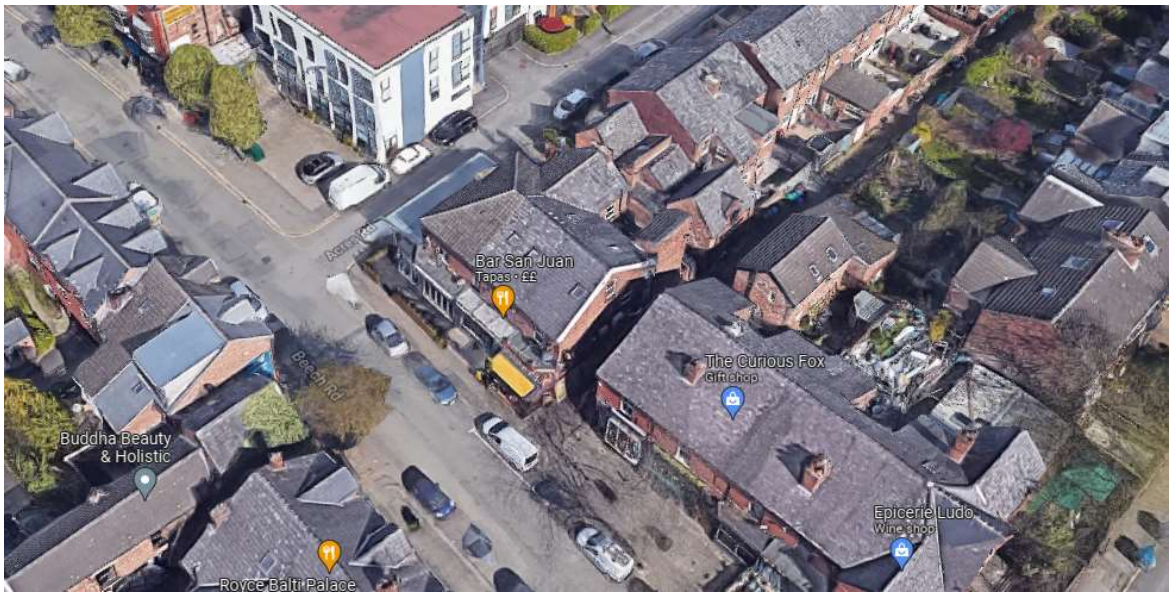
Planning Statement and Historic Assessment for a new fire escape at rear, new toilets under and conversion of first floor to restaurant kitchen and prep area at Bar San Juan, 56 Beech Road, Chorlton, Manchester M21 9EG. Rev 1

Planning Portal Reference: PP-11189929

Background



Bar San Juan is an established Spanish Tapas Bar with a first class reputation serving authentic tapas to locals and visitors from further away, in Manchester and the north west.

The premises are small, like many authentic tapas bars, and very popular which means that the outdoor area at the front of the restaurant, is often used, even in inclement Manchester weather.

The owner wants to convert the first floor, currently a vacant one bed flat to a new kitchen and prep area and build new toilets on the ground floor.

Site and Surroundings

The site is in a established and popular local centre that is also within the Wilbraham Road/Edge Lane (Extension) Conservation Area. As such the property has the status of being a heritage asset and any scheme needs to have regard to the NPPF and whether or not any adverse impacts are outweighed by benefits to the community.

Existing layout

The existing restaurant has a gross ground floor area of c.63 sq m with an outdoor seating area. The existing toilets are very small and located at the rear and there is a storeroom in the basement.

The first floor flat is accessed via a fire escape to the rear. The flat has one bedroom and one two store/box rooms, as well as a bathroom, lounge and kitchen, spread over the first floor and in the loft space.

Proposed Scheme

The outdoor area and restaurant cooking area on the ground floor will remain as existing. When the new kitchen is developed the ground floor will be re-configured.

Alterations will take place at the rear to build two new toilets under the re-configured fire escape, and an internal staircase to access the first floor.

The first floor will be cleared of partitions and new kitchen and prep area will be formed.

A new staircase will be built to access the loft space, that will be used for storage/office use in conjunction with the operation of the restaurant.

Existing access to the flat and fire escape

The existing UPVC door will be replaced with a new fire door onto to the re-configured fire escape. This door will be exit only.

The party wall, at first floor and in the loft, will be insulated so as to minimise noise transfer into the adjacent property. It should be noted that there have been no complaints from the neighbours, about noise generated in Bar San Juan, in the past.

It should be noted that this is very much a dining venue and trading ceases at 22.30. It is not a late night drinking venue like many properties on beech Road and, as such, its impact on residential amenity is very limited.

The two existing flues on the side elevation will be re-configured to serve the existing ground floor and new first floor kitchens.

The existing windows in the first floor and loft will be retained and re-furbished.

The new kitchen area will add approximately 31 sq m of floor space, a relatively small area, but very much in line with the ethos of this traditional tapas bar.

Assessment

Key Planning Issues

The use of the site has already been established and as such the key issues are:

1. Design and the impact on the heritage assets in terms of the Conservation Area and nearby buildings of significance.

2. Impact on residential amenity with the change of use of the 1st floor.

National Policy.

The site is located in commercial area on Beech Road with a mix of commercial uses and residential properties. It already has an established use as a restaurant, on the ground floor.

The NPPF supports sustainable town centre development in para 86 and states that policies should 'promote competitive town centres that provide customer choice and a diverse retail offer and which reflect the individuality of town centres;'

Para 81 says 'Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business'. In this case the development is to allow the business to recover and trade effectively following the commercial impacts that it has suffered during the pandemic.

In terms of the impact on Historic Assets, Para 194 says The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.

Para 202 says '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'

In this case the development of the new toilets and fire escape, with the relocated existing flue on the side elevation, will have less than significant harm to the conservation area and will allow the business to secure its optimum viable use and as such is acceptable.

And in para 197, 'In assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development.'

In terms of the new structure housing the toilets will have little no impact as they are screened by the boundary wall. Similarly, the fire escape will not be readily visible from the public domain and, as such have no greater impact than the existing fire escape.

View of access door to rear yard housing the new toilets and fire escape.

The existing timber door will be replaced and made into an exit only door.

There will be no change to the fenestration at first floor or in the loft space as the existing windows will be retained and re-furbished.

The flues are already in existence and 'tucked' down the alleyway at the side and have limited impact on the streetscene. The relocation of one will not increase the impact on the visual amenity of the conservation area.

In terms of the impact on the character of the conservation area, these alterations will be neutral and not create a substantial loss of visual amenity or impact on designated historic assets.

The change of use of the first floor may impact on the residential accommodation adjoining property.

However, it is proposed that insulation be provided to the party wall on the 1st floor and the loft and it is considered that this will mitigate any impact.

Other commercial bars and restaurants in the area trade until the early hours, but these premisses do not. The proposed noise attenuation, together with the proposed hours of operation will mean any impact would not be material.

Planning Balance

The increase in operational floor area for the restaurant will allow the premises to trade effectively throughout the year and this will bring benefits in terms of life and vitality, but, more importantly, economic ones in that it will secure the operation of the premises all year around and result in new full time and part time jobs being created.

Summary

In this case, it is clear that the development is sustainable in that it is bringing into full time use a currently unutilised 1st floor and loft space of the property with minimal or no impacts on material planning considerations.

As such, while the development will impact on the heritage asset in a neutral way, and any impact on residential amenity will be mitigated, the public benefits of the new jobs being created and the sustainability of the business, mean that any adverse impact is outweighed, and the development is acceptable in terms of para 194, 197 and 202 of the NPPF.