

Design and Access Statement

Spire Dunedin Hospital

Internal alterations within the existing main building at Dunedin Hospital to provide upgraded MRI scanning and outpatient facilities

Introduction

This Design and Access Statement supports the planning application submitted for the new MRI scanning suite and refurbished outpatient's facilities within the main building at Spire Dunedin Hospital, Reading.

The current MRI is located in a separate building on the Hospital site, built in 2009. This is considered as a temporary facility and has had several planning applications submitted and consents granted for an extension of authorized use. The most recent planning application, submitted February 2019, is currently under consideration by the planning authority. This relates to permission to extend the existing temporary permission for a further 3-year period which allows for the design and development of the new permanent MRI suite.

The design team have developed the proposals in conjunction with MRI specialists and Spire Dunedin's Clinical teams to enable an internal reconfiguration to accommodate the new MRI Suite and relocated Outpatient Department within the existing building.

Location

Dunedin Hospital is located on Bath Road to the west of Reading town centre and includes 16 – 22 Bath Road as well as 37 & 39 Downshire Square. The main hospital site is relatively compact containing the hospital building, 16-20 Bath Road. Number 22 Bath Road is a standalone large former residential property and 37 and 39 Downshire Square two former dwellings now used to house administrative facilities, which are located to the north of the main hospital building.

The site is located on the edge of the Downshire Square Conservation Area where policies identified in section EN3 of the recently approved Reading Borough Local Plan seek proposals to respect or enhance the architectural and visual qualities of the area. There is only a small area of the site within this Conservation Area which is relatively inconspicuous and located to the rear of the buildings fronting Downshire Square and Bath Road. The area around the hospital is characterised by residential and institutional uses along Bath Road with predominantly residential areas beyond.

Proposals

Dunedin Hospital has earned a long-standing reputation for providing high quality private medical care to patients in Berkshire and the Thames Valley area. The hospital offers a full range of in and outpatient services including health screening and checks as well as acute and minor surgery.

The hospital makes extensive use of MRI scanning, a non-invasive imaging technology that produces three dimensional detailed anatomical images. It is often used for disease detection, diagnosis, and treatment monitoring and it is critical that MRI scanning facility is maintained at the Dunedin Hospital. The proposed development retains this important service but in a permanent location.

The proposed works principally involve internal re-planning within the existing main building to relocate the outpatient department making space to accommodate the MRI suite (re-sited from the adjacent building). The proposals do not result in the creation of any additional floor area. However a significant amount of mechanical and electrical upgrading is required in order to service the new facilities and additional new plant needs to be accommodated externally. The intention is to locate this in discrete areas that are generally not highly visible and to conceal this as much as possible.

The new plant, ductwork and quench pipe serving the new MRI must be in close proximity to the imaging suite. Following design considerations this new department is located within the single storey part of the Hospital to allow this new quieter plant to be concealed behind the existing high retaining wall that runs along the northern side of the hospital car park and the adjacent stepped access. It is set into the bank at the lowest ground level possible which assists in lowering the outline of the ductwork giving maximum screening. In addition, the area is partially obscured by planting from the south and west and a new screening fence is proposed. The Quench Pipe location through the roof has also been considered and will be detailed appropriately.

In order to accommodate the scanner in this location the existing roof structure requires internal modification to beams and roof trusses. To undertake the works the roof will be stripped and using existing tiles where possible reinstated to follow its original profile. There will be no change to the current ridge height and roof configuration.

The existing external plant facing Bath Road (A4155) and Lima court will be rationalised with new updated and more efficient quieter plant to serve the relocated outpatient department. This will generally be located on the land to the east of the hospital which is set at a significantly lower level than the main road so it will not be easily visible from the south. It will not impact on the adjacent neighbours in the apartment properties to the east of the site, accessed from Lima Court. Only a small number of these properties have windows facing the hospital site as the blocks are predominantly orientated east/west with windows facing north and south. In addition, the parking courtyard associated with the flats is located adjacent to the eastern boundary of the site with a continuous run of 15 garages following the boundary. The new plant is further obscured by the hospital's brick eastern boundary wall and considerable mature planting comprising a mixture of bushes and trees. In addition, screen fencing is being installed where appropriate, whilst maintaining the pedestrian service access.

Conclusion

The proposals will maintain the important MRI facility and relocate the existing outpatient suite. The current capacity of the hospital is not affected and therefore will not generate additional visits or changes to the parking requirements. The proposed location for the new MRI imaging suite gives a more practical solution for use by both patients from the main hospital and day visitors. New more efficient and quieter external plant is to be sited in areas that are generally not visible from the public areas within the site or from outside the site and will be screened as a result of ground level changes, existing planting and tree cover and new screening fences.

As a result of these design considerations, the development will not adversely impact on the neighbours, amenity of the area or detract from the Conservation Area. On this basis, we consider the proposals to accord with planning policy and believe that planning permission should therefore be granted.