DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

PROPOSAL : Retention of car park
ADDRESS : John Munroe Independent Hospital, Horton Road, Rudyard
APPLICANT : John Munroe Hospital Group Limited
DATE : October 2009 JOB No. : 2009.1687

DESIGN

ASSESSMENT

Assessment Area

The application proposes the retention of a car park that was constructed in 2005 with the benefit of a temporary planning permission. The site is located within a site that has been developed over a period of time to form a hospital. The site is in the Green Belt. It is considered that the proposal should be influenced by the nature of development on the site including existing car park areas.

Physical

The application site measures about 2.4 ha. and comprises the original two and a half storey Victorian stone building, a series of modern brick additions, the former landscaped gardens now used as the hospital grounds, and the associated access road and car parks. There are four car parks on the site- the 16 space car park at the front of the building, two smaller car parks at the rear of the building providing an additional 15 spaces and the 28 space temporary car park.

Planning Policy

The application site is located in an area of open countryside designated as a Special Landscape Area that has been included in the North Staffordshire Green Belt. The proposal must therefore be judged against the policies contained within PPS7 and PPG 2 'Green Belts' and the SLA and Green Belt policies of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan. The Local Plan Green Belt policy is contained in Policy N2. This states that, except in the case of very special circumstances, there is a general presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Policy N7 requires that the siting, materials and design of new development does not harm the visual amenity of the Green Belt. Policies N8 and N9 require the special qualities of the SLA to be safeguarded. Policy B13 seeks high standards of design in new developments. The planning policies supporting the Local Plan parking standards have not been "saved".

PPS1 "Delivering Sustainable Development" sets out the Government's overarching policies for the delivery of sustainable development. Paragraphs 33-39 seek new developments to have regard to its context.

Paragraph 3.1 of PPG2 "Green Belts" states that green belts are subject to normal countryside protection policies but, in addition, include a presumption against inappropriate development and that such development should not be permitted except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 3.12 states that the statutory definition of development includes engineering and other operations. The carrying out of such operations is inappropriate development unless they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt.

PPS7 "Sustainable Development in Rural Areas" seeks to deliver sustainable patterns of development in the countryside. Away from urban areas, new development is encouraged to locate in or near to local service centres where the possibilities of being accessed by public transport, walking and cycling are greater. Paragraph 7 recommends that planning authorities should adopt a positive approach to planning proposals designed to improve the viability, accessibility or community value of existing services and facilities in rural areas.

PPG13 "Transport" recognises that the scope for development being served by public transport

is less in rural areas.

Planning History
04/00779/FUL: Planning permission granted for an extension to the hospital and alterations to the car park at the front of the building.
05/00893/FUL: Planning permission granted for a temporary replacement car park whilst application 04/00779/FUL was being implemented.

INVOLVEMENT
This application follows an approach by the Council drawing attention to the expiry of the temporary planning permission. The proposal is guided by the planning policies set out above, and particularly those that led the LPA to grant a temporary consent for the development.

EVALUATION
The principal planning issue raised by the proposal is its relationship with the Green Belt. PPG2 explains that engineering operations represent inappropriate development unless they maintain openness and do not conflict with the purposes of including land in the Green Belt. The five purposes for including land in the Green Belt are to (i) check urban sprawl, (ii) prevent settlements merging together, (iii) safeguard the countryside from encroachment, (iv) preserve the setting of historic settlements and (v) assist urban regeneration. The proposal clearly does not conflict with any of these purposes. The other element of the policy relates to the maintenance of openness. The application site accommodates a small modern hospital and all that that entails. From its beginnings as a single Victorian house surrounded by its garden, the building has expanded significantly since the 1980's to provide a modern and efficient hospital service. As well as the new buildings, the garden has changed to accommodate a new internal road, car parking areas, storage areas and other hard surfaces. These changes form part of the current character of the site. For this reason, an additional small car park is not considered to conflict with SLA policies. In terms of Green Belt openness, it is considered that the substitution of surface treatment does not impact upon openness. The car park is lit by six bollard lights (approx. 1m. high). Within the context of a secluded, well screened area of car park, it would be difficult to argue that these impact on openness. The proposal is therefore considered to assist openness in the Green Belt and is therefore not inappropriate development. On the basis that it does not conflict with SLA policies, the proposal is considered acceptable in principle.
The proposal is also considered acceptable in its detail too. The lighting and its cabling is in place and was done so with the co-operation of the Council's tree officer. In this regard the proposal is not considered to harm the interests of the trees around the site. The car park area is proposed to be reduced and the second entrance closed to lessen the impact of the proposal on trees. For the same reason, the surface is proposed to be porous. The proposed construction specification is set out on the submitted drawing.
It terms of sustainability, the application has examined the scope for reducing the need for car parking on the site. PPG13 acknowledges that the limited scope of public transport in rural areas will often lead to the need to provide higher levels of car parking than would be expected to be provided in towns and villages. The topography of land around the site and the isolated nature of the site means that walking and cycling is not a reasonable alternative to the car.
The site currently provides employment for 108 people. Setting aside those that do not drive and those that car share, 96 employees drive to work. An analysis of traffic movements and car parking requirements taking account the shift system that operates at the hospital was submitted with the temporary application. There has been no change in circumstances since that application. That analysis concluded that there was a clear need for additional hard surfaced car parking. Without this, the site would only provide 31 hard spaces for staff and visitors. This is considered to be inadequate, and that the results of limiting car parking to this

level would lead to scattered car parking on existing grassed areas on the site and possibly to roadside parking on Horton Road.
For the reasons that a slightly reduced car park on a permanent basis would not conflict with government guidance and with development plan policy, and that an under-provision on site would lead to either reduced visual amenity on the site resulting from haphazard parking, or reduced highway safety resulting from car parking on Horton Road, the proposal is considered acceptable.

DESIGN
Use
The proposal is to give permanent consent to a car park for staff and visitors.
Amount
The application proposes 27 spaces on an area of 636 sq.m.
Layout
The layout of the car park has been arranged to accommodate 27 spaces in a slightly reduced area that protects its landscaped setting.
Scale
The scale of the proposal is based upon an analysis of car parking needs on the site.
Landscaping
The proposed car park area has trees around its edges. These are proposed to be safeguarded by a small reduction in the size of the car park, the removal of the second access and the use of a porous tarmac surface.
Appearance
The appearance of the proposal is screened by existing tree planting.

ACCESS
VEHICULAR AND TRANSPORT LINKS
The site is located on Horton Road between Leek and Biddulph. It is not on a regular public transport route and its isolated location away from population centres and its topography means that non car borne transport is not feasible.
INCLUSIVE ACCESS
The proposed development makes provision for access by less abled people.