

**Planning Applications Committee**  
**2 July, 2009**  
**Section C**

<b>Agenda Number:</b>	<b>C5</b>
<b>Section/Area: I</b>	OUTER
<b>Ward:</b>	NELSON
<b>Officer:</b>	Malcolm Dixon
<b>Valid Date:</b>	29th April 2009
<b>Application No:</b>	09/00292/F
<b>Site Address :</b>	Colman Hospital Unthank Road Norwich NR2 2PJ
<b>Proposal:</b>	Provision of 'supa-trac' loose applied car park system to create 13 temporary overspill car park spaces which include the re-provision of 4 spaces lost to the new extension to Pine Cottage.
<b>Applicant:</b>	<b>NHS Norfolk</b>
<b>Agent:</b>	<b>Anglia Support Partnership</b>

**THE SITE**

The site is located within the Unthank and Christchurch Conservation Area. It comprises 7 detached buildings scattered across the site, providing a variety of health related facilities and support functions.

The proposal involves a grassed 'paddock' area (600sq.m) with hedges on the northern, eastern and southern boundaries, located in the NW corner of the site. To the north-west there is a terraced block of flats.

18 trees have been identified on the perimeter of the car park and alongside the proposed highway access, all within the overall hospital curtilage. Although it is adjacent to Colman Road (part of the Ring Road), there is no direct access.

The main functions of the site involve Specialist Palliative Care and Neurological Rehabilitation (SNR). The unit can accommodate up to 44 'in patient' and 24 'day patients' involving 70 staff. Catchment covers the whole of the Norfolk area and some patients require accommodation, sometimes for up to a year. The nature of the use means that friends and families tend to visit the facilities on a more regular basis than visitors to other hospitals. Department of Health guidelines encourage allowing patients to reside at home where possible (Outreach Services) and this means that staff are more dependent on car use to engage with Outreach patients and to carry necessary equipment across the County. Outreach staff are centrally based in order to improve communication (including accessing computerised and paper records) and give access to all equipment and specialist services.

## **PLANNING HISTORY**

4/1992/0730 - Erection of bicycle store and internal alterations. (Approved 14/10/1992)

4/1995/0855 - Removal of landscaping to create additional parking spaces. (Approved 29/11/1995)

05/00988/F - Construction of single-storey office extension to the Pine Cottage (Approved 05/12/2005)

07/00017/F - Additional car parking spaces in landscaped area to rear of 9 - 29 Mornington Road. (Refused 21/03/2007)

## **THE PROPOSAL**

Following the previous refusal for a permanent car park, on the grounds that the proposal involved the loss of an area designated as urban green space on a site which is also within a Conservation Area, adverse impact on tree roots and the lack of a Green Travel Plan, the applicants believe that the main concerns have been addressed by the submission of the details included in the present application, including supplementary tree planting.

The scheme now involves a 'Supa-Trac' loose applied car park system of a temporary nature, to create 13 car park spaces (which includes the re-provision of 4 spaces lost to the new extension to Pine Cottage) for staff and an access road (of the same material) linking from the existing car park adjacent to Pine Cottage to the north.

The applicants have supplied information regarding the proposed 'Supa-Trac' surfacing, i.e. that this is a durable non permanent surfacing system which is profiled to spread loading over a wide area. It therefore ensures that there is minimum impact on soil structure and little or no impact on tree roots at a depth

of 150mm or more. The material lies on top of the original surface, without the need for any hard engineering works, thus ensuring no damage to the integrity of the soil.

The applicants have requested permission for a 5 year temporary period taking into account shorter term budgetary constraints, in order to realise Travel Plan aspirations, including for example the potential to relocate some Outreach Services, expanding the pool car system and provision of further bicycle storage facilities.

The application is accompanied by a Design and Access Statement, supporting evidence with regard to the main functions of the NCH and an Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA), giving consideration to the following:

### **Access and Transport**

The applicants have indicated that the PCT and hospital are both developing Transport Plans. The traffic related issues relate to:

- 3 shift rota system in operation for 24 hours throughout the year.
- Staff encouraged to use public transport where possible.
- 3 pool cars are available and system may be expanded.
- 2 cycle shelters are available and a third is proposed.
- There are 70 car parking spaces on site including 3 disabled bays; a car parking survey was carried out over the summer of 2008 and 35% of users are visitors. Across the ten dates the number of staff parking cars ranged between 68 and 102 with an average of 83, whilst visitor parking averaged 46.
- A Health and Safety Executive visit raised concerns over the pressure for parking illustrated by cars blocking footpath access particularly for wheel chair users.
- Parking on grassed areas has also impacted upon the landscape amenity value of the grounds.

### **Trees**

The AIA identifies Root Protection Areas to avoid damage when the surface is laid. 4 trees have been identified as having visual amenity value, 13 trees of little amenity value and 1 which is suspected of being diseased, a Monterey Cypress with a life expectancy of less than 10 years. This together with one hawthorn tree and a Liquidambar on the route of the access road are the only trees which are recommended for removal.

A replanting and supplementary planting scheme will be pursued and, where pruning is required in connection with any retained planting, this will be carried out before construction commences and a 5 year maintenance programme is proposed.

## CONSULTATIONS

**Norfolk County Council Strategic Highways:** No significant impact on the Strategic Highway Network therefore no objections.

**Transportation:** Unusual situation involving several uses on one site, including outreach services, thus putting greater pressure for parking not directly comparable to more typical nursing homes and day care centres. Movement towards the introduction of a Travel Plan is welcome and the proposal provides a solution which helps to avoid pressure for on street parking in the surrounding area.

**Conservation:** No adverse comments received

**Landscape:** Concern that the temporary car park may become permanent, but a discrete site.

**Tree Protection:** Proposal on a temporary basis will improve on the existing situation where parking takes place informally on grassed areas within the site. The 'Supatrac' system will reduce the risk of potential compaction damage to root systems. Proposed tree planting is acceptable.

### **Third Parties:**

The application was advertised in the press and on site given the Conservation Area status of the site. Thirteen neighbouring properties have been consulted and one response has been received objecting on the grounds that the application:

- Will lead to overspill parking creating an eyesore in a 'garden' area.
- Will generate more local traffic
- Does not provide a serious attempt to deliver a proper 'Transport Plan'
- Does not include adequate survey/analysis information on car journeys and consideration of alternative modes of transport
- Short sighted temporary fix

## PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

### **Relevant Planning Policies:**

#### **National**

PPS1	Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS1 Supplement	Planning and Climate Change
PPG13	Transport
PPG 15	Planning and the Historic Environment

### **East of England Plan**

NR1	Norwich Key Centre for Development and Change – modal shift
ENV7	Quality in the built environment

### **Local Plan**

HBE8	Development in Conservation Areas
SR3	Development leading to loss of open space/urban greenspace
TRA3	Encouraging modal shift
TRA6	Parking standards
TRA7	Cycle parking
TRA12	Travel Plans
AEC2	Local Community Facilities in Centres

### **Principle of the Proposed Use**

An extension to Pine Cottage, referred to above, has led to the loss of 4 car parking spaces and the application has been submitted in order to address this shortfall and to cope with additional parking pressure that has occurred as a result of the reliance on motor vehicles generated by the nature of the uses on site, as referred to above.

However, the application falls to be considered in the context of the previous refusal and the previous grounds for refusal are assessed in turn:

#### **1) Landscape Impact (Policy SR3 and HBE8)**

It remains the case that the site does impact on the Urban Green Space and the Conservation Area, however the change in surfacing does mitigate against possible long term effects. As referred to above in The Proposal section, its design is such that existing mature trees will not be unduly affected, as confirmed by the Tree Protection Officer, and therefore the setting will not be undermined. Furthermore the applicants have agreed to carry out supplementary tree planting which over time will become established and enhance the area.

Assuming the development is only for a temporary period and the long term objective is to reduce reliance on car use, the area will therefore revert to its original condition with the benefit of additional tree planting.

#### **2) Trees (Policy HBE8)**

As stated above and as confirmed by the Tree Protection Officer, other than trees required to be removed as indicated in the AIA, no other trees are

affected by the proposal, thus the amenity value of the area is preserved and, as stated above, will in time will be enhanced by further tree planting.

### **3) Additional Parking and Lack of Green Travel Plan (Policies TRA5 and 6)**

It remains the case that by encouraging further parking, the proposal would normally conflict with government and local planning policy. However, as referred to above, a car parking survey has been undertaken to demonstrate that there is a significant demand for such a facility. The survey does not detail specific times of peak parking demand, nonetheless it clearly demonstrates that there is a significant amount of pressure on car parking space from both staff and visitors alike. Therefore a short term solution appears essential in order to allow the hospital to function properly and to provide the wider related community benefits as outlined above. On this basis it is considered that, although there would be a conflict with normal policy considerations, a temporary permission would offer a short term pragmatic solution to meet a functional requirement and, as such, could be considered as sufficient justification to outweigh the policy conflict in this instance.

Before concluding that this option provided the best solution, the applicants considered another alternative to resolve the parking dilemma i.e. using landscaped areas within the core of the site. However this was dismissed on the basis that it would involve sacrificing landscape features which provide enjoyment for patients and offer general amenity value, whereas the site presently under consideration is less important to patient care given its relatively isolated position. In addition, provision of this facility for staff will free up existing car parking spaces for visitors. The merits of the proposal are supported by the view expressed by the Transportation Service as outlined above.

Turning to the Travel Plan, the applicants have acknowledged the need for a Travel Plan and have agreed to commit themselves to this process. Therefore appropriate conditions can be imposed on the grant of permission to achieve this objective and to seek less reliance on car use in the future. This may be achieved by the applicants agreeing to promote alternative modes of transport and to consider relocating/decentralising their Outreach Services, therefore reducing parking pressure on site.

However, if members are minded to accept the recommendation and grant permission for a temporary period, then it is suggested they do so whilst bearing the following in mind. No matter how well meaning the applicants intentions are, there is the possibility that the applicant may consider that the use continues to be needed on site in 5 years time. It is considered that the information supplied to date does not offer sufficient comfort to signify that significant changes are necessarily deliverable within the requested 5 year time frame.

Consequently, members are therefore advised that if the applicant considers that, despite their current intentions, the need for the overspill car park continues to exist, in 5 years time consideration would have to be given to whether it would be appropriate to renew or resist the renewal of the temporary permission for the car park or possibly consider the continued use of the car park on a more permanent basis.

## **Other Considerations**

### **A) Public Service Facility**

Obviously the Hospital provides a significant county wide community and public service for patients and visitors alike and therefore the merits of the proposal must be considered in the context of the spirit of Policy AEC2, which seeks to promote community facilities such as doctors and dentists. Although not directly applicable, the hospital provides a valuable service for the benefit of the community. The interim solution in advance of a Travel plan, by the provision of temporary staff car parking is considered expedient in terms of supporting this valuable resource.

### **B) Detail**

The surface is of temporary construction which will not unduly affect or impact upon tree roots as confirmed by the Council's Landscape Officer. However, taking into account PPG15 advice at Para 4.14, it is also the case that development should 'preserve or enhance' the character or appearance of Conservation Areas. In normal circumstances, it is unlikely that a car park in isolation would be likely to achieve either of these aims. However, in this particular case, given that the impact will only be for a temporary period and, bearing in mind that existing parking pressure is having an impact on existing landscaping features (as also confirmed by the Tree Protection Officer), it is considered that the proposal will lead to landscaping benefits in the longer term. As stated above, it is considered that supplementing the present level of screening by additional tree planting will enhance the area on a permanent basis.

## **Conclusion**

PPS1 advocates social inclusion and the specific community based nature of the hospital use would conform with this objective. To support the use in the short term, it is suggested that a temporary permission for 5 years would be appropriate as requested by the applicants. This will hopefully give them sufficient time to produce a Travel Plan which can address the evident concerns relating to this site and in the longer term achieve less reliance on the use of cars.

This view is reinforced by taking into account the fact that in the main existing trees will not be significantly affected and that supplementary tree planting will be undertaken, thus benefiting the area in the long term.

Finally, it is considered that, on balance, the temporary solution provided by this scheme has addressed previous concerns as referred to in the refusal notice and therefore the proposal can be supported. This is tempered with a word of caution on the basis of the comments under point 3 above, in so far as the use may have to be reassessed in 5 years time as a potential permanent fixture.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

GRANT PLANNING PERMISSION subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Temporary for 5 years
- 2) Submission of Interim Travel Plan within 3 months of permission
- 3) Submission of a FTP within 12 months
- 4) Pre commencement: soft landscaping details, pruning/ removal/ replanting and implementation/ maintenance timetable
- 5) Root Protection
- 7) Restricted to Staff Use only

## **Reasons for Recommendation**

It is considered that, although the expansion of car parking on the site could be considered to conflict with national and local policies, the facility proposed would meet an identified need to support the continued effective operation of a valuable community facility and, by restricting the permission granted to a temporary one, would enable the applicant to undertake and implement a Travel Plan for the site within the 5 year period of consent granted.

The scheme as submitted is also considered acceptable as the method of construction proposed would, in the main, ensure that existing trees will not be affected and supplementary tree planting will be undertaken, providing for, in the longer term, the preservation and enhancement of the area.

Therefore the proposal is considered acceptable in relation to National, Regional and Saved Local Planning Policies: HBE8, SR3, AEC2 and TRA3, TRA6, TRA7 and TRA12 and all other material planning considerations.





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 Site Address - Colman Hospital Unthank Road  
 Scale - 1:1250



**NORWICH**  
**City Council**

DIRECTORATE OF REGENERATION  
 AND DEVELOPMENT

