



# **PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

## **PLANNING SUMMARY**

Proposed redevelopment of the existing Flour Mill to provide residential development comprising of the conversion of the existing 'Pledges' Flour Mill and the erection of two additional blocks to provide a total of up to 55 apartments (Use Class C3), access, parking, and associated infrastructure

 **The Flour Mill, East Hill, Ashford**

**Prepared by Hume Planning Consultancy Ltd.**

On Behalf of Mulberry Tree Holdings Ltd.

October 2021

## Planning Summary

### *The Flour Mill, East Hill, Ashford, Kent*

This planning addendum note has been prepared in support of ongoing consultation exercises relating to the proposed redevelopment of the existing Flour Mill.

To assist with pre-application discussions, Hume Planning Consultancy has identified what we consider to be the key parameters affecting the development potential of the site – these are outlined below.

This statement focuses on the principle of development in this location but also identifies more site-specific and technical planning parameters that are relevant to the consideration of this proposal.

It is relevant that a separate more detailed design document explains the proposals and their evolution in the context of the site character, including detailed matters of heritage.

## SITE DESCRIPTION

The subject site comprises the existing Pledges Flour Mill off East Hill, Ashford. Currently vacant, the site constitutes previously developed land (Figure 1).

The site represents a prominent location at a gateway position close to the centre of Ashford with the urban area and within easy reach of central services and facilities highly accessible to excellent national and international public transport provision.

Constructed in 1901 as a single block the existing building stands at 7 storeys tall at its highest point, though is for the most part 5 storeys in height. The site falls within the designated Ashford Town Centre boundary.

The River Stour runs through the site. The river runs directly past the front elevation of the existing building on East Hill, with it accessed via an existing bridge. To the North of the site sits Mace Lane, a primary road with vehicular routes through the town and into and out of Ashford. To the South East is the Mill Court residential development with amenities such as a medical centre, pharmacy and small supermarket. To the immediate West sits the Star Inn, and the short public route to the high street. To the North West of the site sits part of the Ashford School complex.



**Figure 1. The site and its immediate surroundings.**

The site falls within the Ashford Town Centre Conservation Area. Two Grade II listed buildings fall within the vicinity of the site – the ‘Star Inn’ and ‘Northside’ – with the Grade II\* listed ‘Bridge House’ to the south west of the site.

In addition, the site is washed over by a Green Corridor (Figure 3), and is in part subject to designations as a wildlife site (specifically the River Stour rather than the surfaced or built elements of the site). The site’s north-eastern extent is currently designated as open space, although it is overgrown and is not publicly accessible. This part of the site does not perform any recreational function.

The site is, in near totality, included within designated Flood Zone 3 (Figure 4). Part of the site fronting East Hill is included within Environment Agency Flood Zone 2.

Whilst the site benefits from existing a vehicular access directly to East Hill with a frontage to the undeveloped parcel of the site fronting Mace Lane, it is also located in proximity to Ashford International rail station.

In its current configuration the site retains pedestrian access from various points and is well related to existing pedestrian and cycle routes. In this regard the site benefits from close access to existing services and facilities, as well as wider connectivity via public transport links.



Figure 3. The subject site in relation to the existing ‘Green Corridor’.



Figure 4. Extent of site flood zone designations.

## PLANNING CONTEXT

There have been a number of past planning permissions for various types of development at the subject site. Largely these refer to alterations and minor development. Those of most relevance to proposed development are summarised:

- 02/01002/AS Proposed external alterations to building shell to form bar and nightclub Including new roof to first floor nightclub area and new footbridge. Approved 15 August 2002.
- 05/00135/AS Creation of one three bedroom apartment and one four bedroom apartment (on the upper floors). Approved 18 March 2005.

It is understood that previous plans for the building included its redevelopment by the nearby Ashford School. Whilst previously considered in the context of the Ashford School’s masterplan, no formal planning applications pursuant to the above is known to have been submitted.

## **PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

Decisions on planning applications must be made in accordance with the policies of the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for the purposes of S38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) comprises the adopted Ashford Borough Local Plan 2030 (adopted 2019) and the Kent Waste and Minerals Plan 2030 (adopted 2020).

In addition to the policies of the development plan, there are a number of policies and standards which are material to the determination of planning applications including the National Planning Policy Framework 2019 (NPPF) and the National Design Guide (NDG).

### *ASHFORD LOCAL PLAN (2030)*

The Ashford Borough Local Plan 2030 was adopted in 2019 and sets out the strategic and development management policies for the Borough over the plan period. The following policies are of most relevance to the proposed development, and its consideration as part of this pre-application enquiry:

Policies of relevance in the adopted Ashford Local Plan include:

- Policy SP1 – Strategic Objectives
- Policy SP2 – Strategic Approach to Housing Delivery
- Policy SP5 – Ashford Town Centre
- Policy HOU1 – Affordable Housing
- Policy HOU3a – Residential Windfall Development Within Settlements
- Policy ENV2 – The Ashford Green Corridor
- Policy COM2 – Recreation, Sport, Play and Open spaces
- Policy TRA3 – Parking Standards for Residential Development
- Policy ENV6 – Flood Risk
- Policy EN14 – Conservation Areas

These policies are referenced throughout the Design Document, and due regard has been had to their content in the preparation of plans to date.

Full detailed assessment of the final design proposal against the above planning policies will be made in a written Planning Statement in due course, and likewise assessed by Ashford Borough Council when considering the application.

## PLANNING SUMMARY

At this stage of the application preparation, we consider that the location of the site and the proposed residential development satisfy the main spatial objectives of both local and national planning policy which seek to focus new residential development to areas that enjoy a good degree of connectivity to local shops, services and amenities, including public transport connections.

In this case the existing Flour Mill building (which has been vacant for some time) will be the centrepiece of the proposed development. The site's location in a prominent location at a key approach to the centre of Ashford which is under utilised provides the opportunity via the quality of the architecture to create a built form that will have a positive visual effect on the character of the area, with new development complementary to the main Flour Mill building.

The spatial pattern of development, that surrounds the site on all sides, is such that the proposed conversion of the existing mill building – alongside the erection of two additional residential blocks - constitutes an appropriate type and scale of development in this location, which makes efficient use of an existing brownfield resource to assist in the delivery of much needed residential development in the Borough.

Key benefits of the proposal are considered to include:

- the provision of new housing that would be delivered;
  - the development of a highly sustainable site with reasonable access to facilities and services;
  - the restoration and bringing back into use of an existing resource relevant to local heritage;
  - the proposal would contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural environment by minimising the use of natural resources and minimising waste and pollution through the provision of new homes in a sustainable location;
  - the development would result in a range of economic benefits through local construction jobs that would be created during the construction phase of the development; and
  - the future residents would contribute to the economic prosperity of the area through additional expenditure in local shops and services.
- 7.5 Overall, the proposal would constitute sustainable development and there would be no 'significant and demonstrable' adverse impacts which would outweigh the benefits of the development.

## **TECHNICAL REPORTS AND ASSESSMENT**

To inform the preparation of a detailed planning application for the above the following documents have been commissioned and prepared:

- Planning Application Form
- Planning Statement
- Topographical Survey
- Arboricultural survey and report
- Ecological survey and report
- Flood risk and surface water drainage report
- Heritage statement
- Transport Assessment
- Full plans, sections and details

Detailed assessment of the findings and recommendations of these technical reports will duly inform the final design scheme, which will be the subject of consultation during the application process itself once submitted.

## **FEEDBACK**

An online feedback form is provided via the consultation portal. We look forward to receiving your comments at this stage.

Consultation materials are published online at:

[https://www.humeplanning.co.uk/consultations/flour\\_mill\\_ashford](https://www.humeplanning.co.uk/consultations/flour_mill_ashford)