

2.9 REFERENCE NO - 15/506307/FULL			
APPLICATION PROPOSAL Change of use of offices for use as an Ambulance Community Response Post (Sui Generis class use)			
ADDRESS Offices Next To 1 Transit Works Power Station Road Minster-on-sea Kent ME12 3AD			
RECOMMENDATION Grant subject to conditions and the receipt of amended site plan clarifying the site area and premises			
SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION Application proposes the siting of a valuable community healthcare facility within a location that serves the strategic needs of the ambulance service, and which would not give rise to any serious amenity issues.			
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE Parish Council objection.			
WARD Minster Cliffs	PARISH/TOWN COUNCIL Minster On Sea	APPLICANT South East Coast Ambulance Service NHS Foundation Trust AGENT	
DECISION DUE DATE 12/10/15	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 12/10/15	OFFICER SITE VISIT DATE 19/10/15	
RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (including appeals and relevant history on adjoining sites):			
App No	Proposal	Decision	Date
SW/81/0601	Change of use from garages / workshop to light industrial.	Approved	10.08.81
SW/11/1624	Outline permission for residential development of the site (up to 46 dwellings).	Approved	02.07.12

MAIN REPORT

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

1.01 Application site comprises a detached, single-storey brick building, and an area of hardstanding at Power Station Road, Halfway. However the red edge site plan appears to include a number of other buildings, not relevant to the consideration of this application and therefore I have sought clarification from the applicant on this issue. I will update members further at the meeting.

- 1.02 The building sits adjacent to the highway and to the front of a complex of buildings occupied by a number of different businesses including the Chainstore Massacre retail store and a vehicle repair garage. It has previously been used as offices.
- 1.03 Permission was granted for redevelopment of the whole site (application building and adjacent warehouse building) for residential use, although that permission has recently expired. Members may also be aware of 15/508025, which seeks reserved matters approval for residential development of up to 142 units on the adjacent site, the former HBC engineering works.

2.0 PROPOSAL

- 2.01 The application seeks permission for use of the building as an Ambulance Community Response Post (ACRP), which will serve as a remote base for ambulance crews to station themselves at during shifts. The proposal is part of NHS restructuring which will see ambulance stations replaced with larger Make Ready Centres (MRCs) providing a central base for start and end of shifts, and ACRPs acting as local bases / rest centres for ambulance crews to be stationed at while on shift. The ACRP therefore acts a form of welfare area for the crew, as well as providing a local base from which to respond to calls.
- 2.02 The submitted covering statement explains:

“The office accommodation at Transit Works in Power Station Road in the Halfway area of Sheppey has been identified as a location for an ACRP. Following an extensive search of the local area, the application site was identified as the place that best achieves the strategic aims of the Trust, and will aim to maximise response times to emergencies, ensuring speedy and efficient delivery of services. This will replace the current Ambulance Station in Queenborough, which will enable us to cover the Sheerness, Queenborough and Minster areas more effectively as we struggle to achieve this from the current ambulance station and this new location is more centrally location.

We are proposing to lease the office space at Transit Works and use it as a rest facility for 1 ambulance crew (up to three staff at any one time). Occasionally we may have another vehicle at this location if activity elevates dramatically and is required (at peak summer periods for example) – or it may be located at the roadside at a location in the surrounding area.

There will be no medicines / drugs stored at the ACRP and staff will not be reporting for duty there either – it is simply a facility where crews can rest between jobs, and be properly refreshed to be able to deal with the next emergency call they go to. This ACRP would be in use 24/7 all year round and we have provided a transport statement which details our anticipated movements and noise implications which we may have – which we believe to be minimal.”

2.03 The submitted layout plan shows an ambulance parking bay to the front of the offices, within the existing hardstanding / parking area.

2.04 No external changes to the building are proposed.

3.0 PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

3.01 The site lies within an area of Potential Archaeological Importance, and Environment Agency Flood Zone 3.

4.0 POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

4.01 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) encourage the provision of new or enhanced social and community facilities, recognising the wider benefits that such developments can bring to communities.

4.02 Paragraph 3.182 of the adopted Swale Borough Local Plan 2008 states that *“existing services and facilities are provided by both public and private organisations. In all instances, the Council is keen to encourage facilities to be used to their maximum potential, for the benefit of local residents and visitors, and for them to be expanded when required.”*

4.03 Further to this Policy C1 of the Local Plan states that *“where proposals would meet an identified local need in an accessible location [the Council] will permit development proposals that will help maximise the use of existing public and private community services and facilities, including those that would make them available for wider public use, in locations where shortfalls in local public provision could be met.”*

4.04 Policies E1 and T3 of the Local plan are also relevant, and seek to ensure that developments do not give rise to serious amenity impacts and that adequate parking is provided for all new developments.

5.0 LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

5.01 None.

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.01 Minster Parish Council object to the proposal:

“...on the grounds that the proposal will result in noise and disturbance in a predominately residential area which will impact on the amenities residents might reasonably be expected to enjoy. Also although not material considerations, Minster-on-Sea PC would like to confirm its support for Swale Borough Councils view about vehicle access into Power Station Road that there may be a problem with vehicles parking across the entrance to the site due to the lack of on street parking

restrictions noting that if the proposal goes ahead, these restrictions will take approx. 12 months to introduce. The Parish Council considers the Sheppey Community Hospital Site to offer a better location due to its closer proximity to the main spinal roads.”

- 6.02 The Environment Agency consider the scheme to be low-risk, noting that the building would be a form of amenity block rather than an ambulance station, and would not be seriously affected during a flood event.
- 6.03 Kent Highway Services have no objection, but suggest that the Council may wish to condition the use of the building to prevent conversion to a potentially more intensive ambulance depot.
- 6.04 The Council's Technical Engineer raises no objection, but notes that there are no on-street parking restrictions along Power Station Road and *“whilst there may not be a problem with vehicles parking across the entrance to the site it may be something to be considered.”*

7.0 BACKGROUND PAPERS AND PLANS

- 7.01 The application is accompanied by a full Design & Access Statement, flood risk assessment and transport impact assessment.

8.0 APPRAISAL

- 8.01 The change of use would result in the loss of office accommodation, but I consider the wider community benefits of the proposal to weigh heavily in favour of approving the application. Therefore, whilst I note that no market testing information has been submitted to demonstrate that the building is no longer viable for employment use – as required by Policy B1 of the Local Plan – I consider the development to be acceptable in principle as an exception.
- 8.02 The site lies within the built up area and close to a number of residential properties. I note the Parish Council's concern in regards to noise and disturbance from ambulance movements, but it must be reiterated that this will be an amenity building and not an ambulance station. It is unlikely that the crew / ambulance will be stationed there for the entire duration of the shift, and will only be returning there for refreshment when time allows. It is therefore unlikely that the ambulance siren will be used for long periods of time.
- 8.03 The submitted transport assessment comments:

“Sirens would only be used where and when necessary in accordance with our driver training programme (and is not normally required during the early hours, as their sole purpose is to warn other road users of our presence – bearing in mind the very light amount of traffic there will be during the small hours, this disturbance will be at a minimum). Traffic movements during the night time hours would be very minimal, so

therefore thus noise disturbance would normally at an absolute minimum given the light amount of traffic during these hours.”

- 8.04 Furthermore the Road Vehicles (Construction and Use) Regulations 1986, at paragraph 97, state that “*no motor vehicle shall be used on a road in such manner as to cause any excessive noise which could have been avoided by the exercise of reasonable care on the part of the driver.*” Ambulances leaving the site would therefore not be permitted to sound their sirens unless road conditions made it necessary. Power Station Road is, generally, not highly congested and it is therefore unlikely that the ambulance would use its sirens during anti-social hours.
- 8.05 Use of the building itself is unlikely to generate significant levels of noise. I therefore consider that the use of the site would not give rise to any serious amenity issues for neighbouring residents.
- 8.06 I also note the Parish Council’s suggestion that the ACRP should be located near to the community hospital. However I understand the logic in the Ambulance Service wanting to be on this particular site, as it is roughly equidistant from Sheerness, Minster and Queenborough, and would allow for better response times across the area than if they were located in the centre of Minster.
- 8.07 The potential for vehicles to block the site access is not a reason to refuse planning permission.
- 8.08 I note KHS’ suggestion regarding restricting the use of the site, and have included an appropriate condition below to prevent the use intensifying.

9.0 CONCLUSION

- 9.01 The application proposes change of use of a single storey office building to an Ambulance Community Response Post, which would serve as a remote amenity building for ambulance crews to rest between calls while away from the main ambulance station (to be relocated to Medway under upcoming restructuring).
- 9.02 The development is acceptable in principle and would not give rise to any serious issues of local amenity or highway safety, and I therefore recommend that planning permission should be granted.

10.0 RECOMMENDATION – GRANT Subject to clarification on the site area/premises and the following conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which the permission is granted.

Reasons: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The ambulance parking bay shown on the submitted plan shall be kept available for such use at all times and no permanent development, whether permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (or any order revoking or re-enacting that Order) or not, shall be carried out on the land so shown (other than the erection of a private garage or garages) or in such a position as to preclude vehicular access thereto; such land and access thereto shall be provided prior to the occupation of the dwelling(s) hereby permitted.

Reasons: Development without adequate provision for the parking of cars is likely to lead to car parking inconvenient to other road users and in a manner detrimental to highway safety and amenity.

3. The premises shall be used for the purpose of an Ambulance Community Response Post and for no other purpose.

Reasons: In recognition of the terms of the application and in the interests of the amenities of the area.

The Council's approach to this application:

In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Council takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals focused on solutions. We work with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by:

Offering pre-application advice.

Where possible, suggesting solutions to secure a successful outcome.

As appropriate, updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application.

In this instance the application was acceptable as submitted and no further assistance was required.

NB For full details of all papers submitted with this application please refer to the relevant Public Access pages on the council's website.

The conditions set out in the report may be subject to such reasonable change as is necessary to ensure accuracy and enforceability.