

7 DCCE2004/1255/F - PROPOSED "DASH" FACILITY (DROP-IN COUNSELLING PLACE AND OFFICES) TO GROUND AND FIRST FLOOR. MONKMOOR COURT, 31-34 COMMERCIAL ROAD, HEREFORD, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR1 2BG

For: Herefordshire Primary Care Trust, Capita Property Consultancy, Eastgate House, 35-43 Newport Road, Cardiff, CF24 0SB

Date Received: 5th April, 2004

Ward: Central

Grid Ref: 51434, 40305

Expiry Date: 31st May, 2004

Local Member: Councillor D.J. Fleet

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application site comprises a three storey office block with car park to the rear positioned on the north west side of Commercial Road within the city centre and Conservation Area. The building has entrances to the front and rear. The second floor is/will be occupied by the NSPCC.
- 1.2 The proposal is to use the ground and first floors of the building and associated rear parking area for offices and/or a "DASH" facility comprising offices for the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust's consultant drug workers and support staff, drop-in/interview rooms and a needle exchange facility for drug users. Access to the building for drug users would be via the rear entrance only. No external alterations are proposed to the building.
- 1.3 The DASH facility currently occupies the neighbouring office block at 28-30 Commercial Road where similar services are provided. The reason given for the move is to take advantage of the more modern accommodation and additional space offered by Monkmoor Court. Number 28-30 Commercial Road would revert to conventional office use albeit still occupied by the Trust.

2. Policies

2.1 Hereford Local Plan:

CON12 – Conservation Areas
SC1 – Health Care

2.2 Herefordshire UDP (Revised Deposit Draft)

S11 – Community facilities and services
CF5 – New community facilities

3. Planning History

- 3.1 HC/890355/PF/E - Demolition of dwelling house due to dereliction and redevelopment with new 3 storey office development - approved 17 October 1989.
- 3.2 HC/960156/PF - Change of use from office accommodation to drug and alcohol abuse day centre including internal alterations (29-30 Commercial Road) - approved 9 August 1996.
- 3.3 HC/970171/PF - Change of use from existing office accommodation to drug and alcohol abuse day centre ancillary use (29-30 Commercial Road) - approved 2 July 1997.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 There are no statutory consultations.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.2 Head of Engineering and Transportation: No objection.
- 4.3 Chief Conservation Officer: No objection.
- 4.4 Head of Environmental Health and Trading Standards: No objection.

5. Representations

- 5.1 Hereford City Council: No objection.
- 5.2 C.A.A.C.: No objection
- 5.2 One letter of objection has been received from the NSPCC who are/will be occupying the second floor of Monkmoor Court. The letter states the following:

"The service provided by us in Hereford currently works with vulnerable young people who have been abused and display sexualised behaviour. Also based in the Hereford office is one of our fund raisers. We are the only service in Herefordshire to undertake this specialist intervention for children and we have a service level agreement with Herefordshire Council and the Youth Offending Service relating to this. Our client group is comprised almost exclusively of children in the 'looked after' system or on the county's 'at risk' register. These are the most vulnerable children in Herefordshire and the proposal that a service for the 'Dash' service clients, addicted adult drug and alcohol users, be based on the ground floor of the premises gives rise to concern that encounters with the 'Dash' clients may expose our young people to an unacceptable level of influence and risk.

The proposed separate access to the 'Dash' facility which involves needle exchange via the relatively private rear parking area and a natural dropping off point close to the rear of the supermarket does not resolve the conflict of use. There is the possibility that some of the 'Dash' clients could be the abusers of some of our child clients. Had the possibility of the change of use of parts of the building from office use and, in particular, the sharing of the building with 'Dash' facility we would

not for operational reasons have taken a lease and committed ourselves to significant expenditure. We were not forewarned of this possibility prior to taking our lease and would wish to have our strong objection noted by you. We are also protesting strongly to the Landlord, the Local Councillor and others about this unacceptable juxtaposition of uses which could reasonably be expected to be a potential risk."

- 5.4 The full text of this letter can be inspected at Central Planning Services, Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford and prior to the Sub-Committee meeting.

6. Officers Appraisal

- 6.1 The main issues in this case are the suitability of the site for the proposed use and its impact on, and compatibility with, neighbouring occupiers.
- 6.2 Policy SC1 Of the Local Plan supports proposals to develop and improve health care facilities provided that they are readily accessible by both public and private transport. The proposal, which is for a health care related use, accords with this broad approach being in a central and accessible city centre location.
- 6.3 Compatibility of uses is a material consideration, particularly where sensitive uses are involved. In this case the proposal includes a drop-in and needle exchange facility for drug users to be provided in a building which is shared with other tenants. The principal other tenant is the NSPCC, and it has raised objection in view of the possibility of DASH service clients exposing its particular vulnerable young clients to "unacceptable levels of influence and risk".
- 6.4 To a degree, this objection is addressed by the arrangement of the uses within the building. The proposal affects the ground and first floor of the building only whereas the NSPCC occupies the second floor. Additionally, the applicant intends that DASH service clients will enter the building by the rear entrance only leaving the front entrance for NSPCC clients. Under these circumstances, and with appropriate internal security and management of the building by the responsible occupiers, it is considered that the issue should be addressed.
- 6.5 Outside of the building it is possible that some overlap between the different service clients would occur, including within the rear car park and access. Such an overlap is, in any event, probable elsewhere within Hereford's relatively small city centre and, consequently would not amount to a sustainable reason for refusing planning permission in this particular location. It is material that the DASH facility is currently in the office building next door to Monkmoor Court with an existing close relationship and inevitable overlap of service clients. Any occupier of the application site, not just DASH clients, could potentially be an "abuser" of the objector's service clients.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions:

- 1 A01 (Time limit for commencement (full permission))
- 2 The premises shall be used for offices and/or a DASH facility comprising offices for the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust's consultant drug workers and support staff, drop-in/interview rooms for service users and a needle exchange facility for service users, and for no other purpose.

Reason: To accord with the terms of the application and safeguard the amenities of the locality.

Informatives:

- 1 N03 - Adjoining property rights
- 2 N15 - Reason(s) for the Grant of PP/LBC/CAC

Decision:

Notes:

.....

Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.