

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

App Ref: 211973/FUL

Address: Brethen Hall Car Park, Redlands Road

Proposal: Temporary 5 year permission to change the use of the existing car park attached to the Gospel Hall of

Plymouth Brethren, Redlands Road to staff parking for use by Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust as secure, additional off-site parking spaces for dedicated critical care staff (retrospective)

Case Officer: Connie Davis

Extended Target Decision Date: 23/01/23

Site description:

The application site was the old car park for Brethen Hall (which has since moved) . It is located on the south-western side of Redlands Road, with access also off Redlands Road. The site is designated for residential development in ER1d - Land adjacent to 40 Redlands Road according to Reading Borough Council's Proposals Map.

The site is located on an area of archaeological significance and within the Kendrick Road conservation area. A green link runs along Redlands Road.

Proposal:

Temporary planning permission (5 years) is sought to change the use of the existing Brethen Hall car park to an NHS car park for staff of the Royal Berkshire Hospital. The NHS are leasing the car park from the hall. The change of use has already occurred (during the course of this application) and so the application is retrospective.

The existing car park was previously used by a religious group at Brethen Hall who have relocated. The hall is currently empty. Permission is sought for the change of use from a non-designated NHS car park to a car park to be used by RBH critical care NHS staff. The staff will need to meet a strict criteria. 76 parking spaces would be provided. The car park comprises of gravel and tarmac. Limited works are proposed, primarily just the formalisation of parking spaces are proposed.

The car park will be open between 7am - 7pm weekdays, Outside of these days and times, the site will be locked and gates secured.

RBH security are responsible for opening and closing the gates between these hours. They will also patrol the site during the day.

Information Submitted:

Aboricultural Report prepared by Sylva Consultancy

Received 4th May 2022

Supporting Statement

Received 25th January 2022

7040.100 - Location & Site Plan

7040.101 - Existing Site

7040.102A - Proposed Plan
CIL Form
Application Form
Planning Statement

Received 8th December 2021

Relevant Planning History:

10/00990/CLE - Certificate of lawfulness for existing use for the land at the rear to be used as part of car-park for gospel hall - Application Permitted

(01/00147/FUL) - Change of use of land from vacant land to use as a parking area for adjoining meeting hall (this was the specific parcel behind no. 40 Redlands Road) - Application Withdrawn

Consultation:

Internal consultees:

Transport - No objection subject to conditions

Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) - No comments received

Berkshire Archaeology - No objection as no below ground works are proposed

Heritage Officer - No comments received

Ecology - No objection subject to condition

Natural Environment - No objection subject to conditions

Planning Policy - No objection to temporary planning permission

Public consultation:

The following addresses were formally consulted via letter on 15/12/21:

38, 40, 46 Redlands Road
2, 3, 4 Beck Court
48, 48a, 50, 52, 54 Allcroft Road
Gospel Hall, Redlands Road

In addition, a site notice was displayed for 21 days.

5 representations have been received; 4 objections and 1 observation and the following matters were raised:

- Statement regarding previous use is misleading and the previous car park different to that proposed under this application

Officer comment: Officers are aware that supporting statements are subjective documents and therefore confirmation of the existing use of the car park was obtained

- Concern over the hours of operation of the car park and this could result in loss of amenity to neighbours

Officer comment: Opening hours will be conditioned

- Access onto Redlands Road will increase the risks to pedestrians and road users on the already very busy section between Morgan and Allcroft Roads

Officer comment: This has not raised by the Transport Officer in their consultation response

- The current drainage is inadequate. Increased usage by vehicles will only make these things worse, unless appropriate measures are taken by the developer

Officer comment: See appraisal of report

- Want to ensure all lighting is kept at fence level only

Officer comment: A condition will be included to prevent any external lighting being installed without permission from the Local Planning Authority

- Lack of information surrounding security of the car park. Concern over gates being unlocked

Officer comment: The car park will only be open during certain hours, and will be conditioned to be locked outside of those hours

- Proposed car park would increase noise levels substantially

Officer comment: See appraisal of report

- Question the need for the proposed additional parking

Officer comment: See appraisal of report

- Car park has now opened and lighting has been installed

Officer comment: The application is now retrospective. Any installation of external lighting requires separate planning permission from the LPA. This should be reported to the RBC Planning Enforcement team for investigation

Relevant Policies

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021)
National Planning Policy Guidance

Local Policy

Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019)

CC7 Design and the public realm
CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
EN2 Areas of Archaeological Potential
EN3 Enhancement of Conservation Areas
EN12 Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodland
ER1 Sites Located for Development

Appraisal

The main issues to be considered are:

- a) Principle of development
- b) Impact on the surrounding area
- c) Impact on neighbouring amenity
- d) Transport matters
- e) Natural Environment matters

a) Principle of development

The site is currently has been used by Brethen Hall but Officers do note that the proposed car park would be used more intensely than it has been previously. However in pure land use terms, the principle of continuing the use as a car park is accepted (albeit the existing previous car park was associated with the hall, rather than being a stand alone car park) This is subject to meeting other policy criteria as outlined below. It has been established via supporting document that a need for additional parking is required. In summary, it is stated that:

The experience of parking at RBH for all users has been a poor experience for many years, and the Trust has to balance the competing demands of those using the hospital (staff, patients and visitors)

Following recent updated modelling, there is much greater demand for spaces on the RBH site than available. This is even more evident as the NHS emerges from the impact of the pandemic, as all patient services are become increasingly busy as part of the NHS recovery plan. Experience over the last few months, has identified that demand/capacity is going to get worse as the recovery plans are escalated, as there is even more demand from patients, visitors and staff for parking than pre COVID. The current 'lived experience' of parking is inconvenient and annoying at best and distressing at its worst for visitors and staff alike.

It should be noted that the site has been allocated for residential use within policy ER1. The continuation of the site as a car park will not preclude future residential development being put forward for consideration. The use of a car park would not require ground works and therefore would not substantially alter the land to jeopardise its potential use as residential. This was agreed with by the Planning Policy Manager, and due to the temporary nature of the proposal, would not preclude a future scheme coming forward in the future. However, a temporary permission was agreed by all parties as a suitable way forward to allow for a review of the site allocation in 5 years' time. Furthermore, the applicant was amenable to a temporary permission given the long term location of the Royal Berkshire Hospital also being uncertain.

b) Impact on surrounding area

The car park is set back from the road and behind gates. No works are proposed to the car park. As such, the visual impact will remain the same as the existing situation, albeit with more vehicle movements during the course of the day. As such, the proposal is not considered to have a substantially harmful impact on the Conservation Area. Concerns from neighbours have been made about drainage. Given no works are proposed, it would be unreasonable to require a drainage strategy for this specific proposal. However, this matter could be discussed with the Council's Building Control department about effects to the land and neighbouring property.

c) Impact on neighbouring amenity

Policy CC8 states that *'Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:*

- *Privacy and overlooking;*
- *Access to sunlight and daylight;*
- *Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;*
- *Harm to outlook;*
- *Noise and disturbance;*
- *Artificial lighting;*
- *Vibration;*
- *Dust and fumes;*
- *Smell;*
- *Crime and safety; or*
- *Wind, where the proposals involve new development of more than 8 storeys.*

Several neighbour representations have been concerned regarding the impact of the car park on neighbouring residents. Specifically, noise generated from the car park (if it is to be used 24/7) and the subsequent impact this would have on the enjoyment of residential gardens.

The applicant has confirmed the car park would only be in use Monday - Friday (07:00 - 19:00). RBH security will be responsible for opening and closing the gates between these hours. They will also patrol the site during the day. Therefore the car park would not be in use in evenings and at weekends. Outside of opening times the gates would be locked. Whilst some additional noise would be generated, it is not considered that this would be continuous throughout the day. Critical care staff will park when arriving to work, with shifts lasting a number of hours, at which time cars will be stationary. A large proportion of the spaces will be located away from residential development.

External lighting will also be controlled via condition to ensure that neighbouring residents are not adversely affected by excessive light pollution. It is noted that lights have already been installed without permission, however the applicant has been advised they would be in breach of their permission and so should address this.

c) Transport matters

It has been confirmed that the existing hall is not currently in use. As such, there are no users of the hall using the car park. The proposal is considered acceptable from a highways/ pedestrian safety perspective subject to a condition that the car park will be exclusively used by NHS staff during the operational hours of the car park; if others were to use the car park, additional Transport surveys would be required to demonstrate there

would be no negative impact on the public highway. Given the car park is leased by the NHS, it will unlikely be possible for other users to use the car park too.

A condition will also be applied ensuring the parking spaces are retained at all times in the interests of highway safety.

Subject to these conditions, the proposal is deemed acceptable in relation to Policies TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

d) Natural Environment matters

Ecology

The changes appear to be cosmetic, and it is considered unlikely that bats (or other protected species) will be affected by the proposals.

However, there are a number of bat roosts within the area and any increase of lighting will have an adverse effect on bats and other wildlife. A condition should be set to ensure that any new lighting is designed to minimise adverse effects on bats and other wildlife:

No new lighting is to be installed without the prior written permission of the local planning authority.

Reason: To limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on nature conservation in accordance with paragraph 185 of the NPPF and policy EN12 of the Local Plan 2019.

Trees

One tree (Horse chestnut) in the centre of the site is subject to TPO 99/01 and other trees are present on the perimeter.

The application seeks permanent use of the car park for the NHS and involves formalising this by tarmacking the current informal (gravel) parts of the land which was used by the Hall for parking. It is normal and reasonable in such situations to seek some landscaping to soften the formalised significant expanse of hard surfacing and, in this case, to improve the rooting environment of the TPO tree.

An arboricultural report acknowledges the TPO on the Horse chestnut tree and confirms incursion into its RPA for parking bays 41-45 (currently gravel) and for the in/out route. However an arboricultural method statement is still required to support the report.

As such, further landscaping details and an arboricultural method statement will be secured via conditions. These were to be pre-commencement conditions, however during the course of the application the change of use occurred. Therefore Officers are requesting these details are submitted within 1 month of the date of the permission.

Conclusion

Whilst the proposed car would be used at a greater intensity than the current situation, it is considered that the harm would be less than substantial with the inclusion of conditions to preserve neighbour amenity and surrounding conservation area. On balance, the benefits of the scheme to help The Royal Berkshire Trust adequately provide for its staff is a positive of the scheme.

Recommendation: **GRANT**, subject to conditions:

1. Temporary 5 year permission
2. AP1
3. Vehicle parking as specified
4. Hours of operation
5. No lighting to be installed without separate permission from the Local Planning Authority
6. Spaces only to be used by NHS staff during opening hours
7. Within 1 month of the date of this permission, an AMS to be submitted
8. Within 1 month of the date of this permission, landscaping details to be submitted

Informatives:

1. Terms
2. Positive and Proactive