

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

23rd October 2013

Planning Application 2013/143/COU

Change of use to provide additional surgery space at first floor and ancillary office/storage space

272 Evesham Road, Redditch

Applicant: Kingfisher Dental Practice
Expiry Date: 5th August 2013

Ward: HEADLESS CROSS & OAKENSHAW

The author of this report is Steven Edden, Planning Officer (DM), who can be contacted on extension 3206 (e-mail: steve.edden@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk) for more information.

(see additional papers for Site Plan)

Members will be aware that this application was considered at Planning Committee on 31st July 2013. The application was deferred to allow Officers to discuss, with the applicant, a staff travel plan together with a potential re-design of the current parking facilities at the practice in an attempt to provide additional parking spaces for staff and clients. Officers can clarify that a travel plan has been submitted together with a re-designed parking layout which would accommodate a further two car parking spaces. This increases provision from 12 spaces to 14. The parking layout plan submitted will be shown as part of the powerpoint presentation for the application. Officers consider that the details submitted are acceptable; the report follows below.

Site Description

The application site consists of a relatively large two storey building, originally constructed as a dwelling, now operating as a dental practice. The building accommodates three surgeries, a reception area, waiting room and ancillary facilities such as kitchen and toilets at ground floor. At first floor, the building accommodates storage and office space together with a larger staff kitchen.

The building has a car park to the frontage containing space for 12 no. cars. The practice has a large rear garden which is bounded by mature trees and hedges, particularly on the southern and western boundaries.

Access to the site is via Evesham Road to the east.

The surrounding area is residential in character.

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Proposal Description

Permission is sought for additional surgery space within the existing building used as a dental surgery. No extensions or external alterations are proposed. It is proposed to rationalise the first floor space to provide two surgeries which would allow for the employment of a trainee dentist and a hygienist.

The applicant states that the application is made to secure the future of this dental practice as result of further changes in NHS funding due to come in during 2014.

Relevant Key Policies:

All planning applications must be considered in terms of the planning policy framework and all other relevant material considerations (as set out in the legislative framework). The planning policies noted below can be found on the following websites:

www.communities.gov.uk

www.redditchbc.gov.uk

National Planning Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The NPPF supports existing business sectors, taking account of them expanding or contracting in order to encourage sustainable development and building a strong and competitive economy. The proposal would contribute towards economic prosperity as it involves the expansion of an existing business and as such will assist towards building a strong, responsive, sustainable and competitive economy. Therefore, the proposal would comply with the relevant aims of the NPPF.

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3

B(BE).13 Qualities of Good Design

C(T).12 Parking Standards (Appendix H)

Relevant Site Planning History

Application no	Proposal	Decision	Date
1992/238/FUL	Conversion of property to dental surgery (two surgeries) and self contained flat	Approved	03.09.1992
2000/154/FUL	Additional dental treatment room	Approved	07.06.2000

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2006/547/FUL	Expansion of existing dental practice (from three to six treatment rooms)	Refused	12.01.2007
2007/124/FUL	Re-submission of application 2006/547/FUL (increase in number of treatment rooms from three to five)	Refused	26.04.2007
2007/303/FUL	Extension of dental practice by refurbishment of existing building and construction of single storey ground floor rear extension	Approved	07.09.2007

Public Consultation Responses

Responses against

3 letters received. Comments are summarised as follows:

- Upper floor is accessed via an external staircase. Any increase in its use would be detrimental to residential amenity
- Cars belonging to both staff and patients of the practice already fill the existing on-site car park in addition to the five available spaces on the road outside whenever the surgery is in full use. The regularity of use already results in highway safety problems
- Whilst most users park their cars without actually blocking the driveways of the three houses affected, cars are regularly parked half on and half off the pavement on both sides of residents drives, significantly reducing visibility for the emerging vehicles of residents and of users of the on-site car park. Parking on the pavement is also a significant inconvenience to pedestrians
- Evesham Road is a busy road and bus route whose width is constrained just north of the application site by bollards in the middle of the road
- The existing level of use of the dental practice already causes a high level of on-street parking in this location which is a significant danger to road users and residents alike
- The proposal would represent a 33% increase in the use of the premises which would not be matched by an equivalent increase in car parking
- The Councils standards should require 20 spaces on site for the proposed use. There are only 12 provided

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- Patient numbers have increased significantly since the original consent. The proposals would suggest that patient numbers would rise again

Consultee Responses

County Highway Network Control

Comments as follows:

The applicant has provided information as requested to show patient location.

A considerable number of patients live either within reasonable walking distance of the practice or near to a regular bus route. Given the above, it is considered that, for the usual patient base, the practice is in a sustainable location.

Similarly, as there are other travel methods open to patients, the parking facilities situated within the application site are considered adequate.

The County Council as Highway Authority therefore considers that the traffic generation from the proposal has negligible effect on the surrounding Highway Network and therefore has no objection to the grant of permission.

Worcestershire Regulatory Services (Environmental Health)

No objection

Background

The planning history related to the site is as set out above. The single storey extensions to the rear, approved under application 2007/303/FUL were not implemented, and this consent has now expired. This application essentially sought to provide the practice with more usable circulation space including a larger waiting area, but unlike the earlier applications, did not propose to increase the number of treatment rooms. Because this permission has expired, a new planning application would need to be submitted for further such extensions to the building in the future. The applicant has however stated that they would not wish to extend the premises in the future in a similar manner to that scheme submitted under application 2007/303/FUL. The premises remain as a dental practice containing three treatment rooms / surgeries.

Assessment of Proposal

Under the consideration of earlier, (refused) planning applications, as set out above, Officers considered that the expansion of the practice by increasing the number of surgeries without commensurate in-curtilage parking facilities would be likely to lead to a danger to highway safety as a result of additional vehicles being parked 'on-street' along Evesham Road.

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A detailed statement has been submitted by the applicant's agent in support of the application. It states that although two rooms are proposed as surgeries, the additional hours worked would only be by one full time equivalent (FTE). The existing practice operates having three FTE dental practitioners. If permission were to be granted under this consent, the additional one FTE post would be split between that of a trainee dentist (4 days a week) and a dental hygienist (1 day a week). The applicant would be willing for a condition to be attached to any consent restricting the use of the existing and additional surgeries granted such that they could be used by a maximum of three FTE dentists and a trainee dentist and hygienist only.

The applicant states that the proposal is required because of changes to NHS dental care and associated targets set by Government for dental practitioners.

With respect to the perceived detrimental impact upon nearby residential amenity regarding the location and use of the existing external staircase (located on the south facing gable, facing towards number 274 Evesham Road), there is already internal access to the existing stairway to the first floor through the reception area serving the dental surgery. The external access was primarily used by occupiers of a first floor flat (which is now vacant) and has not been used for some time. In the event of consent being granted, a proposed new car parking space located in this area would mean that the external staircase would need to be removed, thus removing external movements to and from the first floor.

The applicant states that the amount of on street car parking varies during the day and that not all is by visitors to the Dental practice. The applicant states that neighbours opposite are noted to regularly park their vehicles on Evesham Road. However, where there are no restrictions it is lawful to park on the road and this is the case here. The on-street parking situation which occurs at present is not considered to be of detriment to highway safety. If it were to be, it is likely that yellow lines would have been introduced along this particular stretch to prevent on-street parking.

It is stated that the hygienist would generally see patients at the same time as they have a routine dental appointment and as such it is considered unlikely that a material increase in car journeys would be generated. The proposal also includes plans for a trainee. The applicant explains that the speed at which a trainee works (under supervision) means that they see far fewer patients than a fully trained and experienced dentist.

Detailed information submitted by the applicant has demonstrated to your officers and County Highway Network Control that the proposed development would indeed be unlikely to cause increased pressure on car parking that cannot be met in both the on site car park and off site on the adjacent road.

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The view expressed in the objections that the 33% increase in use of the premises is not matched by an equivalent increase in car parking' is questioned as a 33% increase refers to the proposed increase in surgery numbers, not by a 33% increase in patients.

Officers consider that the use of planning conditions in this case could justify the increase in surgery space whilst safeguarding nearby residential amenities. By attaching such conditions, Officers do not consider that harm to highway safety or amenity could be demonstrated, also having regard to the context of the benefit of retaining this dental practice in this part of Redditch to serve local need, thus being sustainably located.

As far as patient numbers are concerned, the application submission shows that existing patients over the last few years average 8,704 per year. This figure is around 300 less than the 9000 patients projected in the documents produced in 2000 when permission was granted for an increase to 3 surgeries under reference 2000/154/FUL. A trainee working a 4 day week is anticipated to result in little increase over the patient base of 9000 that was projected and considered acceptable in the year 2000. It is also noted that the practice is now more 'child friendly' and that children are likely to attend in family groups not individually and thus share transport. Further, no significant change to the existing patient base is anticipated as Redditch is well served by existing established dental practices. The proposal is not therefore considered to warrant the provision of additional car parking on site. Further, on street parking is lawfully available and public transport (having regard to Evesham Road being a bus route with frequent services) and walking are alternative transport options.

Conclusion

The benefit of maintaining this local NHS dentist as a viable business serving the local community should be carefully considered and weighed against the alleged car parking problems. On street parking is not entirely due to patients and the level of increase of demand for car parking when considered objectively is likely to be very small and so would not cause any demonstrable additional harm to local residents. Notwithstanding nearby residents concerns over the proposed new development, the proposals are considered to accord with national and local policy criteria. On balance, it is considered that the proposals would not prejudice highway safety or residential amenities. As such, the application is recommended for approval.

Recommendation

That having regard to the development plan and to all other material considerations, planning permission be GRANTED subject to conditions below:

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- 1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of the grant of this permission.

Reason :- In accordance with the requirements of Section 91(1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2) The development hereby approved shall be implemented in accordance with the following plans:

tbc

and to be implemented on site to the satisfaction of the LPA before first use of the development hereby approved

Reason: To accurately define the permission for the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is satisfactory in appearance in order to safeguard the visual amenities of the area in accordance with Policy B(BE).13 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3

- 3) The use of the premises as a whole shall comprise a maximum of 3 FTE dentists, a trainee dentist and a hygienist only and no other health care professionals.

Reason: In the interests of ensuring the practice is run in such a way that the numbers of visitors does not exceed the available parking on and around the site to such an extent as to result in highway safety concerns in accordance with Policy CT(12) of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3.

Procedural matters

This application is being reported to the Planning Committee because two (or more) objections have been received.