

Item A. 1 **06/00423/FULMAJ** **Permit Full Planning Permission**

Case Officer **Miss Caron Taylor**

Ward **Chorley North West**

Proposal **Refurbishment of existing hostel and hotel to form 16 self contained flats with office space and sleep over area,**

Location **1 & 3 Southport Road Chorley PR7 1LB**

Applicant **Stonham Housing Association**

Proposal: The application is for the refurbishment of an existing hostel and hotel to form 16 self contained flats with office space and sleep over area at 1 & 3 Southport Road, Chorley.

Background: 1 and 3 Southport Road are a pair of large Victorian semi detached houses located just outside Chorley town centre as shown in the Local Plan. Stonham Housing Association were granted permission for a 9 bed person hostel at no. 1 in 1980 (80/01169/FUL) and no. 3 was granted permission in 1988 (88/00128/FUL) as a guest house, but is now vacant. Stonham purchased no. 3 in June 2005.

Stonham propose to expand the service provision currently provided at no. 1 into no. 3 to accommodate 16 ex-offenders. No. 1 will comprise 8 studio flats, offices, staff accommodation, laundry and training room, while no. 3 will comprise of 8 self-contained 1 bed flats comprising move-on accommodation from no. 1. The service will be staffed on a 24 hour basis. The application states that there will be a maximum of 4 staff members on site at any one time and residents are not car owners.

Planning History: 80/01169/FUL: 9 person hostel for the single homeless people at No. 1
88/00128/FUL: Change of use to guest house at No. 3

Planning Policy: GN1: Settlement Policy - Main Settlements
Windfall Housing Supplementary Planning Guidance
HS17: Special Needs Housing

Consultations: Strategic Housing Services
Support the planning application made by Stonham Housing Association to increase the provision for ex-offenders in Chorley at 3 Southport Road, Chorley.

Improving services to ex-offenders was highlighted in the Council's Prevention of Homelessness Strategy 2003, and increasing the provision of accommodation for ex-offenders is a specific objective of the 2005 Housing Strategy. These priorities for action have been identified through consultation events during the development of both strategies. During 2004 and 2005 sub regional homelessness strategy consultation events were held with Preston City Council and South Ribble Borough Council, amongst the significant issues raised at those events was the need for more ex-offender accommodation.

The Draft Homeless Review 2006 shows that during the period Jan 03 to Jan 06, 341 referrals were made to the current scheme, only 78 (23%) were accepted and temporarily housed. Evidence suggests that these referrals are in addition to those applicants seen by Chorley Borough Council's Homeless Assessment team as only 2% of those referrals were from Chorley Borough Council.

Move on accommodation is also in very short supply in Chorley and they state that this scheme would have a positive impact on improving the stability of current ex-offender accommodation.

Lancashire County Council Highways:

Planning permission would not be required to create an access/parking off Ashfield Road, as it is not classified. Parking off Southport Road already exists and there is a dropped kerb. However, backing out onto Southport Road should not be encouraged. The erection of a low wall at the front of no. 3 may encourage people to turn round using the space in front of the property first.

Chorley Community Safety Partnership/MAPS:

State that their only concern relates to the rear boundary wall of No. 3 as it is in a poor state of repair and access can be gained through a metal gate to the rear garden and therefore the building without check. They therefore recommend a suitable boundary be constructed to prevent such access.

Environmental Services:

The Director of Streetscene, Neighbourhoods & Environment Directorate state that they have no comments.

Applicants Case:

To meet the government's objectives, Stonham in Chorley aims to reduce the impact of homelessness for low risk offenders being released from custody who otherwise would be excluded from obtaining independent accommodation. They support those who have suffered from drug and alcohol misuse, and enable them to access health services, permanent accommodation, education and local leisure activities, to enhance future prospects and remain free of substance misuse. At a local level they meet the council's objective by offering temporary accommodation and support services for the homeless in Chorley.

The service at Southport Road has operated successfully for the past 20 years and they state they will continue to adhere to our policies and procedures regarding the selection and support of our service users, thus ensuring best practice at all times.

In order to be considered for housing within the Chorley service applicants must be:

- Homeless following release from a custodial sentence and at risk of re-offending.
- Be a single homeless person in need of supported accommodation.
- Be aged between 18 and 65 years.

- Must not be currently using any illegal substances, unless they are in a recognised programme of support and rehabilitation.

Stonham aim to consider applications from all sectors of the community and have a stringent process of application, interview and inclusion. They state they work closely with other statutory and voluntary agencies, such as the Probation Service, Police etc and have access to all relevant documentation. This enables them to complete an assessment of needs, risk assessment and risk management, which is regularly reviewed to ensure that our service users are supported to work toward positive outcomes. All referrals are considered individually and their acceptance would be based on a thorough assessment of risk, considering the safety and welfare of the person, other service users, staff and the local community.

At the Southport Road service we do not take applications from those people whose offences place them in a high risk category.

Representations: Eight letters have been received in response to notification of the application.

Objections to the proposal can be summarised as:

- It is inappropriate and irresponsible to extend the existing facilities of the hostel close to a children's play area.
- The behaviour of many of the young men in this area over the last 3 years has become apparent through many complaints.
- Drug taking has been witnessed on the rear car park.
- They do not object to the rehabilitation of offenders into the community yet they feel as many of the offenders are of a serious nature, their home is too close and their children play in the area.
- Noise is experienced very late at night from the existing hostel from people stood outside shouting up to the rooms to try and gain access.
- Tenants sit on the window sills with the windows open playing loud music and shouting at passing people.
- Police or ambulances visiting the property create a major disturbance for their young children.
- Residents of the hostel have knocked on the door of neighbouring properties asking to borrow things.
- Many disturbances and problems have not been reported by residents as they are aware that many of the occupants are violent criminals, drug addicts, sex offenders and paedophiles so fear for the safety of their family if they are seen to be complaining to the supervisors.
- The application has the potential to double to number of ex-offenders and windows on no. 3 overlook the neighbouring children's nursery play area.
- Since the existing hostel opened there has been a steady increase in petty crime.
- There appears to be no internal access between no. 1 and no. 3 to facilitate supervision. Therefore security has not been satisfactorily addressed.
- When the existing hostel was converted the residents parking on the driveway and forecourt of no. 10 caused

substantial nuisance. A doubling of the accommodation has the potential to again result in unauthorised parking. The application contains no proposals to mitigate this.

- The proposal would be adjacent to Pipers Day Nursery that caters for children aged 2-5 years of age. Parents and staff have raised serious concerns as to the appropriateness of siting such a hostel adjacent to an existing nursery. Several parents have indicated they would be unhappy leaving their children in close proximity to such an establishment.
- There is concern over loss of privacy and disruption including parking, as it will exacerbate what is already a difficult situation.
- Residents have broken into neighbouring yards and homes, car windows have been smashed and valuables stolen.
- Fighting has taken place in the street and various police raids have taken place at the premises.
- Visitors may park on the forecourt of 10 Ashfield Road and groups of young people congregate on the forecourt.
- There are concerns over security and supervision during the night and at weekends.

Initially the 'red edge' of the application included land not owned by the applicants and has a right of access over to garages. The red edge of the application has been amended in light of these comments.

Assessment:

Highways/Parking

It is proposed to provide eight parking spaces at the properties. Two within a double garage at the rear, three off Ashfield Road and three off Southport Road. The applicants state that there will be no more than four staff on site at any one time and therefore the other spaces will be available for visits. The access and parking off Ashfield Road would not require planning permission, as Ashfield Road is not a classified road.

The three spaces accessed off Southport Road where there is a dropped kerb already exist and were created when the property was a guesthouse. Although highways state that backing onto Southport Road should not be encouraged, it would be difficult to refuse the application on these grounds as the application does not propose to change the parking situation on this side of the property from what exists at present.

Residents have stated concerns about cars parking in front of garages and rights of access at the rear of the property. However, this is private issue between residents, not a planning issue.

Neighbour Amenity

In terms of overlooking the main issue is the windows of no. 3 that look over the front garden on no. 7. Although these windows already exist, they are bedroom windows and the proposal will involve these windows serving living and kitchen areas creating a potential for greater overlooking. The ground floor windows do not pose a problem as there is sufficient screening on the boundary and the windows towards the rear on all floors conform with the

interface guideline that states there should be 10m between a habitable room window and the boundary of a neighbouring property. The windows at second floor level are of less concern due to their height.

There are two windows of concern at first floor level. Amended plans have been received fully obscuring one of these windows, as it is not the only window that serves the room. The other window of concern is a bay window. While it would be unreasonable to require the whole of this window to be obscure glazed as it is the only window to the room, the main front window pane overlooking the garden has been obscured and the two side panes have been left clear glazed. It is therefore considered that the issue of overlooking has been overcome through the use of obscure glazing in selected windows. A condition will be placed on any permission requiring this glazing to remain in the future.

The concerns of neighbours have been noted in regards to problems with the residents of the properties, however, the Community Safety Partnership Liaison Officer has not objected to the plans and it is therefore considered it would be difficult to refuse the application on these grounds, particularly as the property is on a main road and this part of Southport Road has a number of commercial properties in the vicinity, including a solicitors to the rear and Age Concern on the other corner of Ashfield Road.

Design and Appearance

The Community Safety Partnership stated a suitable boundary should be constructed to prevent access from the rear of the building. The applicants have confirmed that this will be erected to the rear and a condition will be attached to any permission requiring details of a boundary treatment to be submitted. The external appearance of the building will otherwise remain the same.

Windfall SPG

There are currently restrictions on new dwellings in the Borough, so the proposal will need to meet one of the exceptions.

Exception (j) allows for the re-use and conversion of empty buildings within 400m of a designated shopping centre and is within 400m of the bus route/railway station. The site fulfils this criteria so is not contrary to the policy. In addition the proposal would also meet exception (a) that it will meet an identified housing need not met by the housing market.

Policy HS17

This policy covers Sheltered Housing, Rest Homes, Nursing Homes and Other Special Needs Housing. It states that they will be permitted provided that all of the following criteria are satisfied:

- a) the design and scale of the development is in keeping with its surroundings;
- b) there is no adverse effect on the amenity of the residents of neighbouring properties through overlooking, noise transmission or other disturbance;
- c) the development will be easily accessible by a choice of means of transport other than the private car.

In terms of the design and scale there will be no additions or external alterations to the existing buildings. In terms of criteria (b) the Community Safety Partnership that includes representatives from the police have not objected to the proposal. It is therefore considered that it would be difficult to refuse the proposal on the concerns of residents.

Criteria (c) is satisfied as the property is right on the edge of Chorley Town Centre.

Conclusion: Although I accept the concerns of residents, Stonham has been operating from no. 1 Southport Road since the early 1980's. There is a clear shortage in the provision of this type of accommodation and given that there are commercial properties in the vicinity as well as residential it is considered it would be difficult to resist.

**Recommendation: Permit Full Planning Permission
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 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

2. The windows marked as obscure glazed on the amended plan received 1 June 2006 (Drawing No. 03-597-PO2 Revision B) shall be fitted with obscure glass and obscure glazing shall be retained at all times thereafter.

Reason: In the interests of the privacy of occupiers of neighbouring property and in accordance with Policy No. GN5.

3. The approved plans are:

Plan Ref.	Received On:	Title:
03-597-PO1 Rev A	1 June 2006	Proposed Scheme Development Plans
03-597-PO2 Rev B	1 June 2006	Proposed Scheme Development Elevations

Reason: To define the permission and in the interests of the proper development of the site.

4. Before the use of the premises hereby permitted is first commenced, the car parking shall be marked out in accordance with the approved plans. The car parking shall not thereafter be used for any purpose other than the parking and manoeuvring of vehicles.

Reason: To ensure adequate on site provision of car parking and manoeuvring areas and in accordance with Policy TR4 of the Adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan Review.

5. Before the use of the premises hereby permitted is first commenced, details of a boundary treatment to be erected to the rear of the building to prevent rear access, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interest of the amenity of the area and in accordance with Policy No. GN5.
