

**PLANNING
COMMITTEE**

13th September 2023

Planning Application 23/00202/FUL

New two-storey extension (including plant space and vertical circulation) at rear of the existing two-storey hospital to provide 2 new surgical theatres and support accommodation. (part retrospective)

The Alexandra Hospital, Woodrow Drive, Redditch, Worcestershire, B98 7UB,

**Applicant: Mr Simon Blakemore
Ward: Greenlands Ward**

(see additional papers for site plan)

The case officer of this application is Sarah Hazlewood, Planning Officer (DM), who can be contacted on Tel: 01527881720 Email: sarah.hazlewood@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk for more information.

Site Description

The site comprises the Alexandra Hospital situated to the south of Redditch and close to the boundary with Stratford upon Avon District. To the east of the site lies Tudor Grange Academy and to the south a new residential development accessed off Nine Days Lane. The hospital site itself is accessed off Woodrow Drive to the north of the site. The application site lies to the south of the hospital and is situated on a staff car park. Adjacent to the site is a creche for hospital staff and at a greater distance to the south are dwellings off Whetstone Street.

Proposal Description

The proposal comprises an extension to the existing hospital building formed from a mixture of single storey and two storey elements. The majority of the new accommodation is at ground floor level which includes two new operating theatres with associated accommodation including recovery areas, offices and staff facilities. At first floor level plant, heating and server rooms are proposed. The buildings have flat roofs and have a white finish.

Relevant Policies:

Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4

Policy 1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
Policy 16: Natural Environment
Policy 18: Sustainable Water Management
Policy 20: Transport Requirements for New Development
Policy 44: Health Facilities

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Others

High Quality Design Supplementary Planning Document
NPPF National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG National Planning practice Guidance

Relevant Planning History

21/00444/FUL	Creation of 2 new staff car parks and demolition of 2 existing staff carparks, plus creation of some additional infill car parking spaces around the trust site and repositioning of helipad	Granted	17.09.2021
21/00447/OUT	Outline application for the removal of existing carpark and demolition of existing apartment buildings (Use Class C3). Proposed new residential development of up to 92 homes (Use Class C3) with all matters, except the access road from Woodrow Drive to a point 100m west of the junction with Quinneys Lane, reserved (scale, layout, appearance, landscaping).	Pending decision	
22/01237/S73	Variation of condition 2 of application 21/00444/FUL - reconfiguration of north and west car parks and minor alterations to Quinneys Lane to bring it up to adoptable standards	Granted	16.02.2023

Consultations

Worcestershire Highways - Redditch

No objection subject to conditions

North Worcestershire Water Management

I have reviewed the additional information and feel they have addressed any concerns I had. Based on this and the fact it is mostly retrospective, I am happy for the condition to be removed.

Public Consultation Response

A site notice was displayed 29.03.2023 which expired 22.04.2023.

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A press notice was published 31.03.2023 which expired 17.04.2023

A total of 8 letters were sent to nearby properties on 23.03.2023 which expired 16.04.2023

As a result of this publicity a total of 9 responses have been received of which 8 are recorded as comments in objection and 1 recorded as comments in support, however on reading this representation the comments are neither support nor objection.

The material planning matters raised include:

- The height of the building
- Loss of light
- Visually intrusive
- The colour finish of the building
- Noise impact

Cllr Marshall

Residents are asking if there can be some conditions to the granting of permission, such as changing the colour, so it blends into its environment and some strategic planting of shrubs around the new theatres.

Having visited the site, I must note they are very bright and in your face.

Assessment of Proposal

Principle

The site is covered by Policy 44 of the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No 4 (BoRLP). Paragraph 44.2 supports health related development in the curtilage of the Alexandra Hospital. Furthermore, paragraph 44.3 states that the land within the curtilage of the Alexandra Hospital will be safeguarded for development which is intended for genuine health related purposes. The proposal relates to an extension to provide two additional surgical theatres and associated development. The proposed theatres are projected to be able to treat an additional 193 patients a month. There are currently 18,500 people waiting for one or more treatments at the Alexandra Hospital of which 6,800-7,700 are likely to need to have their procedure in a theatre. The development is clearly one which is 'intended for genuine health related purposes' and therefore it is considered that the principle of the development is acceptable.

Highways/Car Parking

The extension is sited on an area used as staff car parking. As a result of the proposal a total of 84 staff car parking spaces will be lost.

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Previous applications at the hospital site have approved additional/replacement car parking provision as well as the loss of one staff car parking area. With respect to the developments relating to car parking Members attention is drawn to the parking appraisal plan provided at appendix 1.

Car park C has permission to be removed from the site under application 22/01237/S73. It is now the hospitals intention to retain this car park, however given that the application that sought its removal remains extant the retention of this car park is currently outside of the control of the Local Planning Authority. It is therefore considered necessary to control the number of car parking spaces across the whole hospital site to ensure that this development does not result in a net loss of car parking spaces. To this end, the applicants have suggested the use of a condition to ensure that a minimum number of car parking spaces are maintained across the whole site. The applicants are suggesting that there should be no fewer than 936 car parking spaces at the site at any one time. In coming to this figure, the following explanation has been provided:

Prior to the application proposals there were 904 car parking spaces across the hospital site. The application proposals result in the loss of 84 car parking spaces. (904 – 84 = 820 spaces). The car park (Area A) to the southeast has been enlarged by 116 car parking spaces (820 + 116 = 936). That figure of 936 parking spaces thus more than meets the demands of the proposed development and the existing (prior to development) operational needs for parking.

However, this figure assumes the retention of car park E which has permission to be removed as part of outline planning application 21/00447/OUT and has a resolution to grant from this committee. The application relates to the construction of up to 92 dwellings. It would therefore be likely that a total of 936 spaces could not be retained across the site in the long term without the benefit of further applications for planning permission, the acceptability of which is not certain.

It is therefore considered reasonable to control the number of spaces at 915. This is 11 more than the current situation (prior to any development taking place), assumes the retention of car park C which is now proposed by the hospital trust, takes account of the 84 spaces lost at car park B for this development (which have already been replaced by the expansion of car park A) and assumes the loss of car park E.

Having taken legal advice on the imposition of such a condition to maintain the 915 spaces across the site it is considered that a condition of this nature would meet with the tests set down at paragraph 56 of the NPPF. Namely that conditions should be necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development permitted, enforceable, precise, and reasonable in all other respects.

The highway authority is content with this approach and having considered the trip generation forecasts for the proposed new theatres raises no objection to the proposal.

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The use of such a condition also provides the hospital the flexibility to develop its site (in accordance with the various planning permissions it benefits from) in the manner and order most suitable to its operational requirements and as and when funding becomes available for such capital projects.

Residential Amenity

The application site lies to the north of the dwellings accessed off Whetstone Street. The development will lie between 18 and 21 metres from the boundary of these dwellings and between 36 and 37 metres to the dwellings themselves. The hospital building lies at a slightly lower level than the dwellings and there is a landscaped area between the development site and the boundary with the Whetstone Street properties. The maximum height of the proposed development is 7.8 metres in the area closest to the dwellings on Whetstone Street.

It is noted that some of the representations received relate to the development causing a loss of light to these dwellings. Chapter 6 of the council's adopted High Quality Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) provides key considerations for non-residential development. Development at a hospital is not explicitly listed however, the SPD makes clear that development should not impact on neighbouring amenity through overbearance, overshadowing and overlooking.

Given that the development lies to the north of the Whetstone Street dwellings, the track of the sun from east to west via the south and the distance between the development and these dwellings it is considered unlikely to result in overshadowing causing a loss of light. Whilst the outlook from these dwellings will have changed and the development is likely visible where there was none previously, this does not necessarily mean that the development is causing harm to amenity. In this regard it is considered that adequate distance remains between the dwellings and the hospital development to not cause an overbearing impact. With respect to overlooking, no windows are proposed at the upper level facing towards Whetstone Street. Whilst access will be necessary to the plant rooms, doors are provided on the west elevation and any use of this area would be transient going to and from the plant room. It is therefore considered that no harmful overlooking from the development would occur.

With respect to the representations made, a number of these raise the matter of potential noise disturbance from ventilation, filtering systems and generators. A noise assessment has been submitted with the application which states that noise should not be a reason to refuse planning consent. Worcestershire Regulatory Services have been consulted with respect to this matter and their response will be reported on the committee update.

Visual Amenity

The existing hospital building is two storeys in height and is largely finished in red brick with low pitched grey roof. There are elements of flat roofed additions to the roof at

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effectively third and fourth floor levels. There are some more recent elements which include the use of a render finish to the external walls.

A number of representations refer to the visual appearance of the proposed buildings, particularly with respect to the white colour finish and how this appears prominent and out of character with the existing buildings on the hospital site.

In response to this, the applicants have provided justification for the design of the building. Whilst not all the matters raised are material planning considerations, it is considered useful background for members to understand how the design of the building has been arrived at:

- In late 2022, the Trust had the opportunity to seek up to £25 million for the theatre development and associated work at the Alexandra Hospital. The outcome was the approval of a bid for of upwards of £18 million to cover the construction of two new modular operating theatres and associated work including car parking and an electricity substation.
- One of the requirements placed on the Trust was for the funding to be used by the end of financial year 2022/23, leaving less than six months from the initial submission of the bid for funding to the required start date for work. This reflects in part the urgency of expanding planned surgical capacity to deliver timely care for a growing number of patients on waiting lists for planned surgery, lists which had grown exponentially during the Covid pandemic.
- Local demand also meant that the alternative model (a rolling programme to refurbish the existing Alexandra theatres) was no longer viable because the clinical risk which would result from even the short term loss of that capacity.
- A decision was made to consider the use of off-site manufacturing in the form of modular theatres. Even this would be tight in the given timescales had it not been for the fact that the modular company was able to provide the first theatre, effectively from stock, as the last one of a number of modular theatres they had pre-built during the pandemic, supplying a number of these to other Trusts. This meant they then had manufacturing capacity to provide a second identical theatre, allowing both units to be delivered to site before the end of March 2023.
- As a result, a number of design decisions in terms of layout and appearance were already 'locked in', which included the choice to use white cladding as the material for the external envelope. Any significant changes to the unit that had already been built, including the external cladding would have incurred both additional costs and potential delays to the installation on site, losing the original benefits. Consideration was given to the design of the remaining, traditionally built building as this would sit alongside the modular theatres, providing the supporting accommodation including recovery, stores and staff facilities. A decision was taken to create this using a steel frame which could then be clad, using the matching cladding, an obvious solution to providing one cohesive building. This was therefore seen as a positive, rather than a choice that was being forced upon the Trust and their design team.

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- This approach also has the benefit of reducing the overall construction programme, making the building water tight sooner, for example, which allows the internal fit out to commence earlier and in turn allowing the building to become operational as quickly as possible.

Further consideration has been given to the visual impact of the proposal in view of the comments made. Reference is made to application 21/00447/OUT which has a resolution to grant permission for dwellings on the western edge of the hospital site. The application is made in outline form with layout a reserved matter for future consideration, however the applicants advance that moderate weight should be given to this application as the indicative layout shows housing extending to the south in a manner which could obscure some views of the proposed development from the junction of Nine Days Lane and Whetstone Street.

Further consideration has been given to cladding the building, applying a coloured finish, fencing and landscape planting in order to mitigate the concerns relating to visual impact. Of these cladding and applying a colouring finish are expensive and would necessitate directing funds away from clinical needs. Similarly, fencing is also expensive given the height it would need to be constructed at and consideration would have to be given to the visual appearance to ensure the fencing in itself would not be harmful to the character of the area. The applicant would, however, be willing to submit and have approved a scheme of landscaping which could be controlled by condition. It would be envisaged that planting could be provided on the bank to the west/south west of the development to provide screening from views gained from this direction.

Officers are mindful that whilst the appearance of the proposed extension is different when compared to the predominant appearance of the existing hospital building, this does not necessarily mean that it is harmful to the visual amenities of the area. The hospital building, whilst having a dominant character, does feature flat roofed elements in colours other than red brick and at a height greater than the majority of the hospital as well as rendered elements. It is also considered that an appropriate planting scheme would provide a buffer and softening of the colour of the building.

Conclusion

The development of the site for additional theatre accommodation and associated development is acceptable in principle in accordance with Policy 44 of the BoRLP. It is considered that the development would not cause a harmful impact to the amenities of the occupiers of nearby dwellings on Whetstone Street and that adequate parking provision can be ensured across the site through an appropriately worded planning condition. Whilst it is noted that the finished colour of the building is largely at odds with the existing building, it is not considered unduly harmful, and the provision of a landscaping scheme will ensure that the appearance of the building can be softened from key vantage points. In addition, this matter has to be balanced against the significant benefits that will arise from the development through the provision of additional theatre

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accommodation and the increased number of surgical procedures that will be carried out at the site.

Your officers have therefore concluded that the application would amount to sustainable development and would not conflict with the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.4 as a whole. Subject to compliance with conditions as listed in full below, a favourable recommendation can be made.

RECOMMENDATION:

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

1. The development hereby approved shall be carried out in accordance with the following plans and drawings:

Proposed Site Layout Plan (11)302 Rev P2
Proposed Block Plan (10)201 Rev P3
Site Location Plan (10)003 Rev P2
Proposed Ground Floor Plan (30)302 Rev P1
Proposed First Floor Plan (31)302 Rev P1
Proposed Roof Plan (32)302 Rev P1
Proposed Elevations (41)302 Rev P1
Proposed Elevations (41)303 P1
Proposed Sections (43)302 Rev P1
Surface water manhole schedule Rev C3 19.04.23
Foul manhole schedule Rev C3
Water Management Statement Rev P0
Drainage Layout 8330-CCE-XX-00-DR-C-0200 Rev C01

Reason: To provide certainty to the extent of the development hereby approved in the interests of proper planning.

2. The Development hereby approved shall not be opened to the public until 8 electric vehicle charging spaces have been provided in accordance with a specification which shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To encourage sustainable travel and healthy communities.

3. The Development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until sheltered and secure cycle parking to comply with the Council's adopted highway design guide has been provided in accordance with details which shall first be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and thereafter the approved cycle parking shall be kept available for the parking of bicycles only.

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Reason: To comply with the Council's parking standards.

4. The development hereby approved shall not be brought into use until a sign and road marking strategy has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure the provision of adequate on-site facilities and in the interests of highway safety.

5. There shall be no fewer than 915 car parking spaces across the Alexandra Hospital site at all times, of which no less than 270 spaces shall be available for visitor car parking.

Reason: To ensure the provision of adequate on site parking facilities.

6. Within 6 months of the date of this permission a landscaping scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved landscaping scheme shall be implemented on site within the first planting season following the agreement of the scheme.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity

Procedural matters

This application is reported to Planning Committee for determination because the application is for major development and as such the application falls outside the scheme of delegation to Officers.