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Categories:

Swan Inn, Cheadle

Significance: The List description suggests that this early 19th century building was built as a pub, built in conjunction with the improvement of the turnpike roads and toll cottages. An important part of the building's significance is therefore its design and function as a public house as well as its historical social value within the community. The Heritage Statement is very weak and for such a substantial proposed change it does not have assessment and analysis of significance/heritage values by a heritage specialist – no analysis of historic mapping, documentary research or analysis of the historic building fabric or assessment of impact. **The application cannot be determined on the basis of the information submitted.**

There is no account of the physical changes necessary – demolition of the link at the rear, works to sever the ground floor into several units, new staircases, alterations to room proportions, the plans are not clear where interventions are taking place (such as blocked doorways), no information regarding Building Regs works to make compliant with fire and noise separation, and no understanding of historic floorplan and circulation routes.

Before any physical changes are considered we need to explore why the original use (which is so important to the building's significance) cannot be maintained. Advice on securing a buildings optimum viable use is given in the PPG on Heritage – this guidance states that 'the optimum viable use is not necessarily the most economically viable one'. They need to submit marketing evidence and, if a case can be made for redundancy, alternative uses which may have less impact on significance need to be considered.

The application needs to be refused or withdrawn to allow the preparation of a detailed Heritage Statement to understand the building's significance and this then needs to feed into the future proposals.

On the basis of the current, limited information and lack of understanding, the application represents harm to the significance of the building. Although the exterior of the building will largely remain unchanged, the interior will be so altered that this will represent substantial harm (significance is not just about the building's exterior, the entire legibility of the building as an historic pub will be lost internally). In accordance with the NPPF, applications proposing substantial harm should be refused unless there are substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or that there is no viable use that will enable its conservation or the harm, or loss is justified by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

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