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4th January 2022
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Adderley Mill, Trimpos, Cheadle – application SMD/2021/0231

This letter responds to Regeneration's email dated the 11th of November 2021 and provides further information on the condition of the property and its viability for future use.

The applicants have owned the site for 17 years and during this time Mr. Hamilton has used part of the site for storage for his building business and rented out other parts of the site for industrial and storage uses. As the Historical Impact Assessment reveals the site has been used for industrial purposes since at least the early 18th century. The property was used as a corn mill from the 18th century until 1918 when it became a bone grinding mill. It continued in the same use, providing raw/processed materials for the pottery industry until 1996. Since then until 2016 it has been in various low-key business uses, but not all of the buildings have been occupied. The buildings have been vacant since 2016. A detailed description of the history of the site on the buildings on it is contained in the Historical Impact Assessment.

Relatively little of the original building remains; the present buildings are mainly an amalgam of 19th and early 20th century works, alterations, and extensions. The Historical Impact Assessment concludes that it is not economically viable for the former corn mill (the northern building) to be retained on this site and that so little of the original building remains for it to be considered as a historical asset.

The site was marketed by Butters John Bee from April 2016 until November 2018. Please see the attached letter from Butters John Bee which describes the marketing carried out and the lack of interest in using the property for commercial use. Property details are also attached. Two offers were made for the site however these were not acceptable to the client. The main interest was for residential development with no interest for commercial use.

In November 2017 the Valuation Office agreed that no business rates would be charged because of the poor condition of the buildings which meant that a large part of the buildings (70%+) could not be used. See the attached business rate notice.

The marketing exercise demonstrates that the continuation of the buildings and land in industrial/storage use is constrained to the extent that it is no longer suitable or commercially viable for industrial or business use.

Other constraints on the development of the site for industrial/ commercial use are: -

1. The existing site access is substandard; the sightline to the north is totally inadequate for modern industrial development. Please refer to the earlier funding application for housing on the site (SMD/2019/0676).

Whilst the Highway Authority has no objection to the present proposal it is unlikely that it would consider the proposed new access suitable for industrial use because of the size of vehicles and likely higher number of vehicle movements involved.

2. Approximately 30% of the site is in Flood Zones 2 and 3. This reduces the area available for development.
3. The poor condition of the buildings is such that restoration is not financially viable. Mr. Hamilton, one of the applicants, is a builder and even if he were to do the work himself he estimates that the costs are prohibitive. A structural survey has not been carried out given the fact that the Valuation Office has agreed that business rates are not charged because of the poor condition of the buildings. If the Council now asks for a structural survey I think it would be unreasonable given the site's history, the visibly poor condition of the buildings, and the time that has elapsed since validation.
4. The buildings potentially contain asbestos the removal of which would add to the costs of redevelopment. Please see the Phase 1 report.
5. The site is potentially contaminated. Please see the Phase 1 report which recommends that an intrusive geotechnical ground investigation (Phase 2 Survey) should be undertaken and should include analysis for soil, ground gas, and groundwater contamination testing.

It is not possible at this stage of the development of the proposal to accurately estimate the likely costs of removing ground contamination. The buildings need to be demolished before any ground survey involving either digging or drilling can be done. However, based on the Phase 1 survey there is potentially ground contamination the removal/remediation of which would add, possibly significantly, to the costs of redevelopment.

6. The site lies in a Coal Measures area and there is a potential risk from shallow unrecorded mine workings. Again, a detailed site investigation is needed.
7. Putting aside for the moment the poor condition of the buildings they do not provide good quality modern industrial accommodation.

A potential benefit of residential development compared to industrial development is that it would produce a significant reduction in the amount of impermeable surface on the site allowing surface water to better percolate into the ground and improve the quality of the water discharging into the River Tean. At the moment approximately 83% of the site consists of impermeable surfaces (hardstanding and buildings). This would be reduced to approximately 28% in the proposed residential development. Further, a greater part of the site would be gardens and green space/nature improving the biodiversity value of the site.

The marketing exercise demonstrated that the continuation of the buildings and land in industrial/storage use is constrained to the extent that it is no longer suitable or commercially viable for industrial or business use. Further, development viability is constrained by likely contamination in both the ground and buildings, potential measures needed to mitigate risk from shallow coal measures, and flood risk.

It is not possible without detailed site investigations to calculate the extra costs that are likely to be involved in removing/mediating ground contamination; the asbestos in the buildings; and tackling possible risks from shallow coal measures. A full viability study cannot be carried out at this time because it would involve detailed site investigations which cannot be carried out without demolishing the buildings. However, based on experience, residential development, as opposed to industrial development, provides a more viable means of tackling such problems.

Kind Regards,

Ken Wainman