

COMMITTEE DATE: 22/02/2017

Application Reference: 16/0812

WARD: Claremont
DATE REGISTERED: 02/12/16
LOCAL PLAN ALLOCATION: Resort Core
Town Centre Boundary
Leisure Zone / Resort Core
Defined Inner Area

APPLICATION TYPE: Full Planning Permission
APPLICANT: Scarborough Group

PROPOSAL: Use of upper floors as short stay holiday accommodation (Use Class C1) with associated reception and bar at ground floor

LOCATION: 8-20 QUEEN STREET, BLACKPOOL, FY1 1PD

Summary of Recommendation: Refuse

CASE OFFICER

Mr G Johnston

BLACKPOOL COUNCIL PLAN 2015 -2020

This application has been considered in relation to Priority One and Priority Two of the plan but as a result of the proposed location of the development and the nature of the proposal it is not considered to be in accordance with either Priority One or Priority Two.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATION

This application would not represent the qualitative holiday accommodation sought by Policies CS21 and CS23 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy. In addition it would represent the loss of office space in the Town Centre which has only recently been vacated and hence the proposal would be contrary to paragraph 22 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CS3 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy. It would not be consistent with Policy SR9 of the Blackpool Local Plan in that it would not introduce an appropriate holiday accommodation in the Leisure Zone and there would be amenity issues for the occupants of the accommodation which would make it contrary to paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS7 of Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy and Policy BH3 of the Blackpool Local Plan. Whilst it is acknowledged that there would be some employment benefits with the scheme and it is recognised that the premises

is in a sustainable location, it is felt that in terms of paragraph 14 of the National Planning Policy Framework the disbenefits associated with the proposal would outweigh the benefits.

INTRODUCTION

This application was the subject of pre-application discussion and issues were raised regarding the location of the proposal and the nature of the proposal. The written advice given was that any application for this type of holiday accommodation would not be supported.

SITE DESCRIPTION

This application relates to a modern looking building with extensive areas of glazing to front elevation on the northern side of Queen Street. There is a canopy at ground floor level which extends across frontage of the Litten Tree Public House to the west. The more traditional former Continental Hotel is to the east. The premises is within the Leisure Zone as identified on the Proposals Map to the Local Plan, within the Town Centre, at the northern end of the Resort Core and within the Town Centre Conservation Area. In the past the premises has been used as offices - some B1, A2 and D1 class uses.

DETAILS OF PROPOSAL

The application is to use the upper floors as holiday accommodation - described as an hotel but the layout plans clearly show accommodation that is more akin to a 'youth hostel' with primarily dormitory accommodation comprising bunk beds. There would be six double rooms with en-suite facilities, three twin rooms and the remainder of the rooms would be dormitory accommodation. There would be two sets of male and female showers/wcs on the first and second floors. The third floor would be all dormitory accommodation. A total of 110 guests could be accommodated. The ground floor would comprise a reception area with bar/dining area with ancillary staff accommodation. It is suggested that the proposal would create five full time and 10 part time jobs. There is a management plan accompanying the application and this indicates the following measures to control occupancy of the accommodation:

- all bookings will require the use of a credit/debit card registered to a valid UK address;
- customers must provide valid photo ID to confirm their address;
- all bookings must be made online and 48 hours prior to arrival and;
- confirmation of booking will be sent via an email address.

It is suggested that the majority of bookings would be made by groups or families and that the applicant has extensive experience in providing high quality hotel developments. In addition, it is suggested the applicant would seek accreditation for the accommodation.

In addition to the Management Plan the application is accompanied by a Planning Statement which seeks to justify the proposal. It is also suggested that the property is now completely vacant (having been partially vacant since June 2013) and that it has been marketed for the past three years without anyone interested in taking the whole of the premises.

The application is for change of use only but the Planning Statement includes some indicative elevations of how the property could be externally enhanced if permission is granted.

MAIN PLANNING ISSUES

The main planning issues are considered to be:

- the principle of the development
- amenity considerations associated with the application
- parking and highways considerations associated with the application

CONSULTATIONS

Built Heritage Manager: The change of use would have no impact on the character of the conservation area. That said, this is clearly the first phase of a process, and any external alterations and signage would have to make a substantial contribution to the enhancement of the appearance of the conservation area.

Blackpool Civic Trust: No comments have been received at the time of preparing this report. Any comments that are received before the Committee meeting will be reported in the Update Note.

Head of Highways and Traffic Management: No comments have been received at the time of preparing this report. Any comments that are received before the Committee meeting will be reported in the Update Note.

Service Manager Public Protection: No comments have been received at the time of preparing this report. Any comments that are received before the Committee meeting will be reported in the Update Note.

PUBLICITY AND REPRESENTATIONS

Site notice displayed: 14 December 2016

Neighbours notified: 12 December 2016

No representations have been received at the time of preparing this report. Any comments that are received before the Committee meeting will be reported in the Update Note.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK

Paragraph 7 - three dimensions to sustainable development - economic/social/environmental

Paragraph 14 - presumption in favour of sustainable development

Paragraph 17 - 12 core principles - including good standard of design and amenity

Paragraph 22 - avoid long term protection of employment sites where there is no realistic prospect of them being brought back into use

Paragraph 23 - promote management and growth of town centres

Paragraph 34 - locate developments where the use of sustainable modes of travel can be used

BLACKPOOL LOCAL PLAN PART 1: CORE STRATEGY

The Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 was adopted by the Council in January 2016.

The policies in the Core Strategy that are most relevant to this application are -

Policy CS1: Strategic Location of Development
Policy CS3 Economic Development and Employment
Policy CS4 Retail and other Town Centre Uses
Policy CS5 Connectivity
Policy CS7 Design and Amenity
Policy CS8 Heritage
Policy CS17 Blackpool Town Centre
Policy CS21 Leisure and Business Tourism
Policy CS23 Managing Holiday Bedspaces

SAVED POLICIES: BLACKPOOL LOCAL PLAN 2001-2016

The Blackpool Local Plan was adopted in June 2006. A number of policies in the Blackpool Local Plan (2006) have now been superseded by policies in the Core Strategy (these are listed in Appendix B of the Core Strategy). Other policies in the Blackpool Local Plan are saved until the Local Part 2: Site Allocations and Development Management Policies is produced.

The following policies are most relevant to this application:

Policy AS1 General Development Requirements
Policy BH3 Residential and Visitor Amenity
Policy SR8 Leisure Zone
Policy SR9 Use of Upper Floors
Policy LQ10 Conservation Areas

ASSESSMENT

The principle of the development

Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy seeks to promote the regeneration of the inner area of the town and the Town Centre is one of the three key areas. This site is within the Town Centre but is specifically identified as being within the Leisure Zone on the Proposals Map to the 2006 Local Plan, where prior to and since 2006 this zone has been promoted as the main location for bars, public houses and nightclubs. The Resort Core is also an area where inner area regeneration is to be focused. The application premises are at the northern end of the Resort Core but as mentioned above is specifically identified as being within the Leisure Zone on the

Proposals Map. There is a recognition that there are still too many bed spaces in the Resort Core than are needed to sustain the number of visitors to the town. Quantatively this proposal would add to those bedspaces and whilst it would be modernised accommodation (converted from the existing offices) it would not add qualitatively to the existing stock of accommodation given the nature of the proposed offer. The three key sites in the Town Centre - Central Business District, Winter Gardens and Leisure Quarter are seen as the focus for new hotel development over the plan period (Policies CS18, 19 and 20) and permissions have in the past been granted for the Yates site, Clifton Road-Talbot Road/ Sorting office, Abingdon Street-Edward Street, Leopold Grove and the Sands Venue. These proposals would add quantatively to the stock of bedspaces but more importantly would add qualitatively to that stock in a way that the application proposal would not.

Policy CS3 of the Core Strategy seeks to promote office development, enterprise and business start-ups in the Town Centre. This proposal would create five full time jobs and 10 part time jobs but would involve the loss of some 1310 sq metres of office floorspace although the applicant's agent is suggesting that this premises has been marketed for some three years without success and hence is relying on paragraph 22 of the National Planning Policy Framework relating to the long term protection of employment sites. It is clear that some of the premises was vacated in 2013 but the remainder has only recently been vacated (December 2016). In this context the premises cannot be considered to be long term vacant premises

Policy CS21 of the Core Strategy seeks to support new visitor accommodation focused on the Town Centre, Resort Core and the defined holiday accommodation areas in the Holiday Accommodation Supplementary Planning Document. The policy recognises the need to reduce the amount of lower quality accommodation whilst supporting the provision of new high quality accommodation. Whilst this would be modern converted accommodation, the format of the accommodation would not be dissimilar to what exists in some areas of the town in terms of multi occupancy bedrooms. It would not represent the high quality accommodation envisaged by the policy.

Policy CS23 of the Core Strategy is seeking to manage the quantum of holiday bedspaces and promote good quality accommodation. It is contended that this accommodation would not be the qualitative improvement envisaged by the policy.

Policy SR9 of the Local Plan allows for appropriate leisure and hotel uses in all of the Town Centre. The issue here is that the Policy dates from 2006 and predates the Humberts Study which informed the preparation of the Core Strategy and hence pre-dates the Core Strategy policies. For the reasons outlined above the proposal is not considered to represent appropriate holiday accommodation in this location.

The applicant's agent is suggesting the scheme is compliant with the National Planning Policy Framework and policies in the Local Plan and Core Strategy and would have the following benefits –

- Making best use of an underutilised part / vacant mixed use employment site;

- Utilising vacant upper floors for holiday accommodation;
- Contributing towards making Blackpool a tourist destination which is attractive all year round;
- Ensuring that an appropriate level of low budget, high quality accommodation is maintained within the Town Centre;
- Providing a range of local employment opportunities;
- Be appropriately managed in accordance with the Management Plan and booking system;
- Regenerating an area which suffers from a poor quality built environment and anti-social behaviour;
- The opportunity to submit a further planning application for external alterations which will significantly enhance the street scene and Conservation Area.

Whilst it is acknowledged that there would be some benefits with the proposal, it is contended that the disbenefits outweigh these in terms of the location of the premises within the Leisure Zone and the nature of the accommodation being proposed.

Amenity considerations associated with the application

The building is within the Leisure Zone (Policy SR8) in the Town Centre and some of the accommodation is directly above the Litten Tree Public House. Since 2006, this area has been the focus of applications for public houses, bars and nightclubs. The purpose of the policy has been to segregate these uses from other more traditional Town Centre uses and to accommodate the needs of residents and visitors in one defined area of the Town Centre. Queen Street has a number of bars and is the focus for late night activity at the weekends throughout the year. Whilst Policy SR9 is supportive of the use of upper floors for appropriate leisure and hotel uses in all of the Town Centre there is a recognition that there may be amenity issues with office and residential uses in the Leisure Zone. Since 2006, it is contended that those amenity issues could also affect other uses because of the concentration of bar uses in Queen Street and late night activity in Queen Street. It is contended that it is not an ideal family environment and would not represent a good standard of design and amenity as envisaged by paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS7 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy and Policy BH3 of the Local Plan.

Parking and highways considerations associated with the application

The existing building has no dedicated car parking spaces. The parking standards would suggest one space per bedroom but this is likely to be based on the room accommodating a couple or family. This case is slightly different with six double rooms with en-suite facilities, three twin rooms and the remainder of the rooms being dormitory accommodation. The standards allow for a reduced requirement in town centre locations (up to 35%). Given the proximity to Blackpool North Station and other modes of travel it is not felt that the lack of car parking would be a justifiable reason for refusal.

Other issues

It is acknowledged that the applicant is suggesting that the management plan would preclude the accommodation being used as a 'hostel' but it is not felt that this is a family friendly location and it is more likely to be attractive to stag and hen groups. This is a market the Council is seeking to move away from.

CONCLUSION

Whilst it is recognised that there are some benefits with the proposal it is contended that these are outweighed by the disbenefits and hence the application is recommended for refusal.

LEGAL AGREEMENT AND/OR DEVELOPER FINANCIAL CONTRIBUTION

None

HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

Under Article eight and Article one of the first protocol to the Convention on Human Rights, a person is entitled to the right to respect for private and family life, and the peaceful enjoyment of his/her property. However, these rights are qualified in that they must be set against the general interest and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. It is not considered that the application raises any human rights issues.

CRIME AND DISORDER ACT 1998

The contents of this report have been considered in the context of the Council's general duty, in all its functions, to have regard to community safety issues as required by section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Planning Application File(s) 16/0812 which can be accessed via the link below:

<http://idoxpa.blackpool.gov.uk/online-applications/search.do?action=simple>

Recommended Decision: Refuse

Reasons for Refusal

1. The proposal would be contrary to Policies Policies CS21 and CS23 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 in that it would not provide the quality of holiday accommodation envisaged by the policies and would provide multi-occupancy bedroom accommodation which the Council is seeking to

replace with higher quality en-suite accommodation in the Town Centre, Resort Core and Holiday Accommodation Areas.

2. The proposal would be contrary to paragraph 22 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CS3 of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 in that it would represent the loss of office accommodation in the Town Centre and it has not been demonstrated that this is long term vacant space and that there is no realistic prospect of the accommodation being used for office use.
3. The proposal would be contrary Policy SR9 the of Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016 in that it would not introduce an appropriate holiday accommodation in the Leisure Zone and there would be amenity issues for the occupants of the accommodation as a result of the concentration of bars/clubs in Queen Street and the associated late night activity which would make the proposal contrary to paragraph 17 of the National Planning Policy Framework, Policy CS7 of Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 and Policy BH3 of the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016.
4. **ARTICLE 35 STATEMENT (NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK paragraph 187)**

The Local Planning Authority has sought to secure a sustainable development that would improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of Blackpool but in this case there are considered factors which conflict with the National Planning Policy Framework and policies of the Blackpool Local Plan Part 1: Core Strategy 2012-2027 and the Blackpool Local Plan 2001-2016, which justify refusal.

Advice Notes to Developer

Not applicable