

DCSE0009/1139/CD - ALTERATIONS AND AN EXTENSION OVER TWO FLOORS TO PROVIDE COUNCIL INFORMATION, LIBRARY AND MEETING FACILITIES AT ROSS ON WYE LIBRARY, CANTILUPE ROAD, ROSS ON WYE, HEREFORDSHIRE HR9 7AN

For: Mr B Williams per AMEY, Caburn House, Brooks Road, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 2BY

Date Received: 28 May 2009 Ward: Ross-on-Wye East Grid Ref: 60154, 24167

Expiry Date: 23 July 2009

Local Members: Councillor P Cutter and Councillor Mrs A E Gray

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 Ross Library is a late twentieth century building, notable for its wide transverse roof, located to the north-west of Cantilupe Road in the town centre. The site is within the Conservation Area and the immediate surroundings are characterised by a mixed content of nineteenth century commercial and twentieth century residential buildings. Library Mews is a modern terrace to the north-east, occupying an elevated position relative of the application site.
- 1.2 Planning permission is sought for the erection of a two-storey extension to the rear and alterations to the existing building, which is essentially square in plan. The proposal involves the demolition of an existing freestanding garage visible from Henry Street and replacement with a two-storey extension, essentially rectangular in plan. The irregular geometry of the site dictates that the extension is off-axis relative to the existing library building, running parallel to the common boundary with the Library Mews development.
- 1.3 The application is intended to deliver an enhanced community facility whilst also allowing the incorporation of the existing Council information service, currently located in Swan House, Edde Cross Street. Accordingly, the scheme includes the internal re-modelling of the existing building with the provision of an additional first floor library space by extending the existing mezzanine. The extension provides enhanced meeting and staff areas in part as compensation for the loss of space in providing the additional information functions. The ground floor of the extension houses the rear entrance lobby, offices, WC's, staff room and book delivery room. The main feature of the first floor, which is coincidental with the ground floor of the main building (there is a substantial fall across the site) is the Dennis Potter meeting room. Additional works involve the provision of improved access arrangements, including re-modelling of existing ramped accesses, improved user facilities and storage space.
- 1.4 The proposals have been through a long consultative process with Council departments and user groups, which have led to design revisions in accordance with feedback received. The revisions have included the reduction in the height of the building and making the roof pitch shallower and latterly a revision to the design of the lift shaft. By comparison with the existing garage, the footprint of the extension is 19 m x 16.8 m as opposed to 8 m x 4.5 m. The ridge height increases from 4.8 m to 8.7 m.

Accordingly there is a significant increase in overall scale relative to the existing freestanding garage.

- 1.5 The extension is designed to 'read' as a separate entity from the existing library, linked by a flat roof, glazed link. This is due in part both to the geometry of the site and the difficulty in satisfactorily replicating the architectural characteristics of the main building.
- 1.6 The application is supported by a Design and Access Statement and arboricultural report (J Ross Arboricultural Consultancy April 2009), which focuses upon the intended removal of a Silver Birch tree located immediately adjacent the retaining wall on Henry Street. The Design and Access Statement describes that the scale of the extension has been a balancing act between achieving the level of accommodation desired, with the need to respect the visual amenity of the Conservation Area and the residential amenity of properties in the immediate vicinity.

2. Policies

2.1 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007

Policy S1	-	Sustainable Development
Policy S2	-	Development Requirements
Policy DR1	-	Design
Policy DR2	-	Land Use and Activity
Policy DR3	-	Movement
Policy HBA6	-	New Development within Conservation Areas
Policy T6	-	Walking
Policy T7	-	Cycling
Policy CF5	-	New Community Facilities
Policy LA5	-	Protection of Trees, Woodlands and Hedgerows
Policy LA6	-	Landscaping Schemes

3. Planning History

- 3.1 None relevant.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 No statutory or non-statutory consultations required.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Conservation Manager: No objection. The geometry of the proposed extension is constrained by the available site but it continues the basic language of the existing library, so is unlikely to increase the net impact of what is already a relatively large building.

Conditions are recommended in relation to external materials and glazing details.

- 4.3 Traffic Manager: Recommends conditions. The parking allocation requires attention and cycle parking needs to be more plentiful and accessible.

5. Representations

5.1 Ross Town Council: No objection.

5.2 Ross on Wye Library Development Group: Qualified comment.

- Is there an assurance that the building will achieve the maximum in conservation and energy-saving?
- What new arrangements will be made for pedestrian access, transport and policy?
- Will WiFi be available?

5.3 Three letters of representation have been received from neighbours resident in Library Mews, a residential development immediately to the north-east and overlooking the application site. The letters come from Mr and Mrs J F Green, Mrs P Jones and Dr Elinor Kelly, of Nos 5, 6 and 7 Library Mews respectively. The content of the letters can be summarised as follows:

- assurance is sought that the building will achieve energy efficiency savings
- concern is expressed at the adequacy of parking, particularly for disabled users
- the proposed extension will have a detrimental impact upon the residential amenity of the dwellings in Library Mews, including a loss of view, compounded by the increase in height relative to the existing garage
- could the site to the north be included so as to enable a larger single-storey extension
- the originally proposed lift shaft was inappropriate in design, appearing as a 'folly' (this aspect has subsequently been re-designed)
- the ridge height is higher than actually required
- the removal of the Silver Birch tree is unwarranted
- concern is expressed at the lack of staff parking.

The full text of these letters can be inspected at Southern Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officer's Appraisal

6.1 The application proposes the extension and re-modelling of an existing, well-used and central community facility in one of Herefordshire's market towns. The site is within the Ross Conservation Area and is bound on two sides by residential development. A number of Unitary Development Plan policies are of relevance, although the criteria of Policy CF5 (new community facilities) relate to the key issues. Policy HBA6 deals with new development within conservation areas and requires that new development should preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area involved.

6.2 Policy CF5 states that proposals which would result in the provision of new or improved community facilities, or the enhanced use of existing facilities will be permitted where they are:

- Appropriate in scale to the needs of the local community and reflect the character of the location;
- Are located within or around the settlement or the area they serve;
- Would not significantly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents; and
- Incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian access together with appropriate provision of car and cycle parking and operational space.

It is clear that the site is central to the settlement that it serves. The remaining policy criteria are discussed below:

Appropriate in terms of scale and need and reflective of the character of the location

- 6.3 The existing library is a large building by comparison with the majority of those in the immediate area. However, the extension is relatively modest in scale by comparison and will, through its design, read as a separate entity. In this regard, the option to pursue an architectural design that is different from the parent building is considered appropriate in terms of reducing the perceived scale of the extension. Although the application does not directly address the issue of need, it is clear that some of the resultant accommodation is required as a result of the desire to rationalise the Council information service in the town and enhance existing facilities.
- 6.4 The Conservation Manager recognises that the existing building is, by virtue of its design, not easy to extend and this is compounded by the irregular shape of the site. He has no objection to the proposal subject to the imposition of conditions and concludes that the proposal will preserve the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area.

Would not significantly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents

- 6.5 The letters of objection refer to the impact that the extension will have upon the residential amenity of the occupiers of Library Mews, the residential development immediately to the northeast of the application site. The concern focuses upon the scale of the extension, particularly when compared to the existing garage. The extension is clearly a much larger building and is located marginally closer to the common boundary. However, the differential in ground levels is such that the height of the extension is not considered to be unacceptable in relation to the neighbouring dwellings. The proposed cross-section indicates that the ridge height over the extension will coincide with the first floor level of the dwellings, although this will not be uniform as the dwellings in Library Mews fall across the site from south to north. In any event the separation distance of 18 metres is considered sufficient to mitigate any perceived overbearing impact or loss of light.
- 6.6 Overlooking of the forecourt to Library Mews is negated by the fact that only high-level obscure glazed windows are proposed to the first floor accommodation. It is thus considered that although the extension is markedly larger than the existing garage, the impacts upon adjoining residential amenity will not be so severe as to warrant refusal of the application. A slab level condition is recommended to ensure that the overall finished height of the building is as per the submitted plans.

Parking and access

- 6.7 The scheme makes provision for improvements to pedestrian and disabled user access. This is through the re-grading of the existing main ramped access on Cantilupe Road.
- 6.8 The Traffic Manager has some concern that inadequate provision is made for staff parking on site, although given the central location and accessibility to public car parks, this is not considered to be material to the determination of the application. There is some concern at the accessibility of the two dedicated disabled spaces to the rear and the location and usability of the cycle parking spaces, which are not conveniently

located in relation to either the main or rear access. These are issues capable of being addressed through the submission of additional information to be secured by condition.

Other issues

- 6.9 Concern has been expressed at the removal of the Silver Birch tree on Henry Street. The justification for its removal has been questioned. As a tree within a conservation area, the issue is material to the determination of the application. The tree is approximately 13 metres in height. The arboricultural report (undertaken by an qualified, independent professional) states that the physiological condition of the tree is poor and that the life expectancy is unlikely to be greater than 10 years. This is due to the constraints placed upon root development by the existing retaining walls. Its current condition is such that it is considered likely that the central section would have to be removed in a few years time, which would so compromise the overall appearance of the tree that the tree is regarded as having only a limited safe and useful life expectancy. In accordance with BS2005:5837: Trees in relation to construction, the tree is not regarded as a significant planning constraint and its removal is thus sanctioned. However, in its current form the tree does have a considerable public amenity value and loss should be offset by mitigation works. In accordance with this advice a landscaping condition is recommended whereby mitigation for the loss of the tree can be subsequently agreed in writing.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1 A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission))**

Reason: Required to be imposed by Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

- 2 B03 (Amended plans)**

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with the amended plans and to comply with the requirements of Policy DR1 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan

- 3 C01 (Samples of external materials)**

Reason: To ensure that the materials harmonise with the surroundings so as to ensure that the development complies with the requirements of Policy DR1 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

- 4 D04 (Details of window sections, eaves, verges and barge boards)**

Reason: To ensure that the materials harmonise with the surroundings so as to ensure that the development complies with the requirements of Policy DR1 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan,

- 5 F16 (No new windows in specified elevation)**

Reason: In order to protect the residential amenity of adjacent properties and to comply with Policy H18 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

6 F17 (Obscure glazing to windows)

Reason: In order to protect the residential amenity of adjacent properties and to comply with Policy H18 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

7 G09 (Details of Boundary treatments)

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity, to ensure the development has an acceptable standard of privacy and to conform to Policy DR1 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

8 G10 (Landscaping scheme)

Reason: In order to maintain the visual amenities of the area and to conform with Policy LA6 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

9 G11 (Landscaping scheme - implementation)

Reason: In order to maintain the visual amenities of the area and to comply with Policy LA6 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

10 H13 (Access, turning area and parking)

Reason: In the interests of highway safety and to ensure the free flow of traffic using the adjoining highway and to conform with the requirements of Policy T11 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan

11 H27 (Parking for site operatives)

Reason: To prevent indiscriminate parking in the interests of highway safety and to conform with the requirements of Policy DR3 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan

12 H29 (Secure covered cycle parking provision)

Reason: To ensure that there is adequate provision for secure cycle accommodation within the application site, encouraging alternative modes of transport in accordance with both local and national planning policy and to conform with the requirements of Policy DR3 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

13 H30 (Travel plans)

Reason: In order to ensure that the development is carried out in combination with a scheme aimed at promoting the use of a range of sustainable transport initiatives and to conform with the requirements of Policy DR3 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan

14 I16 (Restriction of hours during construction)

During the construction phase no machinery shall be operated, no process shall be carried out and no deliveries taken at or despatched from the site outside the following times: Monday-Friday 7.00 am-6.00pm, Saturday 8.00 am-1.00 pm nor at any time on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays.

Reason: To protect the amenity of local residents and to comply with Policy DR13 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

15 I51 (Details of slab levels)

Reason: In order to define the permission and ensure that the development is of a scale and height appropriate to the site so as to comply with Policy DR1 of Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

INFORMATIVES:

- 1 N19 - Avoidance of doubt - Approved Plans**
- 2 N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of Planning Permission**
- 3 HN01 - Mud on highway**
- 4 HN04 - Private apparatus within highway**
- 6 HN25 - Travel Plans**
- 7 HN26 - Travel Plans**
- 8 HN27 - Annual travel Plan Reviews**

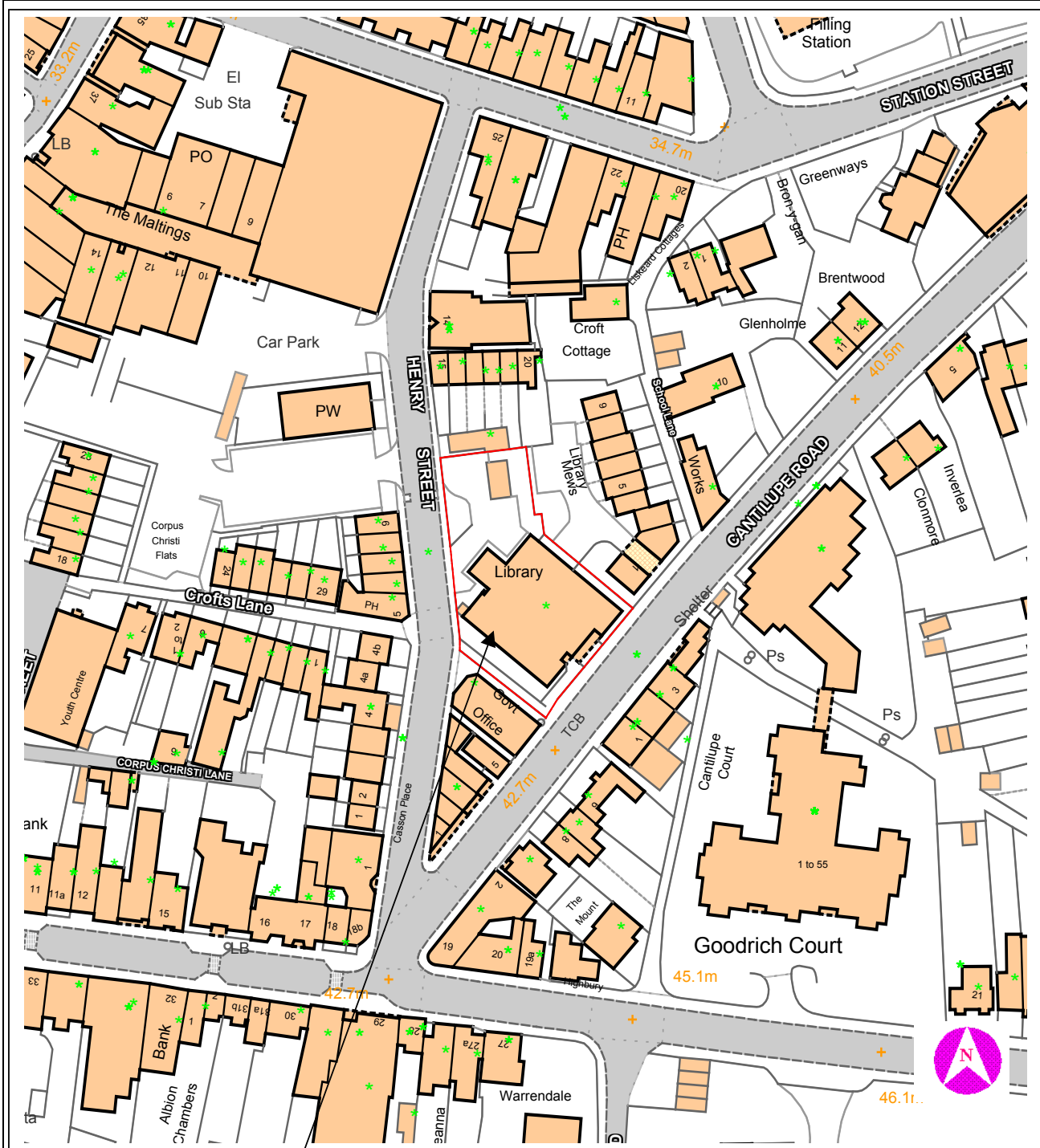
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DCSE0009/1139/CD

SCALE : 1 : 1250

SITE ADDRESS : Ross on Wye Library, Cantilupe Road, Ross on Wye, Herefordshire HR9 7AN

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