report, only very limited external alterations are required in order to facilitate the proposed change of use and the resultant building would not have a significantly greater or more adverse impact on the character of the immediate locality including the 'Locally Important Area' than the existing building.

Community infrastructure levy

27. The Chorley CIL Infrastructure Charging Schedule provides a specific amount for development. The CIL Charging Schedule was adopted on 16 July 2013 and charging commenced on 1 September 2013. The proposed development would be a chargeable development, and the charge is subject to indexation in accordance with the Council's Charging Schedule.

CONCLUSION

28. The proposed development is acceptable in principle and would not result in any significant harm to 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. It is, therefore, considered that the development accords with policy 10 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy 2012 and policies BNE1 and ST4 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026.

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: 80/01195/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 5 January 1981
Description: Change of use from offices to residential

Ref: 87/00269/ADV **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 15 June 1987
Description: Display of non illuminated advertisement sign

Ref: 92/00480/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 16 July 1992
Description: Formation of car parking area

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
Location Plan	01	29 October 2024
Proposed Site/Block Plan	07 A	29 October 2024
Proposed Elevations	06	29 October 2024
Proposed Floor Plans	05 A	29 October 2024

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

4. Before the development hereby permitted is first occupied, provision for cycle storage, in accordance with approved details (drawing 07 revision A) shall have been provided in all respects and made available for use and shall thereafter be retained.

Reason: To encourage sustainable transport modes.