

COMMITTEE REPORT

Committee: East Area
Date: 12 October 2006
Ward: Clifton
Parish: Clifton Planning Panel

Reference: 06/01674/FULM
Application at: York District Hospital, Wigginton Road, York YO31 8HE
For: Erection of multi storey (3 level) car park including alterations to vehicle access and roads
By: Peter Strickland
Application Type: Major Full Application (13 weeks)
Target Date: 20 October 2006

1.0 PROPOSAL

1.1 The application relates the existing surface car park at the front of the District Hospital, facing Wigginton Road. The car park currently provides 184 visitor and 124 staff spaces. The proposal is to create a decked multistorey car park for patients and visitors on the site of the existing car park.

1.2 The application follows a previously approved application (ref: 03/00811/FUL) that was approved in early 2005 for a smaller multistorey car park. The resubmission moves and slightly enlarges the car park from the centre of this site further north so as to free up land for further future hospital expansion.

1.3 The new structure would take the form of a ground floor deck with spaces for 37 visitor cars, the first and second floors for with a total of 162 visitor cars on each level. This creates a total of 361 visitor spaces. There will also be 122 staff car parking spaces to the ground floor and 28 additional staff spaces on external grasscrete. This creates a total of 483 spaces within the car park building. Vehicular access to the building will be from the north of the site and the present main access will be blocked off and built over by the car park. There will be an area of grasscrete staff car parking to the front of the building adjacent to a modified access to be used by blue light traffic and staff only. Pedestrians will have main access at the north of the building within a small staff ground floor block where there will be a stair well and elevator. This will give access to a pedestrianised area and the rest of the hospital.

1.4 The building would comprise of galvanised steel frame structure with burgundy coloured blockwork and teak stained cladding to the lower level. The attendants block will be of galvanised steel frame and teak stained sawn timber cladding with a glass and burgundy rendered stair well element. lower. There is no low level shrub planting shown on the plans but there are cable rails at intervals of 14 metres onto which are proposed to be grown climbers.

1.5 The application includes landscaping measures along the Wigginton Road frontage involving the retention of existing trees as far as possible and the retention of the existing grass bund.

2.0 POLICY CONTEXT

2.1 Development Plan Allocation:

Areas of Archaeological Interest City Centre Area 0006

City Boundary York City Boundary 0001

DC Area Teams East Area (2) 0005

2.2 Policies:

3.0 CONSULTATIONS

Internal

Highway Network Management - Highway regulation are at time of writing formulating their formal response to the application.

Environmental Protection - EPU are at time of writing still formulating their formal response. Their concerns in summary relate to the potential increase in car parking and the impact upon rooms adjacent to the building site that is used for outpatient clinics due to pollution created by the movement of cars.

Environment and Conservation - No response at time of writing. There were serious concerns within the previous application regarding the proximity of the proposed car park to the landscaped area adjacent to Wiggington Road and the previous scheme was amended to be moved further away from this area.

Conditions relating to materials and large scale details of the panel edges and the fixing of the panels to the frames are requested as well as one requiring the finished colours to be agreed, and a full landscaping scheme. Also an archaeological watching brief conditions is recommended.

Landscape - The critical trees are those along Wiggington Road (some of which are within the highway verge, some are on hospital land) and as such the development should be compatible with these with some tweaking of distances. The corners closet to Wigginton Road may well cause harm to these trees.

Several early-mature Limes are contained within the car park footprint and would thus be removed. From the outside they look to be of good form with healthy foliage. As such they could have a very long-term amenity value and are worthy of retention. Nonetheless their visibility is limited to relatively close proximity along Wiggington Road because of screening by the other avenue trees.

The loss of a very attractive, singular Lime adjacent to the existing entrance road would be unfortunate and should be avoided if at all possible.

3.2 External

Clifton Planning Panel - No objections but request an alternative pedestrian crossing.

Nearby Residents and Interested Parties - No objections from consulted neighbours.

4.0 APPRAISAL

Key issues:

Impact of proximity to Wigginton Road

Design

Suitability of a building adjacent a major approach into the City.

Impact upon trees and existing Landscaping

Impact upon Highway network.

5.1 The principle for the car park has already been set and the Hospital already has valid approval for the construction of the car park upon this site. The main difference is the re siting of the structure that will bring it substantially closer to Wigginton Road.

5.2 The reason behind the re siting of the car park is due to the desire and need of the hospital to extend. This expansion is currently being planned and it is believed that some provisional master planning work has been undertaken. This does not form part of the planning application however and merely provides a justification for the alteration from the approved scheme. It is anticipated that subject to the outcome of this current application, subsequent applications shall be submitted for further modification of the site.

Pre Application Advice

5.3 Pre application discussions were undertaken by the applicant and the applicant was advised that the landscaped element adjacent to Wigginton Road was of paramount importance at least in one meeting. This was also a prime consideration of the previous application. The basic design principle for a structure using modern materials of steel and timber cladding was also agreed and are in principle considered suitable.

Design

5.4 Planning Policy Statement 1 (delivering sustainable communities) clearly states that "Design which fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area should not be accepted."

It also states that developments should provide "high quality inclusive design in the layout of new developments and individual buildings in terms of function and impact, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development."

5.5 City of York deposit draft Local Plan Policy GP1 states that development proposals will be expected to (i) respect or enhance the local environment, (ii) be of a density, layout, scale, mass and design that is compatible with neighbouring buildings, spaces and the character of the area using appropriate building materials; (iii) avoid the loss of open spaces, important gaps within development, vegetation, water features and other features that contribute to the quality of the local environment; (iv) retain, enhance and/or create urban spaces, public views, skyline, landmarks and other townscape features which make a significant contribution to the character of the area.

5.6 Local Plan Policy C4 also states that any such expansion should not reduce the amenity of local residents; result in the loss of key areas of landscaping, or cause traffic problems.

5.7 The previous application was extensively negotiated and modified to bring the building further from the road and the final distance achieved was a 13 metre separation from Wigginton Road to the proposed car park. This left adequate space for suitable planting and the protection of existing trees that did contribute to softening the building. However this new application, in its attempt to maximise space, has almost breached this landscaped bund that runs alongside the car park and may well harm existing trees while not leaving adequate space for new planting. The new application also creates a new access through the existing landscape bund to the areas detriment. The applicant appears unable to modify the footprint of the car park in any way other than considering a very minor change to the closest elements to the main road and relying on planting to reduce the impact of the structure.

5.7 It is the opinion of Officers that the proposal will contribute negatively to this major approach into the City Centre. It is felt that the proposal gives little regard to the importance of creating a high quality environment and relies on prescribed landscaping conditions for camouflage. It is acknowledged that this structure is unavoidably functional and subsequently there are few ways other than appropriate siting available to reduce the impact of such a building. This approach of creating a building that visually harms the city is considered to be both unsustainable and unacceptable mainly in terms of its siting so close to the site boundary.

5.8 The Central Core Conservation area is situated to the south of the site and Wigginton Road is a major approach into the Conservation Area. It is felt that the integration of such a large structure so prominent to Wigginton Road will be detrimental to the Conservation Area and will appear very much out of character through its size and scale.

5.9 The internal spaces of the hospital will also suffer due to the size and scale of this building upon this narrow site. The building will create a canyonisation of the present main frontage of the hospital in this location. This was minimised in the

previous scheme by adequate planting and a wider gap being left between the two buildings. Although this area is within the private ownership of the Hospital the integration of this 'canyon' feature goes somewhat against the general advice given by CABI, the Government's advisor on design who are actively trying to encourage quality environments for healthcare facilities through design.

Landscape

5.10 The impact upon the trees along Wigginton Road is considered a serious issue as these trees would provide some screening of the proposed building. However Officers are concerned that the siting of the proposed building will adversely impact upon the trees and thereby affect the visible amenity that currently exists. The proposed extra access into the site below the car park will also contribute negatively to the landscape of the site and is not considered appropriate.

Impact Upon Highways

5.11 Highway Officers have serious concerns regarding the impact upon highway movement on Wigginton Road and internal movement within the proposed car park. The prime concern is whether the newly formed junction forming the access to the Hospital is capable of handling future traffic demand, without undue congestion and delays. They have raised these concerns with the applicants transport consultants who are attempting to address this issue. At time of writing however the initial response from Highway regulation is to refuse the application. Officers are currently awaiting a formal response from the applicants and intend to update at Committee.

5.0 CONCLUSION

6.1 In summary this decision has to be based weighing up the balance between the future needs of the hospital and the need to protect this important approach into the city centre and the physical environment of the City as a whole. The proposal is required for an identified need and as a multi storey car parks the design is thought out better than most. However the route into the City along Wigginton Road is highly characteristic with mature trees lining either side and creates a pleasant landscaped environment in terms of approach.

6.2 The Hospital buildings are well set back but at present do not create the most human or attractive of environments and it is officer opinion that this multi storey car park with its proximity to the main road and its canyonisation of the internal hospital roads will create an environment of poor quality that in turn will go against current desires to create more sustainable communities through good design.

6.3 On balance however the decision must be weighted against the desire of the Hospital to expand and provide a service to the people of York. It is Officer opinion however that a more suitable scheme that does not harm the historic and characteristic environment of York will go some way to providing a better, more sustainable future for the City and will, in the long term, override the short term objectives for gaining a large car park on site.

COMMITTEE TO VISIT

6.0 RECOMMENDATION: Refuse

- 1 The proposal, by virtue of its siting immediately adjacent to Wigginton Road will contribute negatively to the built environment of York and this major approach into the Central Historic Conservation Area and City centre through its height, size and dominance. Therefore it is considered that the application is contrary to Policy GP1 and C4 of the City of York Deposit Draft Local Plan as well as overriding National Policy Guidance in the form of PPS1 (delivering sustainable communities) that places the emphasis on good design in order to create more sustainable communities.
- 2 The proposed structure will rely too heavily on landscaping measures to soften its impact whilst leaving too little space for such measures to be employed. As such the building will appear monolithic, over functional and unacceptable on this landmark site and major approach into the City Centre. As such the application is considered contrary to Policy GP, NE1 and C4 of the City of York Deposit Draft Local Plan as well as overriding National Policy Guidance in the form of PPS1 (delivering sustainable communities)

7.0 INFORMATIVES:

Contact details:

Author: Andrew Graham Development Control Officer
Tel No: 01904 551596