

Design and Access Statement

Wellbeing Centre
17 Craven Road, Reading

For Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

Introduction

The house at 17 Craven Road is owned by the Royal Berkshire Hospital NHS Foundation Trust who plan to convert it to a Wellbeing Centre for the benefit of the Trust's staff.



The Building

Details of the history of the building can be found in the Heritage Impact Report which forms part of this application. In short, the building is Grade II-listed and has been in the ownership of the Trust since 1997 when it was purchased from Reading School. The building has been used by the Trust for a number of purposes since its acquisition, but in recent times has fallen into a poor state of repair meaning that it has been disused for about two years.

Listed Building Applications were approved in February 2021 for removal of damaged timbers and plaster due to damp/water ingress (201729) and for repairs to the roof (201730). These works are now being carried out to make the building safe. This application is to convert the repaired building into a new use.

The Wellbeing Centre

The building will be used solely for the wellbeing of the NHS staff employed at Royal Berkshire Hospital. It will provide a space where personal and group issues can be discussed in one-to-one and open forum and provide stress-free environment away from the workplace offering gym facilities, activity spaces for yoga and pilates, and spaces for quiet reflection. In addition, there is a large garden which will be a private space for the staff to use.

There is currently a small wellbeing space in the TEC Building on the main hospital campus, but this sits adjacent to clinical support services and therefore does not offer users a clear break away from the workplace. Number 17 Craven Road will expand the facilities on offer and will allow staff a clear break from their working environment.

The works to convert 17 Craven Road will be funded using both NHS capital money and charitable funds.

The Proposals

External Works - Landscape

Whilst ensuring the security of those using the facility, we are keen to make the frontage of the site as open and welcoming as possible, which will also present the façade of the building to its best.

To the north side of the site there is a garage, in which is stored gardening equipment and a tractor/trailer used by the Trust's groundskeepers. To prevent unauthorised access to the garage and down the path between the garage and the house, we propose a close-boarded fence with a pair of timber gates.

The staff using the Wellbeing centre will have access to the rear garden. At present this is open to the street as there is no barrier between the Wellbeing centre and the cycle store. We are proposing cast iron railings to separate the garden from the frontage, with access-controlled gates to give direct access to the garden and to the cycle store without having to enter the building. In the past staff have crossed the road to have lunch in the garden and we wish this to continue.

The front entrance to the house will need to be modified to provide level access. We propose re-laying the tarmac drive to a gradual slop up to the internal floor level with steps down to the north side. The front door and screen (which is in very poor condition) will need to be modified as part of its repair to suit the new ground level.

The new tarmac and steps will prevent vehicles using the frontage as a turning area, though there will be space for maintenance vans to gain access and park. This access will be controlled by removable bollards.

The scope of this work extends as far as the retaining wall immediately to the rear of the property. The garden beyond this is extensive and will be subject to a separate application for its restoration as and when funds to carry out the work are available.

External lighting and CCTV are part of the new security strategy and the locations of cameras and lights are shown on drawings.

External Works – Repairs to the Stonework

A survey has been carried out by OG Stonemasonry to determine the extent of repair works required to the external fabric of the building. Fortunately, the external stone is in better condition than the internal fabric, and our proposed works comprise some stone cleaning, re-pointing and some pin repairs to cracked mullions and transoms and also to re-bed the coping stones.

There are a few examples of severely eroded stones which we intend to replace, as well as filling in some holes which were once ventilation holes for the plant room. All these repairs and replacements are shown on the elevation drawings.



Stone beside main entrance



Example of cracking to transom and window head

External Works – Roof and Rainwater Drainage

The works to the roof have been previously approved under Listed Building Consent 201730.

However, further inspection on site has identified shortcomings in the disposal of rainwater off the roof which has in part led to the internal water ingress problems. We propose one new outlet, hopper and downpipe on the front (west) elevation as shown on the elevation drawings. Existing cast iron pipe that were hidden by ivy have been found to be in a poor state of repair and it is proposed to replace these. There are also two upvc downpipes which will also be replaced in cast iron.



Rainwater pipe to east elevation after ivy has been removed.

The lead flat roof to the bays and the north-west corner are also to be replaced in code 6 lead with wood roll joints to match the existing layout.

External Works – Rear Retaining Wall

There is a raised terrace to the rear of the building (east) overlooking the garden. This terrace is formed by a curved retaining wall, which has in the main collapsed due to neglect.

Our new retaining wall follows the same shape in plan, and comprises a concrete foundation and wall, which will be faced in the original stone salvaged from the garden. The concrete wall will allow a cast iron balustrade to be fitted to the top of the wall to allow the terrace to be used safely by the staff.



Remains of existing retaining wall

External Works – Rear Courtyard

There are two outbuildings in the brick extension to the rear of the property. The more substantial of these, designated G21 on our plans, will be retained and refurbished as plant space. Opposite this is G22, a lean-to structure that has collapsed due many years of rainwater from the main roof discharging onto the roof of this structure with no downpipe to take it away. We propose to demolish this structure, increasing the size of the courtyard which will be paved in blue brick pavers to match the adjacent external areas. The rainwater pipe from the main roof will be extended and will be connected to new drainage.



Courtyard area with structure G22 to be demolished. Note rainwater discharge from main roof onto roof of this structure.

Internal alterations

Platform Lift

To maximise the utilisation of the building, we propose to install a platform lift. The nature of the first floor layout, with its change in floor levels, will prevent the lift from serving all of the rooms but will give access to the four key spaces.

Choosing the location of the lift to provide maximum access with the least effect on the building has been a major design challenge. Its chosen location is to the rear in a room that was previously the plant room. This room has in the past been modified removing most of its original features: the ceiling has been replaced with plasterboard without any cornice detail and the room has also suffered fire damage from a faulty boiler.



Rear room in front of chimney breast is location for new platform lift

The floor in G02/08/G17 will need to be replaced due to the germination of spores of the true Dry Rot fungus (*Serpula lacrymans*) which has brought about the breakdown of the timber.

The floor structure to F11 will also need to be replaced for the same reason, and it is proposed to introduce two steel beams to trim the lift shaft and reduce the spans of the new floor joists.

Room F11, which will be used as a small office, has been altered in the past when the corridor was built to by-pass the main stair. The walls we propose to remove are modern stud partitions and the generous ceiling height means that the lift structure will not interfere with the ceiling and cornice.

The floor level where the lift lands at the first floor is to be built up to allow access to the main rooms (F03, F04, F06 and F08) and two new steps will be introduced in the corridor F10.

On the ground floor, access to lift will be through a new archway from the main hallway G02. This opening will be lined with timber panelled reveals and fitted with architraves to match adjacent doorways, and the skirting in the hallway will be extended into this space. The lobby will also incorporate an accessible wc.

Ground Floor – Other Alterations

Two changing rooms are being provided (G17 and G18) for those using the gym facilities. G17 is created from the subdivision of the room that now incorporates the lift, and G18 is created by partitioning the former kitchen to allow a corridor for access from the rear staircase to the back garden.

The entrance lobby G01 is to have its floor level built up to match that of the hallway G02 to allow level access into the building from the amended external levels.

First Floor – Alterations

Yoga/Pilates Room Floor

The front south-western room on the first floor (F04) is to be used as a yoga and pilates room. Whilst this usage does not lead to excessive floor loadings, in order to comply with current structural standards, we will need to strengthen this floor. We propose to incorporate a steel beam within the depth of the floor. This is shown on the structural engineer's drawings. It is intended that the beam can be installed from above if required – this is dependent upon how much of the ceiling to room G04 below can be saved as part of the damp treatment works.

Staircase

The modern glazed screen at the top of the staircase has been removed due to the timber being infected with dry rot. We are hoping not to have to install a new screen (discussions are ongoing with the Building Control Officer) to restore the landing to its original configuration. We also hope to open up the archway between the stair F01 and corridor F10, again subject to building control advice. This archway originally gave access from the stair F01 to corridor F10 and the north end of the building, and will provide natural borrowed light from the lantern into corridor F10 as well as reinstating the view of the lantern and curved stair from this viewpoint.



The glazed screen at the top of the stairs (left) and the archway between F01 and F10 (right)

Access

We have described above the difficulties encountered in providing full access to all areas of the building. The solution of the ramped level access and the installation of the lift in the chosen location provides the best solution to give access to the whole of the ground floor, including provision of a new accessible wc, and to the principal rooms on the first floor.