

MEETING:	PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE:	14 SEPTEMBER 2016
TITLE OF REPORT:	161565 - PROPOSED REFURBISHMENT & EXTENSION TO EXISTING 2 STOREY OFFICE AT BLUESCHOOL HOUSE, 1 BLUESCHOOL STREET, HEREFORD, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR1 2LX For: Mr Hugget per Mr Andrew Worthington, West Point House, 46-48 West Street, Newbury, RG14 1BD
WEBSITE LINK:	https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/development-control/planning-applications/details?id=161565&search=161565
Reason Application submitted to Committee – Council Application	

Date Received: 19 May 2016

Ward: Widemarsh

Grid Ref: 351115,240241

Expiry Date: 18 July 2016

Local Member: Councillor PA Andrews

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The application seeks permission for the refurbishment and extension of Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford. The site comprises a 2-storey brick building (c.1960) with flat roof used by the Council as offices for its Regulatory Services; including Environmental Health & Trading Standards, Planning and Building Control. The site is within the Conservation Area, bounded to the south by Blueschool Street and the north by Catherine Street. A private car park is to the east with City Electrics (a lighting retailer) to the west. The building's footprint occupies a significant portion of the site overall, with a small car park and manoeuvring area. The facing brick is wire-cut and the windows typically single-glazed steel framed units with secondary glazing internally.
- 1.2 The scheme is part of the Council's wider accommodation strategy which will see customer service staff relocated from Franklin House, alongside staff from the Department for Work and Pensions. Existing staff at Blueschool House will be relocated to either Town Hall or Plough Lane.
- 1.3 Planning permission is required for two facets. Firstly the proposal involves recladding and replacement windows. The cladding as originally proposed was a light grey rainscreen with contrasting darker bands at the mid point and parapet. This was hung vertically. Windows were powder-coated aluminium. However, in response to concerns regarding the cladding colour and vertical cladding, the appointed agent revised the drawings to replace with horizontal cladding panels of a colour on the red spectrum; reflective of the use of brick as the predominant facing material on buildings locally. Amended drawings have been received and re-consultation undertaken.

- 1.4 Secondly, a single-storey extension is proposed to the Blueschool Street elevation. This extension creates a new lobby/display area, with the main entrance on the eastern aspect of this extension. All parking spaces for vehicles are foregone; including those to the rear on Catherine Street and new secure cycle parking is proposed on the eastern boundary.
- 1.5 As well as being in the Conservation Area the site is adjoining the Area of Archaeological Interest and opposite the City Wall scheduled ancient monument (SAM).

2. Policies

2.1 Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy

SS1	-	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
HD2	-	Hereford City Centre
LD1	-	Landscape and Townscape
LD4	-	Historic Environment and Heritage Assets
SD1	-	Sustainable Design and Energy Efficiency
MT1	-	Traffic Management, Highway Safety and Promoting Active Travel

2.2 National Planning Policy Framework

2.3 National Planning Practice Guidance

- 2.4 The Core Strategy policies together with any relevant supplementary planning documentation can be viewed on the Council's website by using the following link:-

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/core-strategy/adopted-core-strategy>

3. Planning History

- 3.1 CE2000/0976/F – Change of use from showroom, offices and storage to Local Authority offices and storage: Approved with conditions 15th August 2000.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations:

- 4.1 None

Internal Council Consultations

- 4.2 Traffic Manager: No objection

It is noted that on the latest Ground Floor Plan (AB.05 Rev D) the length of the service vehicle bay has been increased which is now considered satisfactory.

The adjacent grassed guide dog area should be relocated to allow for adequate width access and egress of service vehicles, in view of the narrowness of Catherine Street.

The private/highway boundary should be demarked within the new tarmac surfacing along the Catherine Street frontage (by studs/pins or similar) and the works within highway should be in accordance with our Specification for New Developments.

Subject to satisfactory resolution of the above points, my recommendation is for approval subject to informatives I05 (HN10) and I45 (HN05).

4.3 Conservation Manager (Historic Buildings):

The amendments do improve on the previously submitted scheme. I am not convinced by the proposal to use a red render or cladding panel – red is very prone to fading under sunlight so I think in a few years this will be starting to look quite tired. I would like to see a sample of what is proposed both in the cladding panel and render. The drawing leaves open the decision as to smooth or a textured render – my preference would be to use a textured render but possibly to incorporate some smooth horizontal bands (at say first floor level and possibly at the roofline). I am not a fan of upvc windows – again they don't have a long lifespan, so a powder coated aluminium frame would be preferable. It is overall better than the previous scheme and though we are starting from a pretty low baseline, I think it does improve on the appearance of the existing building so in this respect it would enhance the character of the conservation area. It is difficult to say more.

4.4 Environmental Health Manager: No objection

Our records indicate the site was formerly used as an agricultural engineers. This may be considered a potentially contaminative use. Given that the proposal is an extension to an existing use, it would seem unreasonable to recommend a site investigation be carried out. However I would recommend the following precautionary condition be appended to consider unforeseen contamination which may be encountered during works.

Recommended condition

"If during the course of the development unexpected contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then the work shall be stopped and no further development shall be carried out unless or until the developer has submitted a written method statement to be approved in writing by the local planning authority. The method statement shall include details about how the unexpected contamination shall be dealt with. Thereafter the development of the site will be carried out in accordance with the appropriate method statement."

4.5 The Forward Planning Manager was consulted for his opinion on the weight to be afforded the ESG masterplan for the purpose of taking decisions on planning applications within the ESG area. The masterplan has been referred to by objectors – see below.

Forward Planning Manager: In my opinion the ESG masterplan has never had the status of a Development Plan Document or even a SPD (the Council had produced and adopted its own SPD in 2007).

However, the cabinet report (from 2008) suggests the Council "endorsed" the masterplan as a basis for "the ongoing development of the ESG area and as a material consideration in the determination of relevant planning applications".

From this it seems to me that the masterplan was never adopted as Council policy but still was treated as a material consideration. The Core Strategy in para 4.2.13 makes reference to the masterplan and indicates it remains a factor in guiding development in the area. So I would suggest that its weight as a material consideration continues.

5. Representations

The comments reported below relate to the plans as originally deposited at the time of preparing the report no further comments have been received on the amended proposals.

5.1 Hereford City Council: Objection:

The masterplan for the Old Market and surrounding streets indicated that this [building] would be demolished to open up a boulevard and link the new development with the old city. This should not be set aside. The building is visually unappealing and we support the Civic Society in their critique of its design and adverse impact on the streetscape and the neighbouring conservation area and historical buildings. This is a very poor application.

5.2 Hereford Civic Society: Objection

This is an important site on the Inner Ring Road and if it is to be redeveloped or refurbished should be with a building of high architectural value. The proposed refurbishment does not meet these criteria and gives the appearance of being designed to produce the cheapest and most uninspiring building possible. An opportunity to make a major improvement to the city will be lost if this design is accepted.

HCS considers this to be a prime site and notes the short list of consultees and the extremely brief Design and Access Statement; far less than is demanded for the smallest extension in a cul-de-sac. There is an urgent need for more consideration of this project.

Following the demolition of Garrick House and the move to Franklin Barnes here is a proposal for a third location in a decade. Surely a full appraisal of a new "one stop shop" is required? If it has been undertaken then please publish it.

Hereford does not need an industrial style carbuncle on Blue School Street. The Costa Coffee building has some merit as does Franklin Barnes and the Magistrates' Court - this road was supposed to be a boulevard see early ESG proposals.

5.3 3 further objections have been received from Mr & Mrs T. Ford, Mr C Grylls and Ms M Burns. The content is summarised as follows:-

- The ESG Herefordshire/Hereford Futures Masterplan. published in 2008 and subsequently adopted, clearly outlines a plan for Blueschool Street. The Masterplan promotes minimum heights of 3 storey along Blueschool Street with opportunities to increase the height at comers and with set backs. This application has paid no heed at all to this Masterplan.
- The external appearance and layout pays no attention to the heritage status of the site, directly opposite the City Wall Schedule Monument and adjacent listed buildings.
- The enclosed entrance yard has a mish-mash of service storage in full view of the Blueschool Street. Why are there no submitted drawings for these parts of the development?
- Why a recreation area for blind dogs - what about fully sighted dogs? Grass will not survive in this sheltered area.
- There are no details of the type of cladding - considering this is a key part of the proposal, it must be considered at this stage. The artists impressions released to the press and on the Council's website, but not forming part of the application, do not correlate with the submitted drawings - the reality is far worse than even the impressions. The cladding appears to be a budget flat panel in a drab grey colour, replicating dirty pre-cast concrete panels. It is no mean feat to turn an already ugly building into something even worse.
- The Council quite rightly demanded a very high standard of design, detailing and materials for the adjacent OLM development. It cannot then be seen to be doing the opposite for its own building. This proposal does not preserve or enhance the conservation area in any way, shape of form - it must be withdrawn or refused.

5.4 The consultation responses can be viewed on the Council's website by using the following link:-

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/development-control/planning-applications/details?id=161565&search=161565>

Internet access is available at the Council's Customer Service Centres:-

<https://www.herefordshire.gov.uk/government-citizens-and-rights/customer-services-enquiries/contact-details?q=customer&type=suggestedpage>

6. Officer's Appraisal

6.1 The application must be determined in accordance with S38(6) of the Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.2 The adopted Development Plan for the area is the Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy. Policy SS1 underscores the presumption in favour of sustainable development. Of the detailed policies, SD1 deals with sustainable development and the requirement that development promotes good design, which chimes with Chapter 7 of the NPPF.

6.3 LD1 deals with local distinctiveness and LD4 heritage assets. LD1 requires that development proposals should “*demonstrate that character of the ...townscape has positively influenced the design*” and that conservation areas are conserved and enhanced.

6.4 LD4 refers to the impact of development on the significance of heritage assets; both designated and non-designated. In this case the Conservation Area is a designated heritage asset. In respect of the assessment on the Conservation Area, statute directs as follows:-

*In the exercise, with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area, of any functions under or by virtue of any of the provisions mentioned in subsection (2), special attention shall be paid to the desirability of **preserving or enhancing** the character or appearance of that area.*

Conservation Area: S72 of the Planning (LB&CA) Act 1990 is applicable.

6.5 At paragraph 138, the NPPF recognises that “not all elements [of a conservation area]...will necessarily contribute to its significance.” In this instance, the baseline situation is that the building is of unattractive appearance and does very little to compliment the character or appearance of this part of the Conservation Area. The wire-cut facing brick is uncharacteristic locally and the concrete parapet and cills are in poor condition. The hardstanding, bollards and signage do nothing to enhance the immediate setting. It is your officer's opinion, therefore, that the refurbishment and extension has the potential to result in a modest enhancement to the appearance of the building and this opinion is shared by the Conservation Manager – see 4.3 above.

6.6 Objectors have cited conflict with the overarching ambitions of the ESG masterplan as a basis upon which the proposal ought to be rejected. Your officers do not agree with this analysis. This is for the following reasons:

1. The ESG masterplan can be attributed some, but not overriding weight in the decision-making process;
2. The ESG masterplan is, quite justifiably, aspirational in terms of the redevelopment of Blueschool Street, but it does not serve to militate against refurbishment of existing buildings in the meantime.

- 6.7 Thus, officers consider the correct test is not whether the application aligns itself with the aspirations within the ESG masterplan, but whether the application accords with the Development Plan and other material considerations that carry more weight i.e. the duty imposed by S.72 as set out at 6.4 above. Refurbishment of the current building does not in and of itself frustrate the ambitions of the ESG masterplan in the long run.
- 6.8 Having regard to the provisions of the Development Plan and the advice of the Conservation Officer, I am of the opinion that the proposal is, subject to the agreement of materials to be reserved by condition, in accord with the requirements of CS Policies LD1, LD4 and SD1 in that it has the potential to lead to a modest enhancement to the appearance of the conservation area against the existing condition. It should be noted that the comments recorded at Section 5 are in response to the original submission and not the amended proposals, which introduce horizontal cladding panels and render panels; the colours to be agreed by condition, but anticipated as being on the red/brown spectrum to reflect the facing bricks locally.
- 6.9 In respect of movement, sustainable transport is encouraged via the removal of on-site parking and provision of secure, covered cycle parking. This is in accordance with CS Policy MT1. The amended plans have made some provision for turning of service vehicles so as to clear Catherine Street. Subject to the agreement of demarcation of the public highway so as to ensure clarity over future maintenance, the Traffic Manager has no objection.

Conclusion

- 6.10 Concerns expressed in relation to the long-term regeneration of Blueschool Street in line with the ESG masterplan are understood. It remains the case, nonetheless, that the current application must be considered on its own merits against the Development Plan and material planning considerations. Having assessed these, officers consider there are no reasons why planning permission should be withheld in this case. The owners have determined that Blueschool House has an immediate future and that refurbishment is necessary. The proposal has the ability to enhance the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area and approval is recommended accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be granted subject to the following conditions and any other conditions considered necessary by Officers:

- 1. A01 Time limit for commencement (full permission)**
- 2. C08 Amended plans**
- 3. C13 Samples of external materials and windows**
- 4. No development shall commence until a Construction Management Plan (CMP) has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The plan shall include the following details:**
 - Wheel cleaning apparatus which shall be operated and maintained during construction of the development hereby approved.**
 - Parking for site operatives and visitors which shall be retained and kept available during construction of the development.**
 - A noise management plan including a scheme for the monitoring of construction noise.**
 - Details of working hours and hours for deliveries**

- A scheme for the control of dust arising from building and site works
- A scheme for the management of all waste arising from the site
- A travel plan for employees

The agreed details of the CMP shall be implemented throughout the construction period.

Reason: In the interests of the residential amenity of properties within the locality and of highway safety in accordance with Policies SD1 and MT1 of the Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework.

5. CB2

6. CAZ

7. If during the course of the development unexpected contamination not previously identified is found to be present at the site then the work shall be stopped and no further development shall be carried out unless or until the developer has submitted a written method statement to be approved in writing by the local planning authority. The method statement shall include details about how the unexpected contamination shall be dealt with. Thereafter the development of the site will be carried out in accordance with the appropriate method statement.

Reason: To ensure that potential contamination is removed or contained to the satisfaction of the local planning authority and to comply with Policy SD1 of the Herefordshire Local Plan – Core Strategy.

INFORMATIVES:

1. The Local Planning Authority has acted positively and proactively in determining this application by assessing the proposal against planning policy and any other material considerations, including any representations that have been received. It has subsequently determined to grant planning permission in accordance with the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out within the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. I05

3. I45

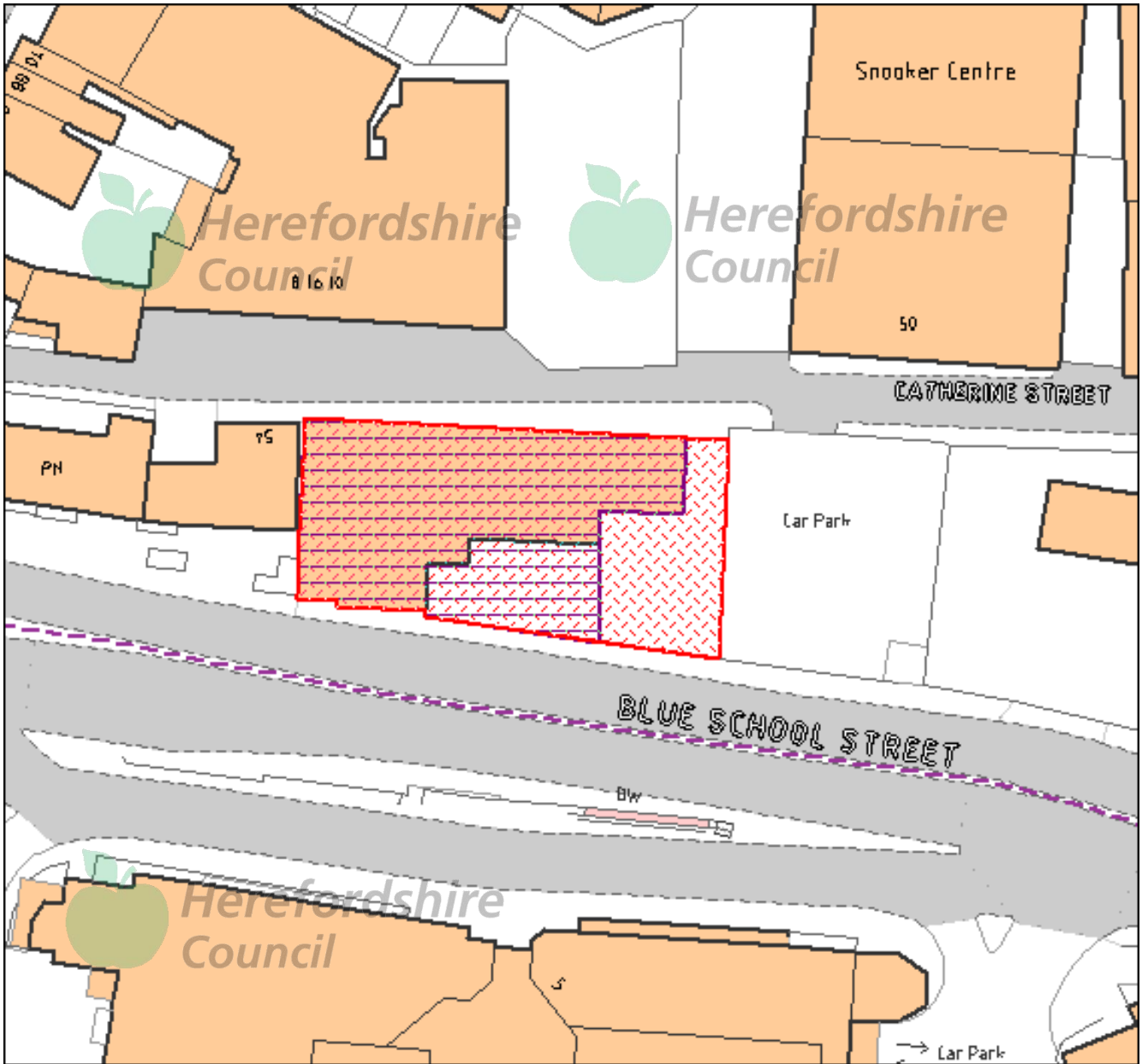
Decision:

Notes:

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Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: 161565

SITE ADDRESS : BLUESCHOOL HOUSE, 1 BLUE SCHOOL STREET, HERFORD, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR1 2LX

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