



PLANNING STATEMENT

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT – CONVERSION OF FIRST AND SECOND FLOOR OFFICES TO FORM 21 APARTMENTS; ASSOCIATED EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS

HOYLAND TOWN HALL, HIGH STREET, HOYLAND, BARNSELEY S74 9AD

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1. INTRODUCTION

This statement has been prepared to support the submission of an application for full planning permission for a residential development of 21no. apartments. The proposal comprises the conversion of vacant office space within the former Hoyland Town Hall building.

The proposal seeks to deliver a scheme of high-quality apartments in a highly sustainable location. The scheme has been developed in response to a previous appeal decision (APP/R4408/W/ 18/3200276) at the site, and following pre-application discussions with Barnsley MBC (the LPA). The proposed development would assist in providing an adequate supply of housing in the locality whilst sufficiently respecting the character of the surrounding area, and ensuring a high quality of living environment within the site.

The proposal represents the sustainable development of an underused site, which is supported by local and national planning policy. The proposal results in a sustainable form of development which should be welcomed by the LPA.

This statement should be read in conjunction with the supporting plans supplied by 2131 Ltd which demonstrate the credentials of the scheme in more detail. It is anticipated that the Local Planning Authority (LPA) will adopt a progressive approach to this sustainable scheme.

This statement now proceeds to give details of the site. The details of the proposal are then set out. The planning merits of the scheme are then discussed in relation to relevant planning policies contained in the statutory development plan, together with Government guidance principally set out in the NPPF. In particular, it will be demonstrated that the proposal would result in a sustainable form of development, would make a positive contribution to meeting housing targets, would not harm highway safety or efficiency, would not harm the character of the area and would sufficiently protect neighbouring living conditions. Critically, it will be demonstrated that the scheme would provide a high quality of living environment within the site. The current proposal has fully addressed all previous concerns set out in the earlier appeal decision.

Finally, the conclusion is reached that planning permission should be granted for the proposed development.

2. THE SITE

The application site comprises the former Town Hall on High Street, Hoyland Town Centre. The Town Hall formerly consisted of job centre and office floorspace on the first floor, with office floorspace on the second floor.

The Site was used for local government purposes by Hoyland Town Council until 1974 when, following local government reorganisation, the Town Council was abolished. Since that date it has been used for a variety of office uses.

The building is of flat roof design and is of no particular architectural merit. The ground floor of the building is used for retail purposes. The site is not within a Conservation Area and there are no listed buildings nearby.

The site is situated within the centre of Hoyland and surrounding uses are predominately commercial or residential in nature. The site benefits from excellent access to public transport links, amenities and services. The site is therefore in a highly sustainable location.

3. THE PROPOSAL

Full planning permission is sought for the conversion of the first and second floor accommodation into 21 apartments. Full details of the scheme are set out on the submitted plans (2131 Ltd). However, at this stage the main details of the indicative proposal are as follows:

- Pedestrian access to site to be obtained at ground floor level, from the west of the building;
- Ground floor cycle and bin storage areas to be provided for future residents;
- Residential accommodation to be split over two floors and to comprise 21 apartments;
- Scheme consists of 6 studio apartments, 11 1-bed apartments and 4 2-bed apartments;
- All dwellings designed so as to achieve minimum standards set out in the South Yorkshire Design Guide;
- Some small scale alterations are proposed to the exterior of the building, most notably the insertion of replacement windows.

4. PRE-APPLICATION DISCUSSIONS AND PLANNING HISTORY

The key planning history for the site is as follows:

- 2017/0994 - Conversion of first and second floor offices to form 27 Residential Apartments - refused by notice dated 25 October 2017.

The application was refused for the following reason:

“The development would provide substandard levels of amenity for occupants, provide an insufficient mix of unit types, including no “affordable housing” in accordance with policy requirements and would provide no other contributions to local infrastructure. As such, substantial weight is given to the harm identified which would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, due to the development being contrary to CSP 14 ‘Housing Mix and Efficient Use of Land’, CSP 15 ‘Affordable Housing’, CSP 40 ‘Pollution Control and Protection’, SPD ‘Designing New Housing Development’, SPD ‘Parking’, SPD ‘Open Space on New Housing Developments’ and the South Yorkshire Residential Design Guide.”

A subsequent appeal (APP/R4408/W/18/3200276) was dismissed on 3rd April 2019. The Inspector made the following key points in the formal decision letter:

- The proposed layout would have resulted in shortfalls in terms of room sizes for some of the apartments, when using the minimum requirements set out in the South Yorkshire Design Guide;
- 4 of the proposed units would not receive adequate levels of light or outlook;
- Given the nature and location of the site, the proposed mix of unit types was acceptable;
- Vacant Building Credit was applicable, and therefore no affordable housing provision was required;
- Any contribution towards open space could be adequately secured via a unilateral undertaking.

Following the appeal decision the applicant has engaged in detailed and productive pre-application discussions with the LPA’s Planning Officer, James Hyde. It has been provisionally agreed that the current scheme has satisfactorily addressed all of the reasons for refusal set out in the earlier appeal decision.

5. ALLOCATION AND POLICIES

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this instance the Development Plan consists of the Local Plan and Policies Map that were adopted on 03 January 2019. The Council has also adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes, which are other material considerations.

Further material considerations exist in the form of national policy and guidance contained within the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which was published on 24 July 2018 and the suite of documents comprising National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG).

Allocations

The site lies within a Primary Shopping Area, Local Centre and Nature Improvement Area under the provisions of the Local Plan.

National

The NPPF is reflective of the guidance contained within the NPPG. The following sections of the revised NPPF are considered of direct relevance to the current proposal:

Paragraph 8 states that

“...achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):

- a) *an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;*

- b) *a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and*
- c) *an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”*

Paragraph 10 states that “...so that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.”

Paragraph 11 goes on to set out that “...plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking 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:

- i. *the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*
- ii. *any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”*

Chapter 5 highlights the chronic shortage of housing within the UK and step out the clear aim of significantly boosting supply.

Paragraph 38 states that “...local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way.”

Paragraph 68 encourages developments on windfall sites, particularly small and medium scale developments, as these often deliver homes at a quicker rate than larger developments.

Chapter 8 promotes the creation of healthy and safe communities.

Paragraph 124 states that *“The creation of high quality buildings and places is fundamental to what the planning and development process should achieve. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities.”*

Chapter 10 promotes sustainable patterns of development and encourages developers to consider access and parking issues as early as possible.

Paragraph 109 states:

“Development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.”

Paragraph 127 states that *“decisions should ensure that developments:*

- a) will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- b) are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping;*
- c) are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities);*
- d) establish or maintain a strong sense of place, using the arrangement of streets, spaces, building types and materials to create attractive, welcoming and distinctive places to live, work and visit;*

- e) *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space) and support local facilities and transport networks; and*
- f) *create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users; and where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion and resilience.”*

The overarching message of the NPPF is that LPAs should adopt a positive and pro-active approach to planning proposals, particularly those that result in sustainable development. LPAs should not place unnecessary burdens on developers and should look to support appropriate schemes such as this.

Local Plan Policies

The following policies are considered of relevance:

LG2 – The Location of Growth

H4 – Residential Development on Small Non-allocated Sites

H6 – Housing Mix and Efficient Use of Land

T1 – Accessibility Priorities

T3 – New development and Sustainable Travel

T4 – New Development and Transport Safety

D1 – High Quality Design and Place Making

6. ASSESSMENT

Principle

The main emphasis of current national planning policy is to ensure proposals are compliant with the definition of sustainable development set out within the revised NPPF. Sustainability is multi-faceted and is set out within the Framework taken as a whole. To achieve sustainable development, the Framework sets out that economic, social and environmental gains should be sought jointly and simultaneously through the planning system.

The proposal would be wholly sustainable using the definition set out in the NPPF for the following reasons:

- **Social:** The proposed development would result in the creation of 21 high quality dwellings in a sustainable location. The application site is a short, and easily walkable, distance from the local services and community facilities within Hoyland town centre. The proposal would provide ongoing support for the existing services and facilities. The proposal would not result in any adverse social impacts.
- **Economic:** The proposal would make much more efficient use of the existing site and would provide growth and investment in the locality. Additional economic activity would be created during the construction phase. The new dwellings would be likely to provide additional custom at existing local services in Hoyland.
- **Environmental:** The proposal would have no detrimental impact on the character of the site or the surrounding area. The proposal represents a high quality development which would enhance the housing stock in the locality. The site is in a sustainable location with a good level of local services and future residents would have good access to public transport links to wider services. The proposal would have no adverse ecological impacts.

In terms of the suitability of the location of the site for housing, the site is situated centrally within the Principal Town of Hoyland. Policy LG2 encourages growth in this area, whilst policy H2 suggests that Holland should accommodate roughly 2500 new homes (12% of overall provision) during the current plan period. The location of the site is highly sustainable and the recent appeal decision confirms that in principle, the site is suitable for residential development.

The Local Plan sets out that the LPA need to deliver 21,564 net additional homes in order to meet the identified housing need over the plan period. This is clearly a significant challenge for the LPA. The Local Plan acknowledges that this is an ambitious figure. The NPPF makes it clear that windfall developments, particularly those involving previously developed land, should be welcomed to enable LPA's to deliver housing. This site is ideal for such development.

The broad principle of development is considered clearly acceptable.

Amenity and Relationship with Existing and Planned Neighbouring Uses

The recent appeal decision was dismissed as the Inspector concluded that the scheme would not provide a sufficient standard of residential amenity within the development. The key comments from the Inspector are as follows:

“ In considering the revised plans, submitted 15 November 2018, I note that many of the units have had their internal measurements altered. Whilst these now appear to meet the overall floorspace requirements of the SYRDG, the internal requirements of this document also relate to the individual room sizes. In terms of the living areas and bedrooms proposed, the revised floor plan shows that Units 13, 26 and 27 would have a layout that would result in narrow rooms. Furthermore, Units 1, 12, 14, 24 and 25 all have a floorspace of just over 20m² for the open plan living/kitchen/dining areas which all fall short of the 24m² required by the SYRDG. I note that the SYRDG comprises best practice guidance rather than formal policy, however the purpose of the document is to secure a good standard of accommodation and living conditions for future occupiers. Taken collectively, I find that the shortcomings of the individual room sizes would result in a development that, due to the number of flats proposed in the existing building, would not provide the high quality living conditions required.

The Council have raised concerns over the level of natural light and outlook from the proposed development. Units 8 and 9 and 21 and 22 would be located on an internal angle. Unit 8 would be served by one window to the bedroom and one window to the open plan living area. Unit 9 would have two windows serving the open plan studio. This arrangement would be replicated above for Units 21 and 22. Given the orientation of these units, and the positioning of the windows, I find that these units would be unlikely to receive adequate amounts of natural light to provide high quality living conditions.

The Council also raised concerns over the potential for issues of outlook and privacy from these units with regards to some of the windows facing each other at an angle. The submitted plans show that some of the windows could be treated with a form of obscure glazing which would mitigate against any issues in relation to loss of privacy, however this would have the potential to diminish the outlook from these properties.”

The applicant has responded positively to these concerns and, following pre-application discussions with the LPA, has reduced the number of proposed units down to 21. This reduction in unit numbers has resulted in all of the proposed units fully complying with the South Yorkshire Design guide internal space requirements. In particular, all units would now benefit from a main living room which would exceed the minimum 24sqm requirement.

In relation to privacy/ outlook, the revised arrangement ensures that flats 7 and 17 now wrap around the corner of the building where units 8,9, 21 and 22 were previously shown. This revised arrangement ensures that the proposed units would be well separated from adjacent units and that each if the units would benefit from 3 separate window openings. The use of mirrored glazing on the elevation which faces the adjacent building to the west also ensures privacy for residents of the units facing in that direction.

It is considered clear that the revised scheme has fully addressed the previous reasons for refusal and the concerns raised by the inspector in the recent appeal decision. The development would provide a high standard of residential amenity for future occupiers and would result in no adverse impacts on the residential amenity of existing occupiers in the locality. The development is entirely in accordance with local and national policy in this respect.

Design/ External appearance

The scheme includes some small scale external works. These works comprise the replacement of some windows with UPVC, the addition of spandrel panels to some areas of glazing, and the addition of some mirrored glazing.

The proposed works would have no significant impact on the character of the existing building. Furthermore, the area is not architecturally sensitive and the proposed alterations would not harm the character of the area.

The development would therefore be sympathetic to the built environment and is fully in accordance with the design principles set out in policy D1.

Drainage/ Flood Risk

The proposal involves the re-use of an existing building and there would be no increase in hard surfacing or built form. The proposal would link into the existing drainage infrastructure and would not exceed the existing capacity.

The application site falls within flood zone 1 as identified by the Environment Agency so is at the lowest risk of flooding. The development would not be at undue risk of flooding and would not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. The scheme accords with local policy and the guidance contained within the NPPG in this respect.

Transport and Accessibility

As set out above, the site is situated in a highly sustainable location and has excellent access to public transport links. Local services and facilities within the town centre are within short walking distance. The location of the site therefore complies with national and local objectives of creating sustainable patterns of development.

The apartments would not benefit from any dedicated off-street parking. Given the nature of the development, the town centre location, and that the LPA have previously raised no concerns in relation to parking, this is not considered to be a barrier to the grant of planning permission.

It is therefore considered that the scheme can clearly be delivered without resulting in harm to highway safety/ efficiency and the development would have excellent accessibility and sustainability in terms of transport links. The scheme clearly accords with the local plan policies and guidance contained within the NPPF in this respect.

Affordable Housing/ Open Space

In the recent appeal decision was confirmed by the Inspector that Vacant Building Credits apply at the site given that the proposal involves the reuse of an existing building. No affordable housing contributions should therefore be requested.

The applicant understands that the a financial contribution towards open space will be required, and that this matter will need to be controlled via an appropriately worded legal agreement.

7.CONCLUSION

The proposed development represents a sustainable form of development that would not have any unacceptable impact for the reasons set out above. The scheme has addressed all of the previous reasons for refusal at the site and the LPA, in accordance with national guidance, should seek to approve without delay.

The proposal would sufficiently accord with adopted planning policy and guidance and the LPA are respectfully urged to grant permission for the scheme.

The Applicant is willing to discuss any issues that may arise during the consideration of the proposal with the LPA.

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JR Planning