

**Application Number**

P/2013/0369

**Site Address**

Former Finance Building  
Torbay Hospital Annexe  
187 Newton Road  
Torquay  
Devon  
TQ2 7BA

**Case Officer**

Mrs Helen Addison

**Ward**

Shiphay With The Willows

**Description**

Partial demolition of existing buildings, refurbishment & extension to remaining to create 300 pupil 'Devon Studio School' and associated parking & landscaping. Change of use of existing C2 (Hospital office/stores) to D1 (School) use

**Executive Summary/Key Outcomes**

The application is for refurbishment and extension of existing buildings on the hospital annex site (on Newton Road) to form a new school that would focus on developing skills for a career in health, early years or social care, for pupils aged 14 to 19. The school would accommodate 300 pupils and would employ the equivalent of 35 full time staff.

The principle of providing the school on this site would be consistent with guidance in the NPPF and policies in the Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011. It would encourage a good link between the school and the hospital. The design of the new extensions would be contemporary, which would contrast with the historic appearance of the existing buildings on the site. This design strategy would be innovative and would result in an exciting, dynamic and high quality environment for the new school.

The site constraints would restrict the availability of on-site parking, necessitating a zero parking strategy for staff and students, and also providing a limited amount of open space.

Further information has been requested in respect of highways, ecology, the design of the building and S106 contributions. Subject to the receipt of this information the proposal is considered acceptable in principle and would constitute an acceptable form of development on this site.

### **Recommendation**

Subject to the payment of the S106 contribution towards sustainable transport, receipt of the consultation response from Natural England and further information relating to the detailed design of the building and highways; Site Visit; Conditional Approval (conditions at the end of the report)

### **Statutory Determination Period**

The 13 week period for determination expires on 24th July. Subject to receiving the highway contributions, by means of a Unilateral Undertaking, prior to this date the application could be determined within the target date.

### **Site Details**

The application relates to the north western quarter of the existing Torbay Hospital Annex site, situated on the north side of Newton Road.

The site comprises a number of buildings that are predominantly brick and single storey. Newton Road runs along the southern boundary of the annex site, the railway runs along the northern boundary of the site and there is a footpath link from Riviera Way to Newton Road along the western boundary of the site. There is a mature hedge and tree screening along the boundary with the railway line and the western footpath.

There are currently a number of uses on the annex site; including the Rainbow lodge, which is used for out-patient oncology, the pre-school Rainbow nursery, John Parkes unit (a children's developmental nursery care), the Winnicott Centre and Child guidance buildings.

The application site includes the oldest building on the site that dates from 1882 and was originally built as an isolation hospital. It is a two storey building that is currently largely vacant. It is however partly occupied by the hospitals' computer services as a back-up IT communications server space and storage. This

computer server facility is critical to the hospitals IT functioning and because of this and the very large costs that would be involved to relocate it, this service must be retained in-situ. There are a very limited number of parking spaces on the annex site.

The surrounding area is in mixed use. There are a variety of commercial uses along Newton Road including food retail, garages and banks, in addition to the fire station and residential properties. To the south of Newton Road is the main Torbay Hospital campus and buildings complex, which is influential to the character of the area in terms of being the principle employer and activity generator. There is no specific allocation relating to the site in the Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011. The land along the railway line has a wildlife designation.

### **Detailed Proposals**

The application is for partial demolition of buildings on the site together with refurbishment and extension of existing buildings to form a new school to provide places for 300 pupils aged between 14 and 19 years.

The pupils would be split 50/50 between the ages of 14 to 16 and 16 to 19 years. The students would be taught by the equivalent of 35 full time staff. The applicant advises that the proposed school would follow a new state school model and would be the first of its kind in the South West. It will be funded by the Department of Education and South Devon College.

The model seeks to address the gap between what young people require to succeed in life and the skills that the current education system provides. The aim is to support the transition between school and work and to prepare the students to be work ready. The school will focus on developing skills for a career in health, early years or social care. Integrated into their vocational and technical studies will be the national curriculum. The 16-19 year old students will spend 2 days per week off campus doing work experience. The working day will be 9am to 5pm.

The principle of the design of the proposal is to refurbish and extend the existing historic buildings on the site. The main two storey building and large single storey extension to the east would be retained. The existing single storey rear extensions to the main building on the site and the link would be demolished. The Hospital IT Server Hub building would be retained. The outbuilding used for the generator would be retained and three other outbuildings would be demolished.

A new principle entrance would be formed in the single storey building. This entrance building would be of double height, projecting out of the existing building, making it visible from Newton Road. The management suite would be provided adjacent to the entrance to allow visitors and parents immediate access without needing to enter the main body of the school. A large two storey extension would be constructed on the northern side of the main building to form a refectory/multi function space and classroom space. The applicant advises that due to the width constraint of the existing buildings, generally larger classrooms and laboratory space would be provided in the new build element of the two storey extension and single storey link between the two existing buildings. The main plant space would be at roof level.

Parking provision of 8 spaces would be accessed from the main campus site road. A small hard and soft landscaped area would be provided to the north of the refectory.

The design of the new extensions would be contemporary and would contrast with the historic appearance of the existing buildings on the site. They would incorporate modern materials, which would produce a bold and striking appearance. The most striking features would be the new entrance in the east elevation and the external details of the refectory in the north elevation. These both use modern vibrant coloured materials.

### **Summary Of Consultation Responses**

*SWW* No objection

*Natural England* Requests submission of further information relating to bats.

*Environment Agency* Advises the application should be considered against the Best Practice Guide for the disposal of surface water.

*Senior Transport Planner* Requests additional information and contributions of £2.5k for a no loading Traffic Regulation Order and £3.5k for shared use paths to be extended either side of Cadewell Lane.

*Network Rail* No objection in principle but provides advice on requirements for the safe operation of the railway.

*Arboricultural Officer* The proposal includes felling of a mature Monterey Cypress tree. Whilst this tree is important within the grounds of the facility it does not significantly contribute to visual amenities to allow a TPO to be served.

When understood in the context of the benefits of the new facility will contribute to the end user it should not serve to constrain this element of the build. Recommends conditions relating to submission of a landscaping scheme and submission of a detailed arboricultural methodology for changes within the root protection zone.

Devon and Cornwall Police Architectural Liaison Officer- suggests general design principles that are recommended for new schools.

### **Summary Of Representations**

Two letters of objection received that raise the following points;

- Increased amount of traffic on Newton Road
- New cycle lane will be compromised by additional traffic
- Not a suitable place for a school with the present access
- Noise disturbance in a residential neighbourhood
- Objectors house will be unsaleable

From the school consultation event a list of 8 people that attended and 4 comment sheets which raise the following points;

- Excellent opportunity for local young people
- Likes integration of old buildings and new extensions
- More grass needed
- Exciting and innovative concept

The representations have been sent electronically for Members consideration.

### **Relevant Planning History**

Extensive previous planning history relating to the site. Most recent applications are;

P/2012/0385            Construction of raised deck/balcony approx 6.2m Longx1.4mdeep - including stainless steel and glass railings.

Height to top of hand rail from ground 2.3m, Rainbow Day Nursery approved 1.6.12

P/2006/0203 Formation of access for disabled persons to John Parkes Unit approved 19.4.06.

The following applications relating to premises on the opposite side of Newton Road are relevant;

P/2013/0389 Change of use from Car Showroom and Residential Flat to Temporary School ( A1 Use), Torquay Car Centre 126 Newton Road Torquay Temporary consent until 29.8.14 granted 11.6.13

P/2013/0329 Temporary 1 year change of use from C2 (Hospital Administration) to D1 (School). Devon Studio School temporary accommodation, Temporary consent until 29.4.13 granted 15.5.13

### **Key Issues/Material Considerations**

The main issues to be considered at the principle of forming a school for 300 pupils in this location, the design and form of the new building, highways, ecology, landscape and impact on residential amenity.

### **Principle and Planning Policy -**

Paragraph 72 in the NPPF encourages Local Planning Authorities to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to the provision of sufficient choice of school places. It advises that great weight should be given to the creation of schools. In this case the proposed school would offer a different form of education to that currently provided in Torbay, being specifically linked to the health service and offering a significant proportion of vocational training. It is consistent with the objectives of Para.72 of the NPPF.

The proposal would also be consistent with Policies CF1 and CF10 in the Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011 that supports the provision of new schools, subject to complying with a number of criteria relating to design and layout, accessibility and impact on the surrounding area.

Policy CF13 in the Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011 relates to development at Torbay Hospital. On the proposals map it is not shown as applying to the annex site. In this Policy expansion, redevelopment and improvement of facilities is

supported with a restrictive criteria that the campus should be used only for development related to the hospital's primary function of providing health care. As the proposed school would provide education specifically linked to health care it is considered that the proposed use would be consistent with this Policy.

### **Design and Layout -**

The design approach of retaining a number of the historic buildings on the site is considered appropriate and will provide a clear identity to the new school and preserve its historical context. The new extensions to the building would have a modern contemporary appearance in contrast to the existing building. The use of modern architecture and materials would offer a contemporary and innovative approach that would be appropriate in a secondary school.

It is important in a new school to provide well designed buildings that are fit for purpose. A well designed school will lift the spirits and aspirations of everyone that uses it. Our immediate environment influences our mood and behaviour and it is important that the quality of a school environment is high to encourage high values of self esteem in both pupils and teachers. Both staff and pupils will have increased motivation and morale when working in a good quality environment that works well.

The school has been designed to have a simple layout and plan which will result in clear legibility within the school. From the new reception building a clear linear link will lead directly to the multifunction/refectory space which will be the social core of the school with access to all parts of the school including vertical circulation to the first floor. Radiating around the refectory are the teaching spaces and support facilities which the applicant advises will be very visible with simple way finding.

The new entrance building would be of double height and would visually dissect the existing single storey building. It would project forward of the existing building and by reason of its height would be clearly visible. By reason of its scale, height and use of modern materials and form it would provide a immediate, legible and fitting approach to this innovative new school. Functionally it would provide a dramatic, lofty and well lit reception space.

Behind the entrance building and the existing two storey building a new single level link would be provided. The existing two storey building would be retained and extended with a new two storey rear extension. The new extension would link to the main building by means of a transition section. Sitting at first floor and projecting forward in the middle third of the north elevation (facing the railway line) would be a 'floating box' supported on columns. This feature would have a

synergy and language similar to the main entrance feature and would address the external play space. It would extend in height above the roof of the new two storey extension to provide a roof top plant room. This element of the proposed building would be most prominent from Riviera Way. In the summer when the existing trees are in full leaf there would be only glanced views which would increase in prominence in the winter. The distinctive modern appearance of this box structure would enhance the legibility of the school in the surrounding area and would reinforce the modern identity of the school through the use of bright coloured materials and modern signage.

The applicant has been asked to consider reducing the height of the 'box' structure at the rear as there is some concern that it would be visually dominant in terms of height. In addition the applicant has also been asked to look at providing a glazed structure at the rear of the refectory to provide increased light to this room and provide an improved quality of space.

The contemporary design approach to the extensions on the site would be an appropriate strategy for a school in this location and would result in a distinctive building that would be both functional and innovative. Only distance views of the building would be visible in the street scene. It is considered that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on visual amenity in the area and would be consistent with the objectives of Policies BES and BE1 in the Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011.

### **Accessibility -**

In support of the application a Transport Statement and Framework Travel Plan have been submitted. In the Transport Statement it is stated that it is intended that the school would be accessed via the roundabout that currently serves the Annex site from Newton Road. The school will have a zero parking policy for staff and student car parking. A total of eight on-site parking spaces would be provided, with 2 of these being for disabled use, 1 for a pool car and 1 for a minibus, the remainder will serve as non-staff and student visitor spaces.

A drop/off pick up area would be provided on the site, which would be managed by a Marshall. The drop/off pick up area would be capable of accommodating three cars at any one time and signage would be installed to ensure cars move forward as soon as possible. Eighteen cycle stands to accommodate 36 cycles would be provided close to the entrance to the site. Shower, changing and locker facilities would be provided in the building for both staff and students.

The site benefits from a good level of public transport provision, particularly from bus routes. Bus stops on Newton Road benefit from bus shelters and up to date

timetable information. In addition there is a bus service that connects Torre Station with the site. The Travel Plan contains details of how the school will encourage sustainable journeys and monitor and review trips to and from the school.

The Senior Transport Planner has requested the submission of further information about the existing and proposed movements on the site. He has requested provision of a pedestrian link through the site to the nearest bus stop, a direct link to the footpath on the western side of the site and contributions of £2,500 for a no-waiting road traffic order and £3,500 for improvements to the cycle routes in Cadewell Lane.

The Council is currently working with Network Rail and other partners on the potential for the delivery of a new rail halt in the vicinity of the application site. This is likely to either be provided at Edginswell or closer to the site near to Brown's Bridge. In either event the location of the proposed school will work well with a proposed rail halt. The school will provide increased demand to improve the potential for the delivery of the rail halt and in the event that it is delivered the rail halt would provide improved accessibility for the users of the school.

### **Ecology -**

A phase 1 habitat survey identified the need for further Phase 2 surveys to determine if Reptiles and Bats are present on the site. From the Phase 2 reptile survey a maximum of one slow worm was found during any one visit, which equates to a low slow worm population. The bat survey found common pipistrelle bats foraging on the site, and one lesser horseshoe bat was recorded commuting along the woodland in the north of the site. No bats were recorded entering or exiting any of the buildings. The submitted Ecological Impact Assessment proposes a methodology and mitigation strategy to address the impact of the development on reptiles and bats. To mitigate for the potential loss of features by roosting common pipistrelle bats the following would be provided;

- four bat tubes/bricks would be incorporated into the new two storey extension
- two bat boxes would be attached to the western façade of the retained two storey building
- three bat boxes would be installed on retained trees
- A new bat roost would be created in the generator building
- A false floor would be created in the generator building to form a roof void which would have two bat boxes

- A letterbox entrance would be formed in the northern end of the generator building which would allow direct passage of bats into the building.
- Four swift boxes would be provided in the two storey extension.

Natural England's consultation response to the Ecological Impact Assessment is awaited and will be reported at the committee meeting. Following this, conditions should be imposed to ensure that the appropriate ecological mitigation is incorporated into the development.

### **Landscape -**

The northern boundary of the site is made up of Laurel and indigenous shrub and tree planting with a mature Monterey Cypress tree. To the western side of the site the public footpath is flanked with mature limes. On the remainder of the site there is little foliage or trees. Due to the proximity of the Monterey Cypress to the new building it will be necessary to fell it.

The Council's Arboricultural Officer has advised that whilst the Monterey Cypress tree is important within the grounds of the facility, it does not significantly contribute to visual amenities to allow a Tree Preservation Order to be served. When understood in the context of the benefits of how the new facility will contribute to the end user, it should not serve to constrain this element of the build. A proposed landscape schedule has been submitted which includes the planting of a replacement mature oak tree on the site. The landscape schedule also indicates a tree protection barrier will be provided along the western boundaries to protect the existing trees along this boundary.

The proposed development offers very limited open space on the site, which would be on the northern side of the building. It is proposed that this would include stepped free standing concrete benching covered in hardwood cladding to offer a physical edge to the space and it would also offer an informal amphitheatre type structure. Beyond this, additional planting is proposed to reinforce the natural edge of the site and merge with the railway embankment green corridor.

The applicant has been asked to clarify how the school would provide off site sports teaching for pupils given the space constraints on the site.

### **Residential amenity -**

Two local residents have raised concerns about the impact of the activity associated with the school on the amenity of residents in the area.

It is accepted that the site would generate activity and movement. However this should be considered within the context of the character of the surrounding area as a mixed commercial area where there is already a considerable level of activity.

To the east of the site is a supermarket and to the south along Cadewell Lane is one of the main entrances to the hospital. In terms of the proportional increase in vehicular movements in the area, the proposal would be likely to result in a relatively low increase, and it would be difficult to substantiate an objection to the proposal on the grounds of loss of residential amenity given the prevailing context and existing uses at the Annex site.

### **S106/CIL -**

It would be appropriate to seek a contribution towards sustainable transport. Additional information is awaited from the agent to calculate this contribution, which will be based on floorspace and will also include mitigation given the proposed creation of employment (teaching and ancillary staff).

The Senior Transport Planner has requested £2,500 for a no loading Traffic Regulation Order on Newton Road and £3, 5000 for shared use paths to be extended either side of Cadewell Lane.

### **Conclusions**

In conclusion, the proposal constitutes an investment in a new education facility of a type that is not currently provided in Torbay. It is an innovative concept that would make an important and significant contribution to both the social and economic well being of the community.

The proposal would make effective use of a brownfield site and, by reason of its location close to the hospital, would foster close links to the major healthcare provider in the locality. The site is in a sustainable location that has good public transport provision. The Transport Statement and Travel Plan address implementation of the zero parking strategy including how it will be monitored and enforced.

The scale and design of the proposed extensions would be appropriate on this site and would be consistent with Policies BES and BE1 in the Torbay Local Plan 1995-2011. The contemporary design strategy for the extensions would result in a high quality and robust form of development that would foster a positive working environment for both staff and pupils.

A number of bat and bird boxes are proposed to ensure that the proposal would enhance biodiversity on the site.

In order to implement the proposal it would be necessary to fell a mature Monterey Cypress tree. Although this tree is visible within the site it makes a limited contribution to the wider visual amenity of the area. A landscape scheme has been submitted which includes a replacement mature oak tree.

Subject to the receipt of further information relating to highways, ecology, the detailed design of the building and S106 contributions it is recommended that conditional planning permission should be granted.

#### **Condition(s)/Reason(s)**

01. Samples of materials
02. Parking provided and kept available to serve development
03. Detailed plans of windows/doors and window reveals
04. Provision of bat and bird boxes as per Ecological Impact Assessment
05. Landscape implementation

#### **Relevant Policies**

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