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LF – 23/176
BY EMAIL

To whom it may concern,

PROPOSED EXTENSION - THE WASHHOUSE, 19-23 SHUDEHILL, MANCHESTER, M4 2AF

I write to submit a planning application on behalf of our client, The Washhouse Manchester Ltd, concerning The Washhouse 'secret bar' located at 19-23 Shudehill. The application proposes an extension of the existing bar, to the second floor of 21-23 Shudehill. The description of development is:

Change of use of second floor of No's. 21-23 Shudehill from an office (use class E) to a bar (Sui Generis) and creation of level access to the ground floor of No. 19 Shudehill and verification of noise levels to retrospectively comply with conditions attached to planning application 129840/FO/2021.

We set out below the context behind the application, information about the proposals and an assessment of the scheme against national and local planning policy.

a. Context

Site Location

The application site is known as 'The Washhouse' and is located at 19-23 Shudehill within Manchester City Centre. No. 19 is comprised of a narrow three-storey brick building located between two retail units along Shudehill, an active, busy frontage opposite the Manchester Arndale and associated NCP car park. No. 21-23 adjoins no. 19 and consists of a four-storey brick building with a newsagents and barbers on the ground floor and vacant office space above.

Planning History

In June 2021, a planning application was approved at the site (ref. 129840/FO/2021) which was described as:

Part retrospective change of use of the ground floor of no. 19 from a cafe/restaurant/fast-food takeaway (Use Class Sui Generis) to a Bar (Sui Generis) and expansion of premises through a change

of use of the first and second floor of no.19 and the first floor of no 21-23 Shudehill from an office (Use Class E) to a Bar (Sui Generis) and external works comprising lowering of step to create level access.

Since this application was approved, The Washhouse has gone from strength to strength; it remains one of the top rated bars in Manchester and is highly regarded as a sociable and sophisticated evening destination in the city centre, enjoyed by both the local population and tourists alike.

Whilst this planning permission was implemented, two conditions were not fully complied with; noise verification and disabled access. The conditions were both numbered 3 on the Decision Notice in error. The conditions are:

Noise Verification

The approved use shall be implemented (fit out) and operated in accordance with the noise levels and management measures which form the basis for the assessment as specified within the ADC Acoustics Noise Impact Assessment dated 25th March 2021

The noise levels used for the assessment shall be set and subsequently controlled to ensure noise levels do not exceed those used under the assessment.

The above noise management scheme shall be completed prior to occupation. A post completion report to verify that all of the specified noise levels within the above ADC Report are being met shall be submitted and agreed in writing by the City Council as local planning authority within the following timescales:

(a) Ground floor of 19 Shudehill: within 3 months of the lockdown measures associated with the Covid19 pandemic having been eased

(b) 1st and 2nd floors of 19 Shudehill and 2nd floor of 21-21 Shudehill: prior to the extended use commencing or within 3 months of the lockdown measures associated with the Covid19 pandemic having been eased (whichever is the later). and any noncompliance suitably mitigated in accordance with an agreed scheme prior to occupation.

Thereafter the premises shall operate in accordance with the approved noise levels and management measures.

Where entertainment noise is proposed the LAeq (entertainment noise) shall be controlled to 10dB below the LA90 (without entertainment noise) in each octave band at the facade of the nearest noise sensitive location, and internal noise levels at structurally adjoined residential properties in the 63Hz and 125Hz octave frequency bands shall be controlled so as not to exceed (in habitable rooms) 47dB and 41dB, respectively.

For the avoidance of doubt should if higher music levels are required in the future than as specified in the above report then an updated assessment and recommendations will be required.

Disabled Access

Within 6 months of the granting of this consent level access shall be provided to the entrance to the ground floor of 19 Shudehill.

As these planning conditions were not complied with at the time, we have included information within this planning application to retrospectively show compliance with them.

b. The Proposal

Change of use of the second 21-23

The proposal submitted within this planning application comprises of a change of use of the second floor of No's 21-23 Shudehill. At present, the second floor of No. 19 is already in use associated with

the bar; it provides toilets and a store area associated with The Washhouse. Now, we are proposing the use of the second floor of 21-23 to become part of the public facing areas of The Washhouse, to expand overall capacity. The floor is currently vacant, with the office use ceasing earlier in the year. The proposal will see the floor become transformed into a seating area with a capacity of 55 people, along with a bar for preparing drinks. No. 21-23 is one connected space but with supporting walls within the middle of the floor area.

Like the rest of The Washhouse, the bar will focus on cocktails, and therefore there is limited waste as they do not serve individual bottled drinks. This area will also operate in the same manner as the rest of the bar; reservations and seated only, which ensures the bar is well controlled.

Creation of level access

After conversations with the Planning Officer, Angela Leckie, the Applicant has explored options to create level access into and throughout the building. To address this, the proposals now include the installation of a permanent ramp into the ground floor of No.19, which allows access to the bar area on the ground floor.

When considering creating level access throughout the building, after further assessment, this was not found to be possible. The application has been submitted with a letter from the landlord which indicates that they will not allow permission to install a lift. Further, the application has also been submitted with a plan which shows how the inclusion of a lift was considered.

The plan shows that installation of a lift is not possible for the following reasons:

- It would reduce the seating occupancy of the ground floor.
- A through-lift would only allow access to a small amount of the upper floors; the host and coat check area on the first floor.
- On the second floor, if installed, the lift would arrive at the toilet area, however there is already an accessible toilet on the ground floor. Further, the lift would actually encroach into the toilet and sink area, reducing the overall number of toilets within the premises, and requiring a major re-fit of this area.

c. Assessment against planning policy

Based on the Council's Interactive Proposals Map, the site is designated as within the city centre boundary but sits outside of the city centre primary shopping area. The site is within the Shudehill Conservation Area but is not a listed building.

Principle of the proposal

It is noted that Core Strategy Policy EC 2 (Existing Employment Space) advocates for the protection of employment space and notes that alternative uses will only be supported on sites allocated accordingly, or if it can be demonstrated that: the existing use is un-viable in terms of business operations, building age and format; the existing use is incompatible with adjacent uses; the existing use is unsuitable for employment having had regard to the Manchester/Salford - Trafford SFRA; or on balance, proposals are able to offer greater benefits in terms of the Core Strategy's vision and spatial objectives than the existing use.

Whilst Policy EC2 does relate to the protection of employment sites, its focus is on the protection of strategic employment land, particularly industrial uses, and in this regard, a change of use from offices to a bar, i.e., one main town centre use to another, should not warrant the same level of protection. The supporting text to Policy EC2 indicates that the intention of this policy is to mainly protect the loss of employment sites to residential uses. It should also be clarified that the area subject to the change of use (the second floor) only contained circa 10 desks and has been vacant for two years.

Considering the success of the business to date, we consider that the Council should support the expansion of the operation which in turn, supports the maintenance of a strong and varied nighttime economy in the city centre. The continued operation and expansion of the business is in accordance with Core Strategy Policy C10 which states that new development and redevelopment that supports the evening economy, contributes to the vitality of centres and supports a balanced and socially inclusive evening/night-time economy will be permitted. In considering cumulative impact, residential amenity and balance of uses in the city centre, the proposal is able to accord with the policy requirements. The site's impact on neighbouring amenity is discussed further below with regards to noise mitigation, operations, crime impact and waste management.

Noise impact

A noise verification report has been provided by ADC Acoustics and submitted in support of the application. The report sought to confirm that the noise levels on site do not exceed the limits as set out in the original noise report for the earlier planning application on site (ref. 129840/FO/2021). Following a survey conducted on a Friday evening in May 2023, noise levels were found to be in line with the earlier report, and therefore acceptable.

The report also confirms that with regards to the proposed bar area on the second floor of No. 21-23, There is no reason why it cannot be assumed that the bar will create a similar level of noise compared to the ground and first floor levels currently. The report confirms that doors and windows are in good condition and well fitted. The sound system is the same as the first floor bar and set up for background music only. The shell construction is also identical to lower floors, as one would naturally expect.

Entertainment noise is not deployed within the bar; therefore, this does not need to be assessed.

We can also confirm that no ventilation or extraction equipment (which may generate additional noise) is required, as the bar does not serve food. The Applicant is willing to accept a condition that ensures that no cooking takes place without subsequent agreement of the method of fume extraction and securing of any relevant additional permission

With this information, we consider that we have reasonably assessed the noise impacts of the bar on the local surroundings and confirmed that they are negligible.

Refuse storage and collection

The additional floorspace will increase the overall capacity of the bar by circa 55 people. At present, the following bins are located on site:

- 1 x 660lt general waste bin
- 1 x360lt pulvable recycling bin
- 1 x 360lt glass bin

The proposals do not increase the number of bins on site, but instead will increase the frequency of collections per week, to account for any uplift in waste.

Nevertheless, waste is relatively minimal when considering that the operation does not include food being served, and the bar is a specialist cocktail bar, and hence individual bottled drinks are not widely consumed on site.

Management & Operations

The supporting operations management plan (the same document as previously submitted with application ref. 129840/FO/2021) has been provided by the Applicant, which confirms the proposed opening hours (12noon till 3am Daily) in accordance with their license agreement, as well as measures to reduce noise impact, the potential for crime and managing smokers and loiterers. It should be noted that the premises is only open until 3am on Fridays and Saturdays however providing a 3am closing time across the week will allow additional flexibility should it be needed.

The existing premises has operated from this location for 8 years and to date has proved adept at managing patrons to ensure the impact on the surroundings in terms of noise, litter and appearance are limited. It should also be noted that the premises license for the additional floorspace has already been granted, with no objections.

In terms of safety and security, the same security measures continue to be in place as per the previously approved planning application. These include:

- Both front and rear exits are fitted with security shutters.
- CCTV is installed on every floor, and on the front and rear of the building.
- An alarm system is in place across the whole building.
- Door safe registered security are employed as per The Washhouse's licence conditions.

d. Conclusion

The continued successful operation of the site to date demonstrates that its expansion should be supported by the Council. The proposal accords with Core Strategy Policy C10; supporting the nighttime economy, and Core Strategy Policy CC4, supporting the city centre offering for tourists and visitors. The proposal also accords with the NPPF which advocates approving sustainable development proposals without delay. The benefits of approving this planning application are:

- Supporting additional jobs in the hospitality sector.
- Retaining an attractive, active frontage along Shudehill which is well maintained and adds to the vibrancy of the Northern Quarter district.
- Creating level access to the ground floor of the bar.
- Supporting the leisure and nighttime economy, including supporting the city as a tourist destination.
- Repurposing vacant city centre floorspace, which is supported by the site freeholder, Loxley Estates.

We have submitted the planning application via the Planning Portal, with the following supporting documents:

- LXA-WHM-000 Location Plan
- LXA-WHM-001 Existing Plan
- LXA-1691-050 Planning Plan - Ground & First Floor-Rev A
- LXA-1691-051 Planning Plan - Second & Third Floor-A3
- LXA-1691-054 DDA Lift Plan - Ground & First Floor-A3
- LXA-1691-055 DDA Lift Plan - Second & Third Floor-A3
- Noise Verification Report
- Operations Plan

We trust that the planning application can be validated without delay, however if you require any further information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Lucy Furber
SENIOR PLANNER