

Agenda Item A12	Committee Date 20 September 2010	Application Number 10/00588/FUL
Application Site Derby Home Pathfinders Drive Lancaster Lancashire		Proposal Change of use and refurbishment/extension to the Derby Home building to provide mental health resource centre.
Name of Applicant Derby Home (Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust)		Name of Agent Mr Paul Walton
Decision Target Date 11 August 2010		Reason For Delay Committee cycle and increase in planning applications
Case Officer		Mrs Jennifer Rehman
Departure		None
Summary of Recommendation		Approval subject to conditions

1.0 The Site and its Surroundings

- 1.1 The site that is the subject of this application forms part of the Pathfinders Drive complex off Ashton Road, Lancaster, which has been used for some considerable time by the Lancashire Care NHS Foundation Trust (LCFT). The LCFT complex is accessed off the western side of Ashton Road, close to the junction onto Cherry Tree Drive, south of the built-up area of the city. The complex consists of a number of buildings, included two converted listed barns. The Oaklands Unit is situated in the south western corner of the site bound by agricultural land to the south and west. North of the Oaklands Unit is a vacant stone building known as Derby Home (the application site); this building occupies a prominent and elevated position within the complex with North and East Barns situated to the east of the site at a lower level fronting Ashton Road.
- 1.2 Derby Home is a rather imposing three story (with basement) stone under slate building of considerable architectural merit. The building was constructed circa 1920 and as such consists of traditional pitched roofs with parapet gables with architectural details such as stone window surrounds, quoins, finials and cast iron rainwater goods. At some point in history, the building has been extended in the form of a rather inappropriate flat roof extension to the side, which has been carried out in similar materials but is of no design value. Notwithstanding the design and form of the building, the property has regrettably been vacant for quite a significant time and is now in need of restoration.
- 1.3 The Pathfinders Drive site relates to the former Royal Albert Site and is therefore unallocated in the Lancaster District Local Plan proposals map. Surrounding the site, beyond a small allocated housing opportunity site, land to the north and east enjoys protected Urban Greenspace and Key Urban Landscape designations. This area extends up to the south boundary of Haverbreaks Estate. Whilst the application property is not listed, there are listed buildings within the site complex.

2.0 The Proposal

2.1 The planning application is in two parts:

1. The change of use of the property to a D1 (non-residential institution) use class to provide a mental health resource centre.
2. Various external alterations and extensions.

The external alterations and extensions consist of the following:

- Replacement of all windows and doors
- The construction of a ramp access to the front elevation
- Infilling of a covered area to the north elevation to provide increased internal accommodation
- The erection of two small extensions; one to the south west elevation of the original flat roof extension to provide an enlarged lounge/dining area which amounts to 27 square metres; and a smaller two storey extension to the west elevation to provide a lift shaft for suitable disabled access to the first floor. This amounts to 19 square metres.
- Refurbishment and re-roofing of the original flat roof extension, involving a new hipped roof and alterations to the fenestration to better relate to the character and appearance of the existing building.
- External landscaping to provide 12 additional car parking spaces (including 3 Disabled parking bays).

2.2 The proposed development forms part of the NHS Trust's ongoing scheme to improve and rationalise the mental health care service within the district. This included the recent approval for extensions to the existing Oaklands Unit at the Pathfinders site determined by Committee on the 15 March this year. As a consequence of the reorganisation of the Oaklands Unit, it has meant that the Community Mental Health Team (based at Oaklands) needs to be relocated, along with additional and improved outpatient facilities for older adults, including a day care and memory clinic. These services are to be provided in Derby Home as part of this proposal.

2.3 The application has been supported with a series of supporting documentation including an Arboricultural Implication Assessment, Bat Survey, Planning Statement, Transport Statement and a Travel Plan. The content of these documents will be discussed in the analysis section of this report.

3.0 Site History

3.1 The following applications are relevant to the Pathfinders site:

Application Number	Proposal	Decision
97/00885/OUT	Demolition of various (unlisted) buildings, Outline application for creation of new access, conversion of various (Listed) buildings to form offices for Priority Trust and Erection of Continuing Care Unit for the Elderly	Permitted
98/00122/REM	Reserved Matters Application for demolition of various (unlisted) buildings, new access, conversion of Listed Buildings to form offices for Priority Trust and erection of Continuing Care unit for the Elderly	Permitted
98/00123/LB	Listed Building Application for alterations and extensions to former barns to form offices for Lancaster Priority Trust	Permitted
10/00046/FUL	Refurbishment and alterations of existing building and construction of new access road to create an in-patient adult unit (Use Class C2) with Section 136 suite, a facility for police to use should they believe someone needs immediate care and assessment in a safe environment (Use Class C2A)	Permitted

4.0 Consultation Responses

4.1 The following responses have been received from statutory consultees:

Statutory Consultee	Response
County Highways	No objection in principle, however there are concerns about the proposed level of parking. Overspill parking should be considered, together with further details and clarification to the submitted Travel Plan. Subject to the receipt of a revised TP, conditions relating to the provision of car parking and cycle storage should be imposed.
Environmental Health	No objections.
Tree Protection Officer	No objections subject to an Arboricultural Implications Assessment to be implemented in full (including tree protection and method statement); and New Tree Planting to be agreed on a ratio of 3:1.
North Lancashire Bat Group	No objections to the bat survey submitted. A condition requiring details of bat mitigation to be submitted and agreed in writing.
Lancashire Constabulary	No objections in principle, subject to details of external lighting and the use of CCTV.
United Utilities	At the time of compiling this report no comments have been received.

5.0 Neighbour Representations

5.1 Site notices have been posted at the entrance to the Pathfinders Drive site and adjacent to the flats at Samuel Court. Additional consultation letters have been posted to nearby residents on Ashton Road. At the time of compiling this report only one letter of representation has been received. This raises no objection to the principle of the development but expresses concerns about the lack of parking provision within the site; the inadequate bus services servicing the area; and concerns that the traffic on Ashton Road can be very busy at peak times.

6.0 Principal Development Plan Policies

Lancaster District Core Strategy

Policy SC1 (Sustainable Development) of the Core Strategy emphasises the need to build healthy sustainable communities by ensuring new development is conveniently located to public transport links and local services; cleans up environmental problems associated with the site; will not adversely affect features of significant biodiversity, archaeological or built heritage importance; and that a proposed use would be appropriate to the character of the landscape.

Policy SC2 (Urban Concentration) seeks to build healthy sustainable communities by focusing new development where it will support the vitality of existing settlement, regenerate areas of needs and minimise the need to travel.

Policy SC5 (Achieving Quality in Design) seeks new development to reflect and enhance the positive characteristics of its surroundings.

Policy SC6 (Crime and Community Safety) seeks to build sustainable communities that are safe and attractive by ensuring development proposals contribute to and enhance community safety.

Policy E2 (Transportation Measures) seeks to improve residents quality of life and minimise the environmental impacts of traffic by focusing development on town centres and locations which offer a choice of modes of transport and improve accessibility by walking and cycling.

Lancaster District Local Plan

Policy R21 (Access for People with Disabilities) requires that where appropriate, access provision should be made for people with disabilities.

Policy EC6 (Criteria for new Employment Development) requires new employment to make satisfactory provision for access, servicing and cycle and car parking; is easily accessible to pedestrian and cycle links; is appropriate in terms of its surroundings (scale, design, appearance); uses high quality landscaping; and does not have an adverse impact on the amenities of residents and nearby businesses.

National Planning Policy Statements/Guidance

National Planning Policy Statement 4 (Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth). Policy EC10 of this policy states that local planning authorities should adopt a positive and constructive approach towards planning applications for economic development and that they should be assessed against the following impact considerations:

- Whether the proposal has been planned over the lifetime of the development to limit carbon dioxide emissions and minimise vulnerability and provide resilience to climate change;
- The site/proposal is accessible by alternative modes of transport and that the effect on local traffic levels and congestion have been considered;
- The proposal secures high quality design which takes the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of the area and the way it functions;
- The impact on the economic and physical regeneration in the area
- The impact on local employment.

National Planning Policy Guidance 13 (Transport) identifies three key objectives in order to integrate planning and transport at the national, regional and local level:

- Promote more sustainable transport choices for both people and for moving freight;
- Promote more accessibility to jobs, shopping, leisure facilities and services by public transport, walking and cycling, and;
- Reduce the need to travel, especially by car.

7.0 Comment and Analysis

7.1 Principle of Development

The key issues for Members to consider in determining this application are:

- Whether the use of the building is acceptable in terms of its location for new employment and the provision of an important community service; and as such general compliance with PPS4, Core Strategy policies SC1 and SC2 and Local Plan policy EC6; and,
- Whether the proposed development is acceptable in highway safety terms and does not put an unacceptable strain on existing parking provision within the site and off-site parking on nearby roads; and,
- Whether the extensions and access alterations proposed are acceptable in terms of design, scale, appearance and use of materials and as such general compliance with Core Strategy policy SC5 and Local Plan policies R21 and EC6.

7.2 In terms of compliance with PPS4 and the relevant local planning policies relating to sustainable development, the reuse of this existing, largely vacant building on the Pathfinders Drive site is both an effective and efficient use of land and supports national policy in developing on previously developed land. In terms of location, the proposed development is a result of the NHS's wider plans to upgrade the mental health service in the district and in doing so has resulted in extensions and changes to the other existing buildings and uses already operating within the wider site. The scheme simply represents enhanced re-provision of facilities and services which currently operate from the Pathfinders Drive site and as such the use of Derby Home by the NHS mental health service raises no significant planning objections - despite its edge of town location. The use of Derby Home will allow the NHS to deliver their mental health service from one single site, which clearly has significant benefits to the service and to the local environment. Members may recall when the recent

application for the Oaklands Unit was heard at committee, the changes to this building were a consequence of the rationalisation of the service and the intended closure of Ridge Lea Hospital. The benefits of operating from one site will minimise multiple trips between sites for employees in particular, but would also provide a better service to the community. As a consequence, Members are advised that the proposed use of the building is entirely appropriate and consistent with the existing uses at the site and would clearly provide enhanced facilities and services serving the local community. Subsequently, the principle of the development in this location is considered compliant with both national and local planning policy.

7.3 Highways

The application site is accessed off Ashton Road, which is identified in the Local Plan as a designated Access Corridor and forms part of the Strategic Cycle Network. The site is located approximately 2km south of Lancaster City Centre with close access onto the strategic cycle network (via the residential development opposite Pathfinders) and close to the canal towpath (0.65km south of the application site to the north of Deep Cutting Farm). The site is also accessible by bus with 3 services routing past the site. The bus stop is adjacent to the junction into Pathfinders Drive, resulting in a short 150m walk from Derby Home to the bus stop where there is a safe Zebra crossing allowing safe access across Ashton Road. Two of the bus services give access to and from the city centre and the surrounding residential areas with the other bus route connecting Lancaster with Glasson Dock and Cockerham. The city centre service operates on an hourly basis, but is staggered every 30 minutes. The other service operates a 2 hourly service. Whilst the quality of this service has been regarded inadequate by one local resident, this edge of town location is regarded relatively accessible by public transport and via cycle routes and pedestrian access. PPG13 regards walking and cycle as two of the most important modes of travel at the local level and offers the greatest potential to replace short car trips, particularly under 2km (walking) and 5km (cycling) respectively. Bearing this in mind and regard to the proximity to public transport and alternative routes for walking and cycling, there are no grounds to refuse the application on its edge of town location.

7.4 Aside from the accessibility issues, in terms of cycle and parking provision on site, the scheme proposes an additional 12 spaces associated with the proposed use. This will include 3 disabled parking bays. This is in addition to the 64 spaces provided within the Pathfinder Drive complex. Based on the former Regional Spatial Strategy (now abolished) parking standards, a D1 use would generate a parking requirement of 23 spaces. Subsequently, the proposal would have fallen short by 11 spaces. However the RSS no longer exists, and PPS4 advises where there are no local planning standards then the thresholds contained in Annex D of PPG 13 shall apply. This annex does not specify standards for certain types of D1 use, such as the one being proposed, and therefore there can be no policy objection to the amount of car parking being provided.

In any case the proposal involves the provision of existing services and as such the majority of staff to be employed at Derby Home are already employed by the NHS on the Pathfinders Drive site. In addition, the applicant has also submitted a Travel Plan to help substantiate the reduced level of parking. This demonstrates clear commitments to reduce the need of staff to travel by private motor car and to encourage staff to use alternative modes of transport. The submitted Travel Plan also provides operational details of the service, which indicates that the need for parking is mainly associated with staff as the majority of patients will access the site by Local Authority transport. In terms of patient numbers, it is anticipated that there are generally be no more than 10 patients visiting the site per day. This is based on the hours of operation (0900 to 1700) and the number of consultation rooms for which there are two. The exact numbers will vary but it is unlikely to exceed 10 per day.

7.5 The submitted Travel Plan indicates a commitment to provide cycle parking and storage space as part of the proposal. The submitted plans do not identify where this is to be located and as such amendments have been requested. With regards to shower facilities, the developers have confirmed that all staff employed by the NHS have the use of the shower facilities provided in the main office building (one of the barns) fronting Ashton Road. Subject to the submission of satisfactory amended plans, this raises no objections. The provision of cycle and car parking will be conditioned to be provided prior to occupation and retained at all times thereafter.

7.6 The submitted Travel Plan identifies three key objectives:

- Minimise total travel distance through the reduction of journey lengths and frequency (especially

- single occupancy care trip;
- Reduce reliance upon the private motor car and improve awareness and usage of alternative modes of transport;
- Promote car sharing, walking, cycling and public transport.

County Highways have identified some minor discrepancies with the submitted Travel Plan. These are currently being rectified by the developer and as such Officers will verbally update Members when these matters have been addressed.

7.7 Despite County Highways initial concerns regarding the level of parking proposed and the potential for overspill parking on the internal road layout and possibly adjacent streets, they have verbally indicated to Officers that if the use of the site could be conditioned to be used in association with the rest of the site (the NHS Pathfinders Drive site) and that there is no material net increase in staff numbers visiting the site, the parking provision initially proposed would be acceptable. Precise details of this will be reported verbally. If agreement is reached between the local planning authority and the applicant in this regard, there would be no objections on highway grounds.

7.8 **Design & Amenity**

In terms of the scale, design and appearance of the proposed extensions, the proposed development is considered compliant with the relevant local planning policies. The extensions have been carefully designed to ensure they appropriately relate to the scale and design of the existing building. In this regard, the two-storey extension proposed to the rear has been kept to a minimum and simply provides space for the proposed lift shaft, and whilst this element of the scheme could be argued to appear slightly out of proportion with the massing of the existing building, it is located on the least visible elevation. Subsequently, provided this is constructed and finished in materials to match the host building, this part of the scheme is considered acceptable. The extended and remodelled extension to the side will provide improved accommodation within the building itself but will equally result in a significant enhancement to the visual appearance of the building by removing the unsightly flat roof. The external appearance and the use of materials proposed for the extensions will be relatively consistent with the design consistency of the original building. There are some slight departures from the design and form of the original building, such as the use of a hipped roof and the tall and slim proportions of the proposed two-storey extension, however these alone are not reasons to warrant a refusal of planning permission.

7.9 The development also involves the replacement of all new openings. At present the windows are all boarded up but it is envisaged that these would have originally been timber framed casements. The proposed replacement windows are to be constructed in a light grey aluminium frame - this raises no significant concerns however the casements shown on the submitted elevations are not particularly in keeping for a building of this style. As such, if Members resolve to approve the development, a condition should be imposed requiring precise details of the windows to be submitted and agreed prior to commencement of development. The other significant alteration proposed as part of the development involves a new ramped access to the front elevation. This element of the scheme is both fundamental and necessary in order to comply with policy R21 of the local plan which seeks to ensure new development is as inclusive as possible and accessible to all. In this regard there are no objections to the principle of a ramped access to the building. In terms of its design, whilst it is a sizable structure, it has been carefully designed so as to appear subordinate in scale to the main building and shall be constructed in materials to match. The final alteration proposed relates to the infilling of a covered entrance to the north elevation to provide two additional interview rooms. The external alterations include the construction of a new external stone wall with two narrow window openings. This elevation is well screened from public view and provided the stone work matches the existing, it should not raise any objections from a planning point of view.

7.10 From a visual amenity perspective, all of the alterations and extensions proposed under this application are considered modest in scale, appropriately designed and sympathetic to the character, form and appearance of the existing building. The physical alterations will not adversely affect the wider site context or the setting of the two listed barns fronting Ashton Road. Bearing this in mind, the extensions and alterations are considered consistent with the relevant policies listed in section 6.0 of this report.

7.11 **Residential Amenity**

Due to the location and setting of Derby Home within a complex of other similar surrounding uses, the proposed development will not adversely affect nearby residential amenity. The only issue likely

to affect neighbouring residents is the increase in traffic movements. This issue has been addressed earlier in the report and concludes that the increase in traffic and parking would not be significant.

7.12 **Ecological Issues**

The application is supported by a bat survey and an Arboricultural Implications Assessment (AIA).

The bat survey confirms that the building is a confirmed bat roost site and as such is protected under the Habitat Regulations. Whilst the building is to be retained, there is a legal obligation on the applicant to ensure works are carried out in accordance with appropriate mitigation. The North Lancashire Bat group have commented on the application and have raised no objections to the content of the survey or the proposed development. However they have requested a condition relating to details of the proposed bat mitigation. The submitted bat survey concludes that the proposals are fully compliant with English Natures Bat Mitigation Guidance and the Habitat Regulations, and as a result the development would have no net impact upon the favourable conservation status of the bat population in the Lancaster area. There is no reason to doubt the content of the information provided and as such the development can be considered acceptable from a biodiversity point of view.

- 7.13 Trees within the site and the adjacent site are subject to Tree Preservation Order No. 269. The detailed AIA identifies trees within the vicinity of the application site and proposes tree protection measures in compliance to *BS 5837 (2005) Trees in relation to construction*. A total of 10 tree groups and 22 individual trees have been identified. Only two trees have been identified for removal (T18 and T19). These trees are cherry trees approximately 6m in height but both are in a poor arboricultural condition. As such they are to be removed in the interests of good arboriculture practice, regardless of the development proposals. The AIA also indicates a small group of Grey Poplars to the west of the building to be removed to allow the development to proceed. These trees offer little amenity value due to their relatively small size and their location tucked behind the existing building. Clarification has been sought to confirm if these trees are definitely intended to be removed, as the tree schedule submitted with the AIA indicates that the trees will remain with no actions required. Clarification of this will be reported verbally. The proposed development will have minimal impact on the existing trees provided the tree protection measures are implemented and appropriate replacement planting at a ratio of 3:1 is conditioned.

8.0 Planning Obligations

- 8.1 None arising from this application.

9.0 Conclusions

- 9.1 Subject to the submission of a revised Travel Plan, an amended site plan confirming cycle provision and clarification regarding the trees identified as G13, the proposed development is considered acceptable from a planning point of view and therefore compliant with the relevant national and local planning policies. Members are therefore advised that the development can be supported subject to the following conditions.

Recommendation

That Planning Permission **BE GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. Standard Time Limit
2. Development in accordance with approved plans
3. Amended plans (TBC)
4. Details and samples of all external materials
5. Notwithstanding the plans submitted, details of windows and doors
6. Details of the ramp access (materials, surfacing and hand rails)
7. Details of external lighting and CCTV
8. Details of bat mitigation
9. Tree Protection condition
10. Development to be carried out in accordance with the submitted Arboricultural Method Statement
11. Replacement tree planting (ratio 3:1)
12. Landscaping scheme
13. Parking/Cycle provision to be provided and retained

14. Travel Plan to be implemented
15. At least 10% on-site renewables
16. Building to be used as a D1 use in association with the NHS Pathfinders Drive complex

Human Rights Act

This recommendation has been reached after consideration of the provisions of The Human Rights Act. Unless otherwise stated in this report, the issues arising do not appear to be of such magnitude to override the responsibility of the City Council to regulate land use for the benefit of the community as a whole, in accordance with national law.

Background Papers

None.