

COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee: West/Centre Area **Ward:** Guildhall
Date: 13 November 2008 **Parish:** Guildhall Planning Panel

Reference: 08/02031/GRG3
Application at: City Of York Council 5 Silver Street York YO1 8RY
For: External alterations and conversion of former electricity sub-station into public toilets (resubmission)
By: Russel Stone
Application Type: General Regulations (Reg3)
Target Date: 4 November 2008

1.0 PROPOSAL

1.1 This application seeks planning permission for the provision of a staffed public toilet facility in Silver Street to serve the city centre. The facility would replace the existing toilets in Parliament Street with more accessible toilets. The works would involve the change of use of vacant ground floor premises consisting of a former electricity substation and two adjacent storage buildings to create a changing place room; ladies, gents, ambulant toilets; and a baby changing room. The upper first floor currently provides toilets for the market traders and rest room for City of York Council Market and Street Scene staff. The building is an unlisted but historic building which lies within the Central Historic Core Conservation Area.

1.2 Internally, the works would involve the removal of internal walls and the insertion of additional partition walls. The premises would be staffed during opening hours and a security grille behind the main entrance doors would provide security at night time.

1.3 Externally, the change of use to the toilet facility would involve the remodelling of existing door and window openings. It is intended that 5 No. sets of doors and frames would be removed to be replaced with 2 No. single doors and a set of automatically operated double doors. The removed doorways would be infilled with recessed brick work and 4 No. fanlights would be retained.

1.4 The application has been referred to the West and Centre Sub- Committee for a determination at the request of Councillor David Horton and Councillor Janet Looker given the local business and resident interest in the scheme.

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Development Plan Allocation:

2.2 Policies:

CYC1
Criteria for community facilities

CYGP1
Design

CYHE3
Conservation Areas

CYGP4A
Sustainability

3.0 CONSULTATIONS

3.1 INTERNAL

Highway Network Management- No objections

Design Conservation and Sustainable Development- No objections, suggested revisions to give an improved finish to a door detail.

3.2 EXTERNAL

Guildhall Planning Panel- No objections

York Access Group- No objections in principle but comment on wheelchair access to wash basins and the absence of alarm provision detail.

Safer York Partnership- No response at time of writing

3.3 The application was advertised in the local press, a site notice was displayed, and adjoining neighbours were advised of the development by letter. The consultation period expired on 15 October 2008 and no responses have been received at the time of writing.

4.0 APPRAISAL

4.1 KEY ISSUES

- Land use
- Impact on the visual amenity of the street scene and the conservation area
- Sustainability issues

4.2 POLICY CONTEXT

Planning Policy Guidance Note 15 " Planning and the Historic Environment " seeks to ensure that the character and amenity of conservation areas are not adversely affected by inappropriate developments.

POLICY HE3 of the City of York Development Control Local Plan (Fourth Set of Changes), approved for development control purposes on 13 April 2005 states that proposals for development in conservation areas should reflect street proportions, which are given to floor heights, door and window sizes and disposition.

POLICY GP4a of the Local Plan requires all new developments to have regard to the principles of sustainable development.

Policy GP1 is a general design policy in the Local Plan that, inter alia, seeks to ensure that new development respects its surroundings.

Policy CF1 of the Local Plan supports new community facilities provided that the proposed development is of a scale and design appropriate to the area and meets a recognised need.

POLICY GP4a of the Local Plan requires all new developments to have regard to the principles of sustainable development.

4.3 RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

08/00044/GRG3 Change of Use from substation to public toilets with external alterations WITHDRAWN 20.2.2008

ASSESSMENT

Land Use

4.4 The building would reuse the ground floor of a building that was previously used as a substation and is currently vacant. The building is in a prominent central location and its reuse would increase vitality in the area thereby enhancing the character of the city centre. There is considerable justification for the development within the city centre. Property Services indicate that the proposed toilets would replace the existing sub-standard toilets in Parliament Street and that these would be closed on completion of the new facilities in Silver Street. Although the proposed facility would be smaller than the facilities in Parliament Street, they would provide more publicly accessible toilets that would comply with current standards. The facility would therefore meet a recognised community/ city wide need that would comply with Policy C1 of the City of York Local Plan.

4.5 The upper floor above the proposed toilets are currently in use by Council staff involved with the market and city centre activities. It is unlikely that the proposed toilets on the ground floor would increase activity or noise to a level that would be harmful to the staff who occupy the upper floors. The current occupiers have been advised of the proposed toilet facility and no representations have been received to date. Members will be updated at the meeting of any further responses. The

proposed facility would be situated in a bustling part of the city area, where there are no close residential properties that could be affected, and the use would clearly service the surrounding land uses. The facility would be centrally located in a sustainable location, and would be accessible to all types of user, both tourist and resident.

Visual impact

4.6 The building that would be converted dates from approximately the mid -C19 but the front elevation is more recent and dates from the late C19 or early C20. This part of the conservation area is characterised by a mix of historic and contemporary buildings, and many of the surrounding buildings are listed, including St Sampson's Church opposite. The building is very prominent within a pedestrianised part of the conservation area and it forms a large part of the built frontage of Silver Street. The building has a strong visual relationship with its neighbour as the adjoining shopfront appears to have been an integral part of the building at some point- the shopfront cornice is still in situ. Whilst the front elevation of the building has been altered, it retains its historic character largely dictated by the openings and fanlights to the ground floor and the original sash windows to the first floor. In general, the proposed alterations that would be required to convert the building for the proposed use would be sympathetic. Some existing details would be retained and those that would be altered would reflect the character of the existing front elevation of the building as expanded below.

4.6 The new sliding glazed doors would be the most significant change to the fenestration of the building. They would fit into an existing opening and their simple and contemporary design would not detract from the appearance of the building or be an obtrusive visual alteration in the conservation area. The entrance to the disabled toilet has been altered from a double door in the initially withdrawn scheme, to a single door. The door has been well designed and its proposed fanlight would match the existing fanlights on the building. The filled -in area of the opening would be externally finished in brickwork and a decorative ceramic panel. At this stage, Property Services has no firm proposals for the ceramic panel but it is intended to be either a piece of artwork or used as a signage feature to identify the facility. The proposed tiled and bullnose brick cill below the ceramic panel would be a traditional detail in character with the building.

4.7 The frontage of the building is not symmetrical and consists of differing openings and fanlights and the proposed redesigned frontage would retain this characteristic. There is one small area of concern that has been expressed to Property Services. The conservation officer considers that the treatment of the existing double door opening to the right hand side of the building could be improved. The existing double doors are separated externally by a timber fascia and an internal wall separates the openings. It is intended to infill the left hand door opening with brickwork but retain the existing fanlight. This would create an incongruous appearance as the retained fanlight would "float" above the new brickwork. It is also considered that the brickwork may have an odd appearance adjacent to the central timber fascia. It is suggested by the Conservation Officer that it may be possible to retain the existing external appearance of this opening by fixing shut the existing timber door and bricking- in behind the timber door. Property Services are unwilling to alter this detail

and Members may consider that the treatment of this opening should be amended so that the unharmonious appearance of this alteration to this opening is deleted from the scheme. However, on balance, it is considered by officers that the proposed treatment of this doorway would not be detrimental to the appearance of the building or the conservation area to justify refusing the scheme.

4.8 The bricking up of the door to the left hand side of the building would be acceptable. This is a stand alone door and the recessed brickwork would have a sympathetic and honest appearance that allows the former opening to be read externally. The replacement of the existing window with a double glazed unit would be acceptable subject to large scale details being approved if Members are minded to approve the application.

4.9 It is therefore considered that the proposal would therefore accord with Policy HE3 of the Local Plan and related national planning guidance that seeks to protect the distinctive character and visual amenity of the conservation area.

Sustainability

4.10 It is intended that CFC -free thermal insulation would be laid under the floor during construction and above the suspended ceiling. The new matching windows would be constructed in FSC sourced timber. Generally the alteration works would consist of lightweight blockwork partitions and where possible the studwork construction would incorporate sheep's wool insulation and be faced with 100% recycled plasterboard. It is also intended that water usage would be minimised by incorporating toilets with a dual flush system and urinals would be waterless. It is considered that these measures would be adequate to meet the sustainability requirements of Policy GP4a of the Local Plan.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 The proposed toilet facility would be appropriately sited within the city centre and would meet a required need. It would be accommodated within an existing building that could be easily accessed. It would provide the appropriate range of facilities within the building without requiring significant or harmful alterations to the exterior of the prominent, historic building within the conservation area. Members are therefore advised that planning permission should be granted for the proposed facility subject to the following conditions.

COMMITTEE TO VISIT

6.0 RECOMMENDATION: Approve

1 TIME2 Development start within three years

2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out only in accordance with the following plans and other submitted details:-

Drawing No. 0566/03 Revision A Received 15 August 2008

or any plans or details subsequently agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority as an amendment to the approved plans.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and to ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority.

3 Notwithstanding the submitted details and the terms of Condition 2 above, prior to the commencement of the works hereby approved, the following details shall be submitted for the written approval of the Local Planning Authority, and thereafter the works shall be implemented and retained in accordance with the approved details:

a) Details of all proposed windows and doors and their immediate surrounds at a scale not less than 1:5.

b) Glazing bar profiles to be submitted at 1:1.

Reason: To ensure that the details would be acceptable in the interests of the visual amenity and historical and architectural interest of the Listed Building.

4 The infill brickwork shall match the existing brickwork in all respects ie, bonding, size, colour and texture of bricks and the colour and finished treatment of mortar joints, to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority. A sample panel of the brickwork to be used shall be erected on site and shall illustrate the colour, texture and bonding of brickwork and the mortar treatment to be used, and shall be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority prior to the commencement of building works. This panel shall be retained until a minimum of 2 square metres of wall of the approved development has been completed in accordance with the approved sample.

Reason: So that the Local Planning Authority may be satisfied with the finished appearance of these details prior to the commencement of building works in view of their sensitive location.

6 VISQ6 Infill brickwork to match

7 All windows shall be constructed in timber.

Reason: In the interests of the visual amenity and character of the traditional building and the wider conservation area.

**7.0 INFORMATIVES:
Notes to Applicant**

1. REASON FOR APPROVAL

In the opinion of the Local Planning Authority the proposal, subject to the conditions listed above, would not cause undue harm to interests of acknowledged importance, with particular reference to the visual amenity and character of the listed building. As such, the proposal complies with Policies C1, HE3, GP4a and GP1 of the City of York Development Control Local Plan - Incorporating the Proposed 4th Set of Changes (2005) ; and national planning guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 1 " Delivering Sustainable Development " and Planning Policy Guidance Note No. 15 " Planning and the Historic Environment. "

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