

Item A. 2 05/00455/FULMAJ Refuse Full Planning Permission

Case Officer Mr Simon Pemberton

Ward Chorley North East

Proposal Erection of hotel and public house/restaurant and related works,

Location Land Between M61 Motorway And Leeds And Liverpool Canal, Millennium Way, Chorley, Lancashire,

Applicant Mitchells & Butlers

Site: The site comprises part of the land between the M61 Motorway and the Leeds and Liverpool Canal to the north of Botany Bay Mill. The northern boundary is the A674 (Millennium Way) from which access is gained from the existing roundabout. The site extends to some 5 hectares in total.

Background: This application is related to outline application 05/00394/OUTMAJ found elsewhere on this agenda. That report provides a full resume of the background to the applications, the planning history, consultation responses, and the relevant planning policies. They are not repeated in this report for the sake of brevity.

The application has subsequently been submitted on behalf of Mitchells and Butler (Vintage Inns) for a Hotel and Public House on the northernmost part of the site adjacent to the A674 roundabout. It is understood that the hotel operator is Ramada, although this is not specified in the application submission.

The applicant originally incorrectly indicated that Bluemantle were the owners of the site. As a consequence the applications were invalid until the correct certificate was received on the 7 November 2005.

Proposals: This application proposes the construction of a 109 bed hotel (C1) and public house/restaurant (A3/A4) in the north western most corner of the site with frontage to the access and the A674. Finished floor levels are uncertain although the applicants have indicated they would wish to raise the ground levels to increase the prominence of the building. The pub is domestic in scale and has the appearance of an old cottage. It is similar to their recent development at Three Rings (Bamber Bridge) in South Ribble.

Issues: The general issues relating to the principles of the proposed development have been addressed in the report on the outline planning application. Those issues apply equally to this application as they do the outline, and therefore are not repeated here.

However, the detailed application includes the design and location of the proposed development. Issues relating to these specific issues are discussed in detail below:

The proposed public house is located in the north eastern most corner adjacent to the existing roundabout on the A674. The proposed hotel is located immediately to side (west) of this also adjacent to the northern boundary of the site. The site is very prominent with open views from the elevated road adjacent to the site. The development will also be prominent in terms of views from further a field including Blackburn Road to the East and the M61 to the west, particularly from Junction 8.

The two buildings the subject of this application have been designed as two distinct entities. They are described in detail below.

The Proposed Hotel

The proposed hotel was originally submitted as a bland building with a curved roof with two storey entrance feature. This design was considered to be unacceptable as it paid no regard to context, the characteristics of the site, the adjacent mill buildings, the canal or the desire to create a building of a high standard of design. As a result the proposed development has been amended by the applicant.

The amended plans have sought to create a contemporary building whilst accepting the presence, scale and detailing of the Botany Bay Mill. The proposed building is L shaped in plan form being 52 metres by 34 metres approximately. The building is largely four storeys in height (13.5 metres). There is a central glass atrium located at the corner of the L which accommodates the entrance, reception, stairs, and lifts. The atrium is 5 storey (16.5 metres) in height to accommodate air conditioning and lift head equipment.

The bedroom accommodation is provided in two wings on the first, second and third floors. The ground floor incorporates the various service accommodation (such as laundry, offices and staff accommodation) the bar and restaurant areas (together with the kitchens and other associated accommodation) and nine meeting rooms (5 small and four large).

The proportion of the building and the arrangement of the fenestration has been selected to try and reflect the pattern on the Mill. It assists significantly in the process of achieving a degree of linkage between the historic and modern. The changes have introduced a vertical emphasis and reduced the horizontal mass of the structure.

The hotel is finished largely in red powder coated metal panels with grey louvres and other detailing. The windows are vertical in shape and nearly the full height of the room. They will be recessed and constructed from powder coated aluminium. This reflects the rhythm and proportions of the Botany Bay Mill building whilst expressing the nature of the building as a modern hotel.

The plan form with two unequal wings around a central fully glazed atrium is designed to give the building visual interest and to focus visitors attention on the main entrance.

The resultant building which has been the subject of extensive negotiations between your officers and the applicant creates a

substantial structure that reflects its context and makes an important statement on a prominent and key route into Chorley. It is considered that the design is appropriate bearing in mind the scale of accommodation and the nature of the use it is accommodating.

The Proposed Public House

The proposed public house is a 'cottage' style building. It is domestic in scale and has the appearance of a terrace of cottages that have been converted into a pub/restaurant. This is a deliberate design format of the chain intending to operate the pub. Similar examples of this design of pub can be seen at recently completed developments in South Ribble at Three Rings Industrial/Retail Park, Bamber Bridge (the Walton Fox) and Little Hoole (The Fox Cub).

The main range (facing the roundabout) is 2 storey and 30 metres in length. This has the form of one two storey dwelling with an attached lower element with dormer windows cut through the eaves. At the rear is a series of single storey elements with a combination of flat and pitched roofs to give the appearance of various rambling extensions. These single storey elements at the rear incorporate a mixture of seating areas and kitchens, stores etc. The first floor is not intended to be used for any specific purpose in the first instance.

It is intended that the finished floor level of the public house would be raised by approximately 1 metre above existing ground level in order to make the building more prominent when viewed by passing traffic.

The Relationship Between the Pub and the Hotel

It can be seen from the different design approaches explained above that there is some tension between the design of the proposed hotel – a modern and contemporary structure – and that of the proposed public house – a 'cottage' style structure. The development will be prominently located in a situation where these buildings will be read together, particularly from the east including the A674.

The applicant has submitted two photomontages that show the proposed development in situ. From the west the proposed pub is screened to a certain extent from wider views by the hotel. However, as you approach the building then views will be possible. From the east the public house will be viewed with the hotel looming behind it. The photo montage from the east shows this relationship clearly.

Your officers have indicated concerns regarding this over many months but the applicant has been unwilling to vary their proposals significantly. Your officers have always indicated a preference for buildings that reflected the context of the site but also took advantage of the prominent location of the site to make a strong visual statement. The pub fails to do this. Whilst the design of this building is not offensive in its own right, the relationship between the two buildings is uncomfortable. It was suggested that the public house be relocated adjacent to the canal where the building would be read in a different context, and

certainly not immediately against the proposed hotel. However, again the applicants have been unwilling to consider this. They have suggested that such a location is not commercially viable and that only such a prominent site would warrant the proposed development. However, this point is not accepted as addressing the fundamental difficulty the design ethos of this site.

Local Planning Authorities are urged in PPS1 to secure good design. It confirms that good design is indivisible from planning and that authorities should plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all developments including individual buildings and wider development schemes. It advises that design which is inappropriate and fails to take opportunities for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted.

In this respect design is not just a matter of securing individually acceptable individual buildings but securing an overall built form that is acceptable and creates a sense of place. That includes creating an environment where the relationships between buildings of differing designs is acceptable. This is not the case with the proposed development.

Conclusions: For the reasons discussed above, it is considered that the application is of poor design because of the relationship of the proposed hotel and pub bearing in mind their contrasting styles and design. The application is therefore recommended for refusal for the following reason.

Recommendation: Refuse Full Planning Permission

Reasons

1. The proposed development is located in a prominent location highly visible from public vantage points. The proposed design of the hotel and public house elements represents a poor form of urban design with tension between the design of the proposed elements that would create buildings that appeared out of context with each other and is contrary to the advice in PPS1 on Design policy DP3 of the Regional Spatial Strategy for the North West (RPG13) and policy GN5 of the Chorley Borough Local Plan Review 2003.
