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Albert's Restaurant & Bar
Edenfield Road, Norden, Rochdale

Design & Access Statement
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1.0 CONTEXT

Physical

The development site is located on Edenfield Road in Norden, on the site of the former Nutters Restaurant, which closed in October 2021.

The existing building is a three-storey victorian residence, built by George Goodwin of Staffordshire in 1850 as a gothic-style manor house, Wolstenholme Hall, built of Staffordshire brick and set in six and a half acres of land.

The building was used as a hospital between 1920 and 1977 and after lying abandoned for many years, the building was bought in the 1980s by Whitbread who restored the building and added substantial extensions to the ground floor. It was subsequently bought by Rodney Nutter in 2003 and was the home of Nutter's Restaurant until 2021.

The ground floor extensions added in the 1980s are felt to be broadly unsuccessful in both architectural and functional terms, creating awkward and uncomfortable spaces that do not exploit the distant views available towards Manchester.

The proposed scheme comprises the demolition of part of these ground floor extensions to be replaced with a new winter garden extension to the south and east plus associated terracing and external works.





View of current arrangement of ground floor extensions

Planning

Proposals for the redevelopment of the site were the subject of a pre-application submission, which was made in November 2021 and a full application that received consent in January 2023. A further application was made in 2023 for a reduced scheme, which has now been withdrawn.

This application is for a similar scheme to that withdrawn, with amendments made to address planning comments on the proposed new staircase to the west elevation and the proposed new access road to the western function room entrance.

Refer to the separate Planning Statement that accompanies this application for further information on planning issues.

2.0 DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES

Use

The proposed use of the site is effectively a continuation of the existing use as a restaurant, bar and function venue and is the same use that received planning consent in January 2023.

The applicant, Elle R Leisure, is a long standing and experienced operator of several leisure venues, including four Albert's Restaurants in Manchester, Standish, Worsley and Didsbury.

The first Albert's Restaurant was launched in 2004 with the stated aim "To deliver quality food to local customers at a reasonable price in a sharp, modern space with friendly, unpretentious service" This aim has been pursued ever since and it has earned them a loyal customer base, which they are seeking to build on with a move into Norden.

In addition to the core business of restaurant and bar, the development will also provide a variety of function spaces that can accommodate a range of events from small private parties to large corporate functions and including wedding ceremonies and receptions.

Amount

The amount of accommodation proposed in the development is determined primarily by requirements that have been tested and established through many years of experience in operating other venues in the chain.

This model ideally provides a restaurant of approximately 180 covers with a private dining room for up to 40 people plus two function rooms for 80 and 150 people to allow for the range of different events to be accommodated.

The size of the restaurant space, together with the attendant back of house areas, plus the private dining and function facilities need to be set at a level that can generate sufficient revenue but this needs to be balanced against the constraints of the existing context and financial and operational limits to ensure that the development has long term viability.

This need has led to a reappraisal of the previously consented scheme, with the amount of accommodation proposed being reduced to reflect uncertain and changing market conditions. The amended scheme now contains a smaller restaurant and bar area, with no dedicated private dining room and a reduced capacity function room on the ground floor.

3.0 CHARACTER

Design Concept

The design concept is based on recreating the existing Albert's model of clean, modern and contemporary styling, so that the development is recognisably an Albert's restaurant, whilst respecting and responding to the character of the existing building and the context of the site.

The clear, open plan nature of the Albert's model is at odds with the current arrangement of the existing building in which the haphazard ground floor extensions create an incoherent layout and obscure much of the character of the existing house.

The design objective, therefore, seeks to integrate these conflicting requirements, allowing the quality of the existing building to be expressed whilst providing an efficient layout that allows the building to function effectively and to gain maximum benefit of the south facing and distant views available.

Layout

There are a number of factors that have influenced the development layout and internal arrangement including the layout of the site and the existing buildings, the operational requirements of the restaurant and function spaces and the availability of south facing views.

The primary generator of the overall site layout is the location and aspect of the restaurant and the integration of the template established at other Albert's venues, with front and back of house layouts and sizes dictated by functional requirements and operational experience.

The location of the restaurant entrance is also fundamental as this is the primary use and requires clear visibility on the approach from the driveway. The function rooms are the secondary use and require the ability to have independent access as well as access to the main restaurant area.

The previously consented scheme featured a separate new-build block containing the restaurant and bar, a new extension to the west housing a function room with the existing building used for private dining and circulation space and a first floor function room.

The new proposals offer a substantially reduced footprint due to the restaurant and bar spaces being moved within the existing building and the number and capacity of different private function spaces being reduced.

Even with this reduced aspiration the floorspace available within the existing building is insufficient to provide the required number of covers in the restaurant, the core element of the business, and the efficiency of the space is further compromised by the current structure and sub division walls on the ground floor.

Consequently, it is proposed to open up the existing ground floor area, providing a new internal structure through the ground and first floors, and to supplement the existing floor area with a new glazed extension in form of a single storey winter garden to the south and east elevations, with the south facing gable retained as a full height element of the existing building.

This arrangement allows the winter garden, the new south facing terrace in front and the main public space within the building to benefit from more of the available sunlight and the distant views towards Manchester.

This layout also utilises the existing entrance position and approach to the building, with the existing glass canopy removed and replaced with a new feature surround to the existing plain entrance doors. There will be a new rooflight fitted to the roof over the entrance to provide a visual connection to the gable windows above.

The west elevation features a lobby with vaulted stone ceiling, part of the original entrance to the house, which is currently obscured by a glazed extension whose roof cuts across the gable. It is proposed that this glazed lobby is removed so the original gable feature can be revealed and become a dedicated entrance to the function room spaces.

The existing small function room to the south west is to be retained and refurbished, including a new glazed gable to the south elevation and replacement windows and external doors providing access to the terrace areas.

The main function room is located on the first floor to take advantage of the space available on upper floors and the elevated views afforded from the extensive south facing windows. The room will be supplemented by a new balcony to part of the south and east elevations to provide private outdoor space for the use of the occupants.

Access to this function room will be afforded via a feature staircase located in a new enclosure on the west elevation adjacent to the main function room entrance. This staircase has been redesigned from the flat roofed enclosure on the withdrawn scheme and now features a steeply pitched roof to reflect the character of the existing building.

The existing ground floor extensions in this area will be demolished to allow formation of the new stair enclosure and it is proposed to provide a new glazed link at ground floor level between the existing stone entrance archway and the new stair enclosure.

The northern part of the existing footprint will contain all the back of house functions, as is generally the case with the existing layout, and will include a new access and escape staircase through all floors of the building by extending an existing staircase enclosure. Ancillary functions such as staff facilities, storage and plant space are located at basement and 2nd floor level or externally to the rear of the building.

Scale

The scale of the proposed development is determined by both the operational needs, which dictate the amount of accommodation required, and the scale of the existing building, which influences the design and massing of any new elements.

The overall scale of the development has been reduced from the previously consented scheme with the restaurant and bar now provided within the existing footprint rather than in a separate restaurant wing and the reduction in private dining and function facilities, which allows for a more compact overall plan.

This allows the original building to retain its prominence in the overall scheme, whilst the removal of the extension to the south and east elevation allows the true scale and detail of this three storey building to be revealed through the new lightweight, glazed winter garden structure.

Appearance

The appearance of the building is largely unchanged with the most significant alteration being the demolition of the extension to the south and east and its replacement with a single storey, glazed winter garden structure that wraps around the south east corner of the original house. This takes reference from the glazed structure that previously formed the entrance to the original house on the west elevation, as can be seen in the photograph below.



View of the original house from the south west showing the original gable at the north west corner and the glazed structure at ground floor level

This glazed extension allows the south and east elevations to the original house to be revealed and be much more visible than in the existing arrangement, particularly in the summer months when the outer walls are lowered to provide an open dining terrace.

Another alteration to the appearance is the provision of an extension to the west elevation to provide the feature staircase to the main function room. The design of this stair has been amended to include a steeply pitched roof to reflect the existing roof scape and this is covered in blue/black slates to match the covering on the existing main house roof.

This pitched roof is proposed to abut a new, pitched gable end on the line of the existing external wall, recreating a feature that existed on the original house, and the existing roof profile at this corner will be restored via an extended ridge and a new valley. This original gable can be seen in the photograph above.

This stair enclosure will be formed in brick to reflect the buff coloured Staffordshire brick of the original house and will feature a new large feature window arrangement on the western gable that will include stone lintels and mullions as a modern interpretation of the existing window features.

The final alteration to the external appearance is to the north elevation, with the existing rear stair enclosure being enlarged to accommodate a new back of house and escape stair that runs through all floors of the building. This will be formed of brick to parapet level with a new standing seam roof above.

Landscape Strategy

The provision of attractive outdoor areas for both the restaurant and function rooms, that take advantage of the southerly aspect and distant views, is fundamental to the success of the scheme as a destination venue.

The current arrangement of extensions to the south elevation has the effect of creating a haphazard collection of outdoor spaces that are disconnected from the interior and do not adequately respond to the available views or sunlight.

The existing terrace area to the west will be retained in extent but repaved with new high quality natural paving, whilst the removal of the extension to the south east will allow for an additional, enlarged terrace area to be created in front of the restaurant and bar winter garden.

The winter garden extension to the south and east elevations will also allow much greater visual connection between indoor and out, with direct physical access from all ground floor public areas making the terrace a vibrant social space that feels connected to the functions it serves.

Highways & Parking

The development site is rural and not well served by public transport and so it is anticipated that the overwhelming majority of visitors will arrive by car.

Vehicular access to the site is currently, and will remain, from Edenfield Road with the access to the highway remaining unaltered. A new access route is to be provided to the west of the site to provide a drop off facility to the primary function room entrance.

In a variation from the withdrawn scheme this new roadway is proposed to be accessed from the south west corner of the existing car park and to run directly in front of the terrace within the existing grass embankment.

The southernmost line of this access road will align with the edge of the proposed terrace on the previously consented scheme and will avoid the need for a new access road from the site entrance that would cross the open area to the frontage of the building.

The existing car park is to be fully retained and is to be supplemented by an additional low-impact overspill car park to the south of the existing to provide the additional parking required during the busiest periods.

Further information on parking provision is contained within the planning statement supporting this application but it is proposed to provide a total of 133 parking spaces for both customers and staff plus space for eight cycles and three motorcycles. This provision is less than that provided by the scheme consented in January 2023 to reflect the smaller scheme.

Waste Management

A refuse storage area has been provided adjacent to the staff entrance in close proximity to the kitchen and stores areas. This has been sized to provide sufficient space for a number of containers allowing separation of recyclables, food waste and general waste.

4.0 ACCESSIBILITY

Access Links

As stated above, the development site is rural and not well served by public transport and so the majority of visitors will arrive by car.

Parking

Disabled parking spaces are located directly adjacent to the bottom of the existing ramped approach to the terrace and entrance area.

Access Routes & Entrances

The existing ramped approach provides direct access to the main restaurant entrance and all areas of the building are accessible via step-free thresholds from this point.

The independent access to the function rooms is also step free as is the access to the terraces from all areas within the building. There is existing ramped access between the terrace levels and this will be retained ensuring all external areas are fully accessible.

Internal Circulation

The ground floor accommodation, including restaurant, bar, WCs and small function room, is all at a single level ensuring step-free access between these areas of the building.

The only two exceptions are the small lounge bar at ground floor level, where there is an existing change of level, and the large function room at first floor level, which is accessed via a lift and ambulant staircase from the main ground floor function room entrance.