

DCCE0009/1942/CD DCCE/092343/CD - NEW SINGLE STOREY HEALTH CENTRE. SECTION OF EXISTING SITE BOUNDARY WALL TO BE REMOVED AND THE REST LOWERED. AT STONEBOW UNIT, COUNTY HOSPITAL, UNION WALK, HEREFORD, HEREFORD, HR1 2E

For: PCT Per Convergence Consulting, 86a Albany Road, Cardiff, CF24 3RS

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For: PCT Per Convergence Consulting, 86a Albany Road, Cardiff, CF24 3RS

Date Received: 24 August 2009

Ward: Central

Grid Ref: 351536,240303

Expiry Date: 19 October 2009

Local Members: Cllr M Hubbard

1. Site Description and Proposal

1.1 The site occupies a corner plot on the Southern side of Commercial Road (A465) immediately west of Stonebow Road (unclassified road 80205) which serves as the principal access to the hospital. Immediately west is the access to the bus station and associated public car park and directly opposite to the north is a BP garage and Commercial Public House and Hotel. The site itself forms part of the garden associated with the Stonebow Mental Health Unit which lies immediately to the south. The site is enclosed to the north and west by a 3 metre high brick wall with the eastern boundary enclosed by a mixture of wall and lower timber fencing. Within the site itself including the adjoining land are around 40 young, semi mature and mature trees. Levels within the site are approximately 1 metre higher than the adjoining pavement and road level.

- 1.2 The site falls within the Hereford City Conservation area and adjoins the central shopping and commercial area as identified in the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan. The site also falls within Hereford Area Archaeological Importance.
- 1.3 Planning permission is sought for the construction of a single storey building to be used as a GP Health Centre treating minor injuries and health enquires. The primary purpose of the development is to reduce pressure on Hereford's A&E department. The building is made up of four consultation examinations rooms, two nursing consulting rooms and a minor treatments facility as well as staff support facilities and patient waiting facilities. The proposed building has a 45° form thereby fronting on to both Commercial Road and Stonebow Road with the principal public entrance being on the junction of the two roads. An existing vehicular access off Stonebow Road would be extended to provide service delivery area. The proposal would entail the removal of around 19 trees.
- 1.4 Conservation Area Consent is also submitted to partially demolish the wall along Commercial Road and lower sections at either end.

2. Policies

2.1 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan 2007:

S1	–	Sustainable Development
S2	–	Development Requirements
S7	–	National and Historic Heritage
S11	–	Community Facilities and Services
DR1	–	Design
DR2	–	Land Use and Activity
DR3	–	Movements
DR4	–	Environment
DR5	–	Planning Obligations
T7	–	Cycling
LA5	–	Protection of Trees, Woodland and Hedgerows
LA6	–	Landscaping Schemes
NC1	–	Biodiversity and Development
NC6	–	Biodiversity Action Plan Priority Habitats and Species
NC7	–	Compensation for loss of Biodiversity
HPA6	–	New Development within Conservation Areas
HPA7	–	Demolition of Unlisted Buildings within Conservation Areas
HPA9	–	Protection of Open Spaces and Green Spaces
ARCH1	-	Archaeological Assessments and Field Evaluations
ARCH2	–	Foundation Design and Mitigation of Urban Sites
ARCH7	–	Hereford AAI
CF5	–	New Community Facilities
CF6	–	Retention of Existing Facilities

2.2 National Guidance:

PPS1	–	Delivery Sustainable Developments
PPS9	-	Planning and Biodiversity
PPG15	-	Planning and the Historic Environment

3. Planning History

3.1 None.

4. Consultation SummaryStatutory Consultations

4.1 Welsh Water

No objections subject to conditions concerning foul and surface water drainage.

Internal Council Advice

4.2 Transportation Manager:

I have concerns over the lack of parking proposed for the development. The existing hospital and bus station car parks have limited spare capacity and lack of any parking may exacerbate existing problems with hospital staff parking in residential streets in the locality.

Further information is therefore required regarding the availability of existing parking provision, likely staff numbers and shift patterns and relationship with existing A&E development at the hospital. This will enable a more detailed evaluation of proposals.

4.3 Conservation Manager:

With regards to the wall, this has some visual interest but we do not believe it makes a major contribution to the character of the conservation area and therefore believe that demolition would be acceptable.

Currently this site forms a gap within the streetscape. Following the major redevelopments of the mid-late 20th century the area has lost its historic street pattern and subsequently fails to positively benefit the conservation area. We therefore believe that inserting a new building on this site would be an enhancement as it would allow a gap site to be filled and help to create a sense of enclosure which is lacking at this end of Commercial Street and so repair some of the character that has been lost.

In principle the design is acceptable but would recommend minor changes relating to increasing the pitch of the roof and reviewing the design of the entrance portico.

We support the proposals subject to the design of the entrance and the roof pitch being reviewed.

4.4 Conservation Manager - Ecology.

No objects subject to the recommendations of the Ecologist report being implemented.

4.5 Conservation Manager - Landscape and Trees:

Comments awaited.

4.6 Conservation Manager - Archaeology.

Comments awaited.

5. Representations

5.1 Herefordshire City Council:

The City Council has no objections in principle to the creation of such a facility and considers the location within convenient location of A&E to be very sensible given the inevitable cross over of services. The City Council also appreciates the design of the building and the materials chosen. However the City Council objects for the following reasons:-

1. Impact on the Highways at a busy junction is unacceptable. No provision for disabled parking or drop off space has been provided leading to likelihood of cars dropping off on the main road causing delays.
2. Detrimental impact on the conservation area with the loss of up to 19 trees, many of which are mature. They form a pleasant natural visual and noise barrier that should not be removed.
3. The impact on the neighbouring Stonebow Unit is unacceptable, with the loss of an important therapeutic amenity for patients and an unacceptable loss of privacy for those using the garden. No provision has been made for an alternative garden.
4. Unacceptable loss of amenity to neighbouring houses both visually from the loss of trees and inconvenience through illegal parking.

The City Council would welcome an application for the facility on another site perhaps next to the existing A&E.

5.2 Conservation Advisory Panel: Comments awaited.

5.3 30 letters and e-mails of objection have been received to the planning and conservations area application. Main points raised are:-

1. The lower of the existing wall will remove all privacy and increase noise for patients.
2. The existing garden and general outdoor space is the only area of outside amenity and forms an important part of patient recovery
3. Loss of 19 trees will be detrimental to the area.
4. Lack of any patient drop off causes danger to highway safety.
5. There is inadequate parking in the area and this proposal will exacerbate the problem.
6. The development will remove privacy for patients due to overlooking.
7. Existing empty shops in the city centre should be used for the facilities.
8. The development will remove all existing security.
9. Unacceptable loss of wildlife habitat.
10. Noise and dust during construction will distress patients.
11. The site next to the A&E department would be the most appropriate.
12. The design of the building is totally inappropriate.
13. Development will lead to precedent for loss of further garden in the future.
14. Staff safety will be a concern if the facility operates on a 24 hour basis.
15. Staff working conditions will be poor due noise and pollution at the front and no openable windows to the rear.

16. The development will also adversely impact on the elderly with Cantilupe Ward
 17. The scale is excessive
- 5.4 The full text of these letters can be inspected at Planning Services, Garrick House, Widemarsh Street, Hereford and prior to the Committee meeting.

6. Officer's Appraisal

- 6.1 The main issues to be considered in the assessment of this application are as follows:-
1. The principle
 2. Appearance, design and impact on conservation area
 3. Trees and Ecology
 4. Highways matters
 5. Archaeology

The Principle

- 6.2 The proposal forms part of a national initiative to create GP led health centres in order to relieve capacity in A&E as a result of unnecessary or inappropriate attendances. As such the need for a facility of this nature is recognised and indeed the need is not questioned by any of the objectors.
- 6.3 The general location of the facility is also considered to be appropriate in that it is within very close proximity to the hospital whilst adjacent to the bus stop and adjoining public car park and is on the edge of the city centre where linked trips with other facilities may occur. As such, in locational and accessibility terms the siting is considered acceptable.
- 6.3 Policy CF5 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan identifies four criteria against which new community facilities of this nature must be assessed. These are
1. Facilities should be appropriate in scale to needs of the local community and reflect the character of the location
 2. Are located within or around the settlement or the area they serve
 3. Will not significantly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents
 4. Incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian access together with appropriate provision for car and cycle parking and operational space.
- 6.4 For the above reasons, it is considered that criteria one and two are satisfied. It is also considered that criteria 3 and 4 are satisfied and the reasons why are discussed later. As such the proposal in principle complies with the main policy within the UDP concerning such proposals.
- 6.5 The main cause for objection concerns the principle of the proposal on the specific site in question and the relationship with, an impact on the use and operation of the Stonebow Unit. It is considered that this is a material planning consideration. Firstly, it is considered that the two land uses are compatible and can co-exist on the same site. The proposal will result in the loss of approximately one third of the existing garden used by in and out patients of the Stonebow unit and this is the key issue. This garden provides an area of secure and private recreational space for patients to relax and assist in their recovery. The need for an area of outside amenity space

associated with the Stonebow unit is therefore fully acknowledged and recognised. The issue to be considered, however, is whether the loss of one third of this space would have an adverse impact on the operation of the Stonebow unit.

- 6.6 There are no standards within Planning Policy that could be applied to assess whether the extent of amenity space that would remain is reasonable and proportionate with the Stonebow unit and the number of patients. A planning judgement must therefore be made on the size, usability and amenity value of the garden that would remain. Against these factors it is considered that the area and the quality of the garden that would remain with scope for potential enhancement in terms of new tree planting and ecology is acceptable. Any fears over security and overlooking can be removed through the construction of a new boundary wall of an appropriate height. As such, it is considered the principle of the development on this site in land use planning terms is acceptable.

Appearance, design and impact on conservation area

- 6.7 The development will have a contemporary appearance with a form and scale that reflects the prominent position of the site within the conservation area. The front elevation will address both road frontages with a more prominent entrance on the corner of the junction accentuated with different materials and roof heights. Although the building is only single storey due to the increase in levels between the site and adjoining pavement, the scale in terms of height will appear more as 2 storey within the streetscene. This is considered important to maintain the continuity of built form and the historic character of the conservation area that the Conservation Manager is seeking.
- 6.8 Minor changes to the design of the entrance along with increasing the pitch of the roof have been requested. Subject to amended plans being submitted addressing these changes it is considered the general appearance, form, scale, design and materials of the development will enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 6.9 With regard to the partial demolition of the existing wall fronting Commercial Road, it is believed this was constructed when the Stonebow was built and is therefore of no historical merit. The wall has architectural and visual interest but its partial demolition to secure the construction of an appropriately designed building is considered justified. This view is supported by the Conservation Manager who does not object in principle to the partial demolition of the wall subject to the acceptability of the new building.
- 6.10 Concerns have been expressed by objectors regarding the possible overlooking of the garden that would remain from the rear elevation of the proposed building. Whilst a fence is currently proposed it is not considered that this would provide the degree of privacy and security that currently exists. As such it is recommended that a new brick wall is constructed at a height of three metres which is effectively the eaves height of the proposed building to form a new rear boundary. Subject to this, any overlooking including the perception of being overlooked will be removed.

Trees & Ecology

- 6.7 The applicants have undertaken a detailed arboricultural survey which identifies the presence of 44 trees within and adjoining the site. Around 19 trees would have to be removed to accommodate the development. In accordance with BS5837-2005 trees are categorised into four categories, redundant trees, category A - high retention value, category B - moderate value and category C - minor value. Around half the trees that would have to be removed are category B with the remainder being category C or redundant. The removal of category B trees is unfortunate. However this must be balanced against the community benefits of the new facility alongside the enhancement of the Conservation Area in restoring the form of the historic streetscape. Compensatory planting is also proposed. Whilst the comments of the Conservation Manager (Landscape) are awaited, the loss of trees, on balance is accepted. This is subject to compensatory planting within the existing remaining garden to be agreed in consultation with the Stonebow unit.

A ecological survey of the site has also been carried out which does not identify the presence of any protected species. The ecology report makes recommendations for both during the construction and for ecological enhancement thereafter including the provision of hedgehog hibernation boxes, as hedgehogs were located on site. The Conservation Manager (Ecology) has no objection to the application subject to the ecologists recommendations being implemented.

Highway Matters

- 6.8 A service access is proposed via the existing access to Stonebow off Stonebow Road, but no other vehicle access or parking is proposed for the development. Whilst the Traffic Manager has requested further information regarding staffing levels and existing parking permission the site is located in a very sustainable location with easy access to the bus and railway station, a public car park next door and safe pedestrian crossing points. Cycle parking is also proposed adjacent to the principle entrance. The development will therefore be accessible by choice modes of transport including private car.
- 6.9 Concerns have also been expressed regarding the absence of any patient or ambulance drop off point. It is considered that given the proximity to the A&E department anyone with a serious injury that required access via ambulance or was not able to walk could utilise the A&E department and therefore this is not considered to be an issue. Furthermore, provision of a drop off space could lead to an increased danger to highway safety with the space potentially being abused by patients. Therefore, it is considered more appropriate given the location of the site next to a busy junction for there to be no parking for either staff or patients.

Archaeology

- 6.10 The site falls within Herefordshire Area of Archaeological Importance an archaeological investigation of the site has been carried out. This has taken the form of a desktop study utilising information and evidence gathered from excavations carried out in the vicinity of the site along with historical records. The report identifies that there is likely to be significant archaeological remains in and around the site. Whilst the comments of the archaeologist are awaited, it is likely that the archaeological interest of the site can be mitigated with appropriate conditions partly due to the fact the ground levels have been raised and previous 20th Century development will have damaged the archaeological interest of the site. The

conditions will require on site archaeological investigation prior to and during the course of the development.

Conclusion

- 6.11 The comments of some consultees are awaited but it is considered that all planning issues associated with the development have been satisfactorily addressed or can be addressed by the submission of further details and amended plans. The proposal will result in a much needed community facility in a sustainable location that enhances the character and appearance of the conservation area. The impact of the development on the Stonebow unit is not considered to be harmful and other issues such as ecology and archaeology can be mitigated through appropriate conditions. The proposal is therefore considered to be compliant with the relevant Unitary Development Plan Policies. Delegated authority is sought to enable the submission of the amended plans.

RECOMMENDATION

DCCE0009/1942/CD

Subject to the receipt of suitably amended plans, the officers named in the scheme of delegation to officers be authorised to issue planning permission subject to the following conditions and any additional conditions considered necessary by officers:

1. **A01 Time limit for commencement (full permission)**
2. **C01 Samples of external materials**
3. **E01 Site investigation - archaeology**
4. **E04 Submission of foundation design**
5. **G02 Retention of trees and hedgerows**
6. **G04 Protection of trees/hedgerows that are to be retained**
7. **G09 Details of Boundary treatments**
8. **G10 Landscaping scheme**
9. **G11 Landscaping scheme - implementation**
10. **I16 Restriction of hours during construction**
11. **I41 Scheme of refuse storage (commercial)**
12. **K4 Nature Conservation - Implementation**
13. **L01 Foul/surface water drainage**
14. **L03 No drainage run-off to public system**

INFORMATIVES:

- 1 **N15 Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC**
- 2 **N19 Avoidance of doubt - Approved Plans**

Conservation Area Consent – DCCE0009/1945/C

Subject to the receipt of suitably amended plans, the officers named in the scheme of delegation to officers be authorised to grant Conservation Area Consent subject to the following conditions and any additional conditions considered necessary by officers:

- 1 **D01 Time limit for commencement (Conservation Area Conset)**
- 2 **D15 Detailed scheme of demolition operations**
- 3 **D13 Signing of contract before demolition**

INFORMATIVES:

- 1 **N15 Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC**
- 2 **N19 Avoidance of doubt - Approved Plans**

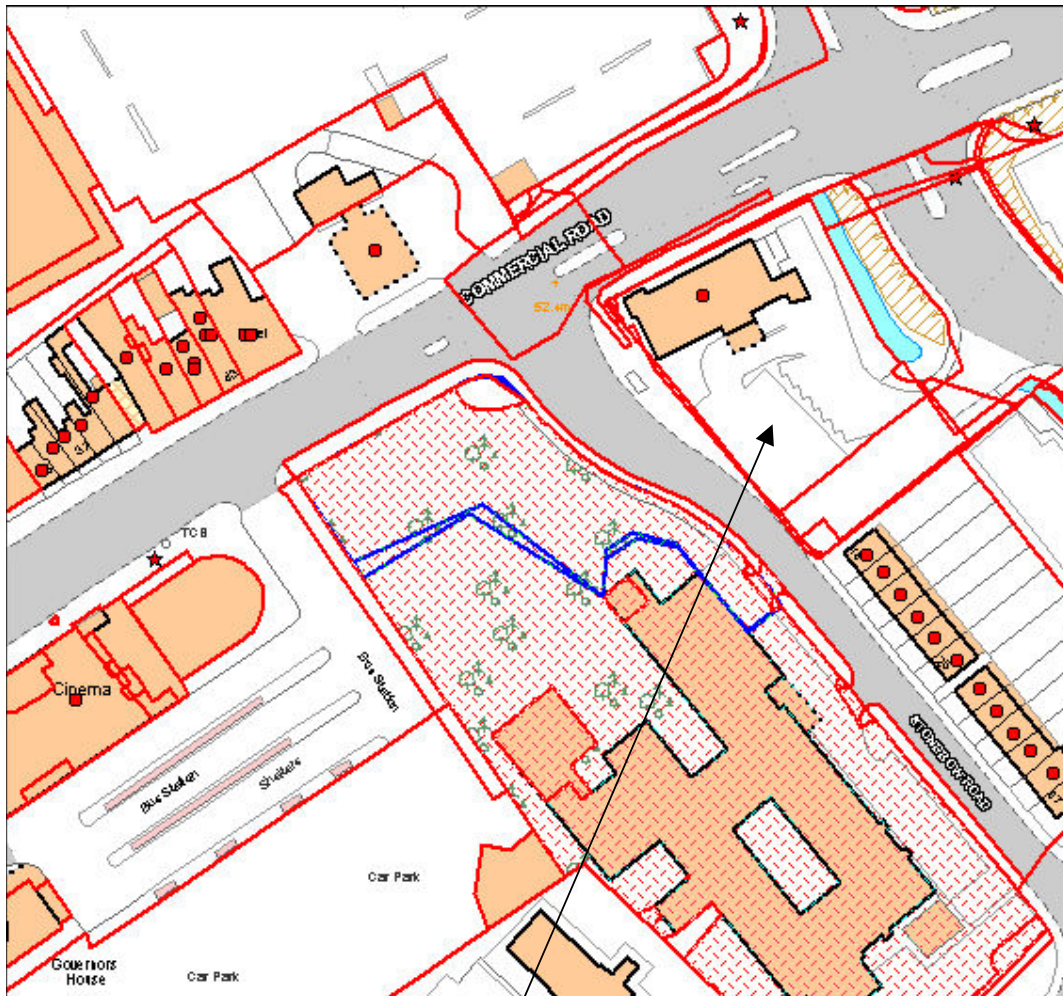
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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