

To whom it may Concern

Ref :- Planning Application for Change of Use to the Existing Car Park attached to the,
Gospel Hall of Plymouth Brethren, 40 Redlands Road, Reading. RG1 5HE

Supporting Statement

The Royal Berkshire Hospital site poses a number of challenges for travel and transport planning. The central location, local road network and restricted nature of the site all contribute to congestion, environmental quality issues and lack of capacity that affect all methods, and purposes, of transport.

Like many public bodies the RBHT Trust is under considerable pressure to consider and reduce its environmental impact and is obliged to meet its Social Responsibility commitments. It must therefore commit to implementing a strategy that manages its environmental impact (particularly from traffic congestion and emissions from vehicles) if it is to play its part in ensuring that local air quality targets are met.

Travel and transport is also a high priority topic for Reading Borough Council, with many synergies with the challenges and vision that the Trust has.

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) The RBH travel and transport plan was developed to compliment the Reading Borough Council Local Transport Plan 3 and in compliance with Health Technical Memorandum 07-03 NHS car-parking management: environment and sustainability.

A number of factors contribute to the ways in which people (patients, staff and visitors) travel to the hospital, including; requirements to travel during the working day, whether they feel able and safe to walk, run or cycle and whether facilities are adequate to support these, the distance and time taken, how well public transport meets their needs, the availability of parking and the capacity of the local road network and other indirect factors such as carer responsibilities.

In July 2020 The RBH Executive Management Committee agreed the Travel and Transport plan which identified that good alternatives to driving to RBH for staff and reducing the number of cars arriving at RBH were required. The following proposals were agreed in principle:

Improvements to encourage active travel including secure cycle parking, improved shower and change facilities. This includes a dedicated centre on-site for active travel.

A change from parking enforcement to parking management

Actions

Based on the demand projections and the need to balance patient, visitor and staff demand to;

Lease additional spaces off site for RBH staff, and
Allocate more space within the multi-storey car park to patient, visitor and blue badge holders

Evaluate the requirement a shuttle bus

Change the criteria/allocation of permits to 'match' the location of available spaces

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.

There is a significant under provision of spaces to meet the demand of many of the groups of users. Therefore to meet patient & visitor and staff demand additional spaces are required, as well as promotion and encouragement to use alternative forms of travel.

It is noticeable that more staff are choosing active travel for their commute to work, and it is hoped that continued promotion of shower, change and cycle facilities and the popular new cycle to work loan scheme will encourage more to shift away from cars and parking.

At the same time, it is noted that there is still an element of reluctance amongst some staff to return to using bus transport, particularly on the busier routes. We continue to work with Reading Buses on this and highlighting the safety measures that they are taking as well as the increasing number of buses offered.

With regard to Patients and Visitors (P&V), due to social distancing and reduced waiting capacity for patients and anyone who accompanies they are, in many cases, advised to wait in their vehicles until called and/or just before their appointment time, continuing pressure on parking spaces.

The solutions

Provide better quality, better managed parking: Promote good alternatives to driving by increasing and promoting active travel options

Increase and promote alternative travel options

Secure additional off-site parking spaces for dedicated critical care staff, hence the requirement for parking at Brethren Hall and this application.