

TAUNTON & SOMERSET NHS FOUNDATION TRUST

CONSTRUCTION OF HELICOPTER TAKE OFF AND LANDING APRON (HELIPAD), TOGETHER WITH ASSOCIATED TRAFFIC CONTROL BARRIERS, WARNING LIGHTS AND MODIFICATION TO CAR PARK AREA AND LANDSCAPING AT MUSGROVE PARK HOSPITAL, TAUNTON

321569.124148

Full Planning Permission

PROPOSAL

The proposal is to provide an emergency helipad facility on site in front of the Accident and Emergency Department to allow for landings by the air ambulance. The proposal includes the provision of three sets of traffic control barriers and 5 sets of warning lights on the approach roads within the site for traffic safety and the removal of a number of larger trees for the safe landing of the helicopters. A noise report and ecological report has been submitted with the proposal.

SITE DESCRIPTION AND HISTORY

The application site consists of the current area of car parking and landscaping in front of the Queens Building at Musgrove Park Hospital. The site was originally considered for a helipad at the time of the building's construction, however due to the size of helicopters at the time there was inadequate space for them to operate safely.

CONSULTATION AND REPRESENTATION RESPONSES

Consultees

SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL - TRANSPORT DEVELOPMENT GROUP - The proposal will see the construction of a helipad with associated traffic control barriers. The development is located on private land within the grounds of the hospital and will not generate any additional traffic movements over and above the existing. I therefore raise no objection to the proposal.

Taunton -

CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY -

AVON & SOMERSET CONSTABULARY - COMMUNITY SAFETY TEAM - No observations to make.

CHIEF FIRE OFFICER - DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE RESCUE - The following observations are made. The proposal should ensure they do not have an adverse affect upon the means of escape in case of fire from the hospital buildings and should comply with the Building Regulations 2000. The proposals should ensure that they do not have an adverse affect on the access and facilities provided by the hospital buildings, which include access to dry risers and nearby fire hydrants for appliances. Proposed alterations should comply with the provisions contained in Approved Document B, Part B5 of the Building Regulations 2000. These premises are subject to the above legislation and for the purposes of identifying the measures to be taken to comply with current fire regulations, the Responsible Person must

carry out a review of fire risk assessment taking specific account of these proposals and act upon the 'significant findings' of that assessment.

PRINCIPAL ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH OFFICER - NOISE & POLLUTION - I refer to the information that you recently submitted along with the above application:

- Proposed Air Ambulance Helipad Environmental Noise Study, September 2009. The report suggests that the noise from the planned helipad will be high but of a short duration, usually between 4-5 minutes on average 2-3 times a week and that the helipad is to be used in connection with air ambulance emergencies only. This being the case I wish to advise planning for the information available to me at this time suggests that the noise from the proposed development will be loud, but not sufficient for Environmental Health to object to the above application.

HERITAGE AND LANDSCAPE OFFICER - There will be a significant loss of tree cover but given the relatively large number of replacement trees there should be no longer term loss of amenity.

SOUTH WESTERN AMBULANCE SERVICE -

Representations

1 letter of support

9 letter raising no comments.

7 letters suggesting relocation of helipad to the side of the building to save trees or the roof of the A&E building or of the car park building and concern over damage to property being compensated and vortex between buildings. Can there be no night usage. Concern over noise and disturbance, increased light pollution, loss of parking and impact on surrounding roads, impact on wildlife and badgers, tree loss and people's safety.

PLANNING POLICIES

PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development,

PPS9 - Biodiversity and Geological Conservation,

PPG24 - Planning and Noise,

STR4 - Development in Towns,

S&ENPP1 - S&ENP - Nature Conservation,

S&ENPP49 - S&ENP - Transport Requirements of New Development,

S1 - TDBCLP - General Requirements,

S2 - TDBCLP - Design,

EN6 - TDBCLP -Protection of Trees, Woodlands, Orchards & Hedgerows,

DETERMINING ISSUES AND CONSIDERATIONS

The main consideration with the scheme is the impact on the amenity of local residents, safety and wildlife impact.

The proposal will require the removal of the existing small car park and the adjacent landscaped area to provide a helipad in front of the Queens Building and access to the Accident and Emergency Department. There is considered to be adequate on site parking available to compensate for the loss of parking area to provide the helipad. The works would also include the removal of a number of trees, including ten sycamores, to make the flight path safe. Replacement tree planting in the vicinity of the site but not in the flight path is proposed. The use of the site is restricted to the size of helicopter and is intended for recognised air ambulance operators and not to

be licensed by the CAA for general helicopter use. It is anticipated, based on current arrivals, that the use for critical patients will be 2-3 flights per week. Noise levels will clearly be high during any visit in the nearest properties at Parkfield Drive and Ashley Road. However the duration of the visits will be short and limited in number over a week. Alternative locations have been suggested for the helipad, however the proposed site has been chosen to limit further delay to access the A&E Department. Roof top locations are impractical due to the need for a permanent Fire Brigade presence and the logistics of ensuring any easy transfer to the Emergency Department. Other locations within the hospital grounds would be further away from the A&E Department and would cause similar noise issues for residents elsewhere, if the flight path were changed to another location.

There would be an element of noise disturbance to certain residents wherever a helipad were to be located. It is recognised in PPG24 that housing and hospitals are noise sensitive developments. Policy S1 of the Local Plan seeks to avoid noise pollution that would harm health or safety or amenity of dwellings. It is considered the development would not harm health or safety but would impact on amenity of dwellings for limited periods. However the level of noise caused by helicopter take-off and landing cannot be mitigated against and a level of noise disturbance during these occurrences, lasting around 5 minutes per visit, has to be accepted if permission is to be granted. The only way to limit noise impact is controlling the frequency of flights to the site. However it is not possible to control the timing and number of emergency events requiring critical emergency transfer. The information provided by the applicant indicates flights will normally be restricted to between 07:00 and 23:00 except for critically ill patients. It would seem unreasonable therefore to restrict the timing of flights given that an emergency could happen at any time. The Environmental Health Officer has considered the submitted Noise Report and comments that while the noise will be high it will be of limited duration and on this basis an objection is not raised.

The site has been selected and designed with safety in mind for both people on the ground and operators and patients. The down draft effect from the helicopter is an early consideration in determining suitable and safe landing areas. Recessed ground lights are proposed which will only illuminate during helicopter arrival/departure and safety barriers for the roads and warning light systems are proposed to safeguard staff and visitors during the use of the helipad.

The provision of an Ecological Assessment has been carried out and this addresses concerns raised by locals over the wildlife impact of the development. The report concludes that there will be no adverse impact on badgers or bats from the development and in view of the recommendations an informative note in terms of wildlife impact and site clearance is proposed.

The proposed development will clearly have a noise impact on local residents and this impact cannot be mitigated against other than restricting the timing of flights. The impact of this on local residents has to be weighed against the importance of speedy care for critical emergency patients and the limited use intended for the helipad and on this basis it is recommended that permission be granted.

RECOMMENDATION AND REASON(S)

Recommended Decision: Conditional Approval

Permission be GRANTED subject to conditions of time limit, hard and soft landscaping, lighting and flights limited to registered air ambulances only and note re wildlife.

The proposal is considered not to have a significant adverse detrimental impact upon visual or residential amenity and is therefore considered acceptable and, accordingly, does not conflict with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policies S1 (General Requirements), S2 (Design) and EN6(Protection of Trees).

RECOMMENDED CONDITION(S) (if applicable)

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun within three years of the date of this permission.

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

2.
 - (i) Before any part of the permitted development is commenced, a landscaping scheme, which shall include details of the species, siting and numbers to be planted, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.
 - (ii) The scheme shall be completely carried out within the first available planting season from the date of commencement of the development, or as otherwise extended with the agreement in writing of the Local Planning Authority.
 - (iii) For a period of five years after the completion of each landscaping scheme, the trees and shrubs shall be protected and maintained in a healthy weed free condition and any trees or shrubs that cease to grow shall be replaced by trees or shrubs of similar size and species, or the appropriate trees or shrubs as may be approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development makes a satisfactory contribution to the preservation and enhancement of the local character and distinctiveness of the area in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan Policy S2.

3. Before any part of the development hereby permitted is commenced, a scheme of hard landscaping showing the layout of areas with stones, paving, walls, cobbles or other materials shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Such scheme shall be completely implemented before the development hereby permitted is occupied.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development makes a satisfactory contribution to the preservation and enhancement of the local character and distinctiveness of the area in accordance with Taunton Deane Local Plan

- Deposit Policy S2.
4. No lighting units other than those specified on the submitted drawing 578/02C shall be erected on site unless otherwise submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details and thereafter maintained as such.

Reason: To minimise the impact of the development in accordance with Policy S1(E) of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.

5. The site shall be used by licensed air ambulance operators only.

Reason: In the interest of limiting flights to the site and impacting on residential amenity in accordance with Policy S1 of the Taunton Deane Local Plan.

Notes for compliance

1. WILDLIFE AND THE LAW. The protection afforded to wildlife under UK and EU legislation is irrespective of the planning system and any activity undertaken on the tree(s) must comply with the appropriate wildlife legislation.

BREEDING BIRDS. Nesting birds are protected under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and if discovered must not be disturbed. If works are to be carried out during the breeding season (from February to August, possibly later) then the tree(s) should be checked for nesting birds before work begins.

BATS. The applicant and contractors must be aware that all bats are fully protected by law under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations 1994 (as amended 2007), also known as the Habitat Regulations. It is an offence to intentionally or recklessly damage, destroy or obstruct access to structures or places of shelter or protection used by bats, or to disturb bats whilst they are using these places.

Trees with features such as rot holes, split branches or gaps behind loose bark, may be used as roost sites for bats. Should a bat or bats be encountered while work is being carried out on the tree(s), work must cease immediately and advice must be obtained from the Government's advisers on wildlife, Natural England (Tel. 01823 285500). Bats should preferably not be handled (and not unless with gloves) but should be left in situ, gently covered, until advice is obtained.

In preparing this report the Planning Officer has considered fully the implications and requirements of the Human Rights Act 1988.

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