
Application Number	18/1877/LBC	Agenda Item	
Date Received	30th November 2018	Officer	Lewis Tomlinson
Target Date	25th January 2019		
Ward	Market		
Site	Hobson House 42 - 44 St Andrews Street		
Proposal	Change of use and refurbishment of the existing Grade II listed office building (use Class B1(a) Offices to a 57 bed boutique hotel (Use Class C1) and cafe/tea room (use Class A3), in include replacement of glazed screen on the St Andrew's street facade, upgrading thermal character of the glazed roof over drill hall to create a central atrium, removal of existing northern wing to create two floors above, second floor extension to the existing southern wing; together with partial demolition and replacement new-building at the rear and associated works.		
Applicant	c/o Agent		

SUMMARY	The development accords with the Development Plan for the following reasons: The proposal would not harm the special interest of the Listed Building.
RECOMMENDATION	APPROVAL

1.0 SITE DESCRIPTION/AREA CONTEXT

- 1.1 Hobson House is located on the western side of St Andrew's Street. Hobson House is a Grade II Listed Building which falls within the Central Conservation Area. The site is the former police station with a yard to the rear. It also includes key features such as the drill hall, Chief Constables House and office, Mortuary and officer accommodation. To the north west of the site is 7 Downing Place and to the south east of the site

Mandela House. The site falls within the Controlled Parking Zone.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Change of use and refurbishment of the existing Grade II listed office building (use Class B1(a) Offices to a 57 bed boutique hotel (Use Class C1) and cafe/tea room (use Class A3), in include replacement of glazed screen on the St Andrew's street facade, upgrading thermal character of the glazed roof over drill hall to create a central atrium, removal of existing northern wing to create two floors above, second floor extension to the existing southern wing; together with partial demolition and replacement new-building at the rear and associated works.
- 2.2 The application seeks listed building consent to carry out a list of extensive works to Hobson House. The works involve the creation of a hotel which keeps services to a minimum. The plans retain and restore all the interior details of historic interest including the Chief Constables Office and the grand staircase and, where they remain, fireplaces, coving and cornices. The Drill Hall, which is currently a neglected space covered in tarmac and used as a car park, will be restored and glazed over to create a large spacious tea room that will be part of the hotel and also accessible to the general public. The application would also result in the demolition of the mortuary and officers accommodation to the rear of the site (facing onto Downing Place) and the erection of replacement buildings. The replacement buildings would be constructed of a red brick with a zinc mansard roof form with smaller dormers.

3.0 SITE HISTORY

- 3.1 There is an extensive site history including multiple alterations and works to the Hobson House. However, none of it is directly relative to the proposed scheme.

4.0 PUBLICITY

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|-----|------------------------|-----|
| 4.1 | Advertisement: | Yes |
| | Adjoining Owners: | Yes |
| | Site Notice Displayed: | Yes |

5.0 POLICY

5.1 See Appendix 1 for full details of Central Government Guidance, Cambridge Local Plan 2018 policies, Supplementary Planning Documents and Material Considerations.

5.2 Relevant Development Plan policies

PLAN	POLICY NUMBER
Cambridge Local Plan 2018	61

5.3 Relevant Central Government Guidance, Supplementary Planning Documents and Material Considerations

Central Government Guidance	National Planning Policy Framework 2019 National Planning Policy Framework – Planning Practice Guidance March 2014 Circular 11/95
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6.0 Consultations

Urban Design and Conservation Team

6.1 Objection.

- ☐ The proposed new development to the rear of Hobson House will result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the Grade II listed Hobson House as per para 196.
- ☐ The proposed new development to the rear of Hobson House fails to preserve or enhance the character of the Historic Core Conservation Area or comply with Policies 55, 57, 58 and 61.

6.2 Hobson House is a Grade II listed building and a good example of a late Victorian police station with its important features such as the drill hall, Chief Constables House and office, Mortuary and officer accommodation remaining largely intact albeit in some cases greatly altered. The concept of a hotel which keeps services to a minimum would appear to be a good fit for this

building. The plans retain and restore all the interior details of historic interest including the Chief Constables Office and the grand staircase and, where they remain, fireplaces, coving and cornices. The Drill Hall, which is currently a neglected space covered in tarmac and used as a car park, will be restored and glazed to create a tea room for the hotel and accessible to the public. The point of contention has been over the existing buildings to the rear of the site facing Downing Place including the Chief Constables house which is noted as a positive building within the Historic Core conservation appraisal and the former mortuary and officer accommodation in the north wing which forms part of the overall listed complex. There has been much debate over the merits of these parts of the complex and earlier iterations of the design removed both the Constables House and the mortuary and officers accommodation without adequately justifying their demolition or providing high quality replacement designs.

After a prolonged period of meetings and discussion the latest iterations keep the Chief Constables house and create new build elements to the rear and to the side replacing the existing two storey element which roofed over the former fire station yard. Retaining the Constable's House acknowledges the historic and social interest of the building's development with that of the police station which is historically unusual, its importance to the cultural history of Cambridge and the contribution this house makes to the character of Downing Place as one of the last remaining remnants of former residential buildings. The arguments for the demolition of the mortuary and Officers accommodation have centred on the fact that they have been altered and so have lesser significance in relation to the listed building as a whole. It is true that these buildings have been altered but on inspection some of the remnants of their function can still be read, the mortuary is still one big space with a cornice and the single lantern light and the Officers accommodation whilst completely altered at ground level still retains some fireplaces on the first floor in what were the bedrooms.

It is accepted that the mortuary and officers accommodation have undergone major alterations over the years but it was felt that the applicants had not done enough to justify their removal or provide a high quality replacement design. Para 193 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed

development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation irrespective of whether the harm amounts to substantial, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Hobson House as a whole is an unusual complex and has high significance as a purpose built police station. The buildings to the rear were part of the function of the station although it is acknowledged that due to alterations in the past that function is not easily read. What needs to be assessed is whether their loss would be classed as substantial or less than substantial harm to the listed building as a whole. As a result of these discussions the applicant provided further information from the owners of Hobson House which highlight that the proposed hotel use is seen as a good fit for the rest of the building which due to its size and complexity would make an alternative use difficult to find. The applicant has always maintained that retaining and re-using these elements would not provide enough rooms to make the hotel viable and those rooms would not be of high enough quality due to ceiling heights and wall positions. They also considered that the street presence onto Downing Place these buildings provided was not of high quality and enhancements could be made to the character of the conservation area.

Having looked at the buildings themselves in terms of their significance and assessed the proposals as a whole I consider that the loss of the Mortuary and Officers accommodation to be less than substantial harm to the significance of Hobson House as a whole. Para 196 in the NPPF states that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum use.

In assessing the balance between the continued use and restoration of the majority of Hobson House, the retention of the Constable's House and the restoration and availability of the drill hall to the public there is a recognition that the harm caused by the loss of the Mortuary and Officer accommodation might be outweighed by the wider public benefits accrued by the works to the whole site.

However any replacement building needs to comply with Local Plan policies 55, 58 and 61 in that it needs to respond to the

context of Downing place and ensure that the special character of Cambridge is protected and enhanced. The new buildings need to demonstrate that they have a positive impact on their setting in terms of height, scale, form, do not adversely impact on the setting, character or appearance of listed buildings or conservation areas and be of a quality which is both a worthy addition to Hobson House, enhances the character of the conservation area and relates well to the retained Constable's House.

Design proposals

The plan for the interior of the remainder of Hobson House retains and enhances the existing features and includes some important refurbishment to the interiors which have been poorly used over the years. However the issue still remains with the replacement buildings for the mortuary and Officers accommodation and the building adjacent to the Constable's House. The current design proposals have responded in part to previous comments. It is now in red brick which reflects the existing buildings and the Drill Hall and follows the essence of the existing frontage with large service doors at ground floor. The main difference is that the demands of the hotel require a first and second floor addition. The focus of discussions has been the relationship of this first floor element and new roof to the diminutive scale of the adjoining house at No 7 Downing Place, the visibility of the crow stepped gable to the Drill Hall, the relationship of the new roof against the Constable's House and long views down Downing Place.

The current design proposal has been amended to create a zinc mansard roof form with smaller dormers. Both new build elements are being given the same roof profile. The roof forms are large and their bulk will be visible in long views along Downing Place and they look too dominant alongside No 7 Downing Place and the roof of the Constable's House. Amendments have been made to ensure that the rear roofs which line the passageway to the drill hall allow the crow stepped gable to be viewed as fully as possible and to ensure that the circular window at the top of the gable is not obscured which is a positive move.

The elevation treatment of the mortuary replacement building is contemporary and simple which echoes that of the existing

building. However this building needs to be of high quality to justify the removal of the existing listed ones and the detailing and quality of brickwork needs to be an enhancement to the street scene. Overall whilst there have been changes and improvements made to the design, the scale and mass of the roofs of the new buildings are not acceptable and do not provide a high enough quality replacement to justify the demolition of the listed mortuary and Officers accommodation and they do not serve to enhance or protect the character of the conservation area.

- 6.3 The above response are a summary of the comments that have been received. Full details of the consultation responses can be inspected on the application file.

7.0 REPRESENTATIONS

- 7.1 The representations have been summarised in the report on the full planning application (18/1876/FUL).

8.0 ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Hobson House is a Grade II Listed Building. The accompanying planning report (18/1876/FUL) considers the material planning issues raised in relation to this proposal. For this listed building consent application, the only issues that need to be considered relate to the alterations to the listed building itself.
- 8.2 The application seeks permission to carry out a list of extensive works to Hobson House. The works involve the creation of a hotel which keeps services to a minimum. The plans retain and restore all the interior details of historic interest including the Chief Constables Office and the grand staircase and, where they remain, fireplaces, coving and cornices. The Drill Hall, which is currently a neglected space covered in tarmac and used as a car park, will be restored and glazed over to create a large spacious tea room that will be part of the hotel and also accessible to the general public. The application would also result in the demolition of the mortuary and officers accommodation to the rear of the site (facing onto Downing Place) and the erection of replacement buildings. The replacement buildings would be constructed of a red brick with a zinc mansard roof form with smaller dormers.

- 8.3 The applicant has engaged in an extensive pre-application process with officers and has amended the scheme to address comments raised. Early on in the pre-application process, the proposal has also been to the Design and Conservation Panel and the application has sought to address any comments raised.
- 8.4 The Conservation Team comments are within section 6.10 – 6.11 of the report. The Conservation Team highlights that any replacement building needs to comply with Local Plan policies 55, 58 and 61 in that it needs to respond to the context of Downing place. The new buildings need to demonstrate that they have a positive impact on their setting in terms of height, scale, form, do not adversely impact on the setting, character or appearance of listed buildings or conservation areas and be of a quality which is both a worthy addition to Hobson House, enhances the character of the conservation area and relates well to the retained Constable's House.
- 8.5 The current design proposal has been amended to create a zinc mansard roof form with smaller dormers. Both new build elements are being given the same roof profile. The roof forms are large and their bulk will be visible in long views along Downing Place and they look dominant alongside No 7 Downing Place and the roof of the Constable' House. It is the Conservation Team's view that the scale and mass of the roofs of the new buildings are not acceptable as they do not provide a high enough quality replacement to justify the demolition of the listed mortuary and Officers accommodation, and therefore they do not serve to enhance or protect the character of the conservation area. It is for that reason that the Conservation Team do not support the proposal in its current form.
- 8.6 Paragraph 193 of the NPPF states that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the assets conservation irrespective of whether harm amount to substantial, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
- 8.7 Hobson House as a whole is a complex site due to the various alterations the site had gone through. The applicants have argued that given its complex nature, the proposed hotel use is optimum use due to minimal services required. The

Conservation Team agree with this approach. It is also to be noted that both the applicant's heritage assessment and the Conservation Team agree that the proposed development would lead to less than substantial harm.

8.8 Paragraph 196 of the NPPF states that: Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

8.9 The applicant has put forward the following public benefits:

- ☐ Sustaining and investing in the heritage asset
- ☐ Repairing the Downing Place townscape
- ☐ Significance of the drill yard revealed
- ☐ Public access to the drill yard

8.10 The following is also to be noted:

- ☐ The plans retain and restore all the interior details of historic interest including the Chief Constables Office and the grand staircase and, where they remain, fireplaces, coving and cornices.
- ☐ The Drill Hall, which is currently a neglected space covered in tarmac and used as a car park, will be restored and glazed to create a tea room for the hotel and accessible to the public.
- ☐ The Chief Constables house is being retained. This acknowledges the historic and social interest of the building's development with that of the police station which is historically unusual, its importance to the cultural history of Cambridge and the contribution this house makes to the character of Downing Place as one of the last remaining remnants of former residential buildings.
- ☐ It is recognised due to its size and complexity and alternative use would be difficult to find.
- ☐ The current design proposals have responded in part to previous comments, namely the rear roofs which line the passageway to the drill hall allow the crow stepped gable to be viewed as fully as possible and to ensure that the circular window at the top of the gable is not obscured which is a positive move, together with the use of materials.
- ☐ The current design proposal has been amended to create a zinc mansard roof form with smaller dormers.

- ☐ The elevation treatment of the mortuary replacement building is contemporary and simple which echoes that of the existing building.

8.11 Policy 61 'Conservation and enhancement of Cambridge's Historic environment' of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 states that to ensure the conservation and enhancement of Cambridge's historic environment, proposals should:

- ☐ preserve or enhance the significance of the heritage assets of the city, their setting and the wider townscape, including views into, within and out of conservation areas;
- ☐ retain buildings and spaces, the loss of which would cause harm to the character or appearance of the conservation area;
- ☐ be of an appropriate scale, form, height, massing, alignment and detailed design which will contribute to local distinctiveness, complement the built form and scale of heritage assets and respect the character, appearance and setting of the locality;
- ☐ demonstrate a clear understanding of the significance of the asset and of the wider context in which the heritage asset sits, alongside assessment of the potential impact of the development on the heritage asset and its context; and
- ☐ provide clear justification for any works that would lead to harm or substantial harm to a heritage asset yet be of substantial public benefit, through detailed analysis of the asset and the proposal.

8.12 It is important to understand the character of Downing Place. The character is very mixed in design, form and scale. Working from south east to north west:

- ☐ Mandela House is a large flat roof building that sits at the end of Downing Place. It not only has a large metal shutter door but also metal railings on the first floor and on the roof.
- ☐ Hobson House sits adjacent to Mandela House.
- ☐ Opposite Mandela House and Hobson House is the Downing site. A single storey brick wall with a metallic overhang with a railing above runs from Mandela House to No.7 Downing Place.
- ☐ Opposite No.7 Downing Place and St Andrews Hall are the rears of other buildings within the Downing Site. These are heavily decorated with flues etc and a large metallic fire escape due to it being the rear of the building.
- ☐ Adjacent to the church is the rear of The Regal Whetherspoons Pub which has car parking in front of it and waste storage. It is

also bound by a large metal fence/gate. The building itself is of a contemporary design in comparison to its neighbouring buildings.

- 8.13 As shown above, there is a mixed character along Downing Place. While there a couple of buildings of merit, the general character of the lane has been eroded over time due to the introduction of various servicing elements and large flat roof buildings. The proposed zinc mansard roof form with smaller dormers would materially reduce the scale and massing of the roofs on the buildings to the rear. It is my view that the wider public benefits as outlined above would outweigh the less than substantial harm to the heritage asset. For these reasons set out above, I consider the proposal would be compliant with policy 61 of the Cambridge Local Plan 2018 and paragraph 196 of the NPPF.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Building & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans as listed on this decision notice.

Reason: In the interests of good planning and for the avoidance of doubt.