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3. 3/09/1099/FP - Single storey portacabin extension on steel frame with link to main building (temporary permission) at Rivers Hospital, High Wych Road, Sawbridgeworth, CM21 0HH for Ramsay Healthcare UK Ltd

Date of Receipt: 05.08.2009

Type: Full – (Minor)

Parish: SAWBRIDGEWORTH

Ward: SAWBRIDGEWORTH

RECOMMENDATION

That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following condition:-

1. The building hereby permitted shall be removed on or before five years after the date of this decision notice, and the land shall be reinstated to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: The development is a temporary expedient only.

Directive:

1. Groundwater protection zone (28GP) insert '*Redricks Lane*'

Summary of Reasons for Decision

The proposal has been considered with regard to the policies of the Development Plan (East of England Plan May 2008, Hertfordshire County Structure Plan, Minerals Local Plan, Waste Local Plan and East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007), and in particular policies GBC1, ENV1 and TR7. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies and the specific need for the building is that permission should be granted.

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1.0 Background

- 1.1 The application site is shown on the attached OS extract. It is located on the edge of Sawbridgeworth, to the south west of the town along High Wych Road. To the south and east of the site are residential properties whilst to the north and west is open countryside.
- 1.2 Rivers Hospital itself comprises a large complex of purpose built hospital buildings in extensive grounds with considerable boundary landscaping

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and surface parking. The buildings themselves are located within the settlement of Sawbridgeworth whereas the surface car parks, service areas and surrounding grounds are all located in the Green Belt.

- 1.3 The application proposes the erection of a prefabricated building some 40 square metres in size located in an existing service area to the west of the buildings. The proposed building will be directly connected to the operating theatres existing 'dirty corridor' and will provide temporary accommodation for a transfer lobby and equipment store.
- 1.4 Supporting information indicates that the need for such a building has arisen due to proposals for the current on site sterilization facility to be decommissioned and medical instruments to be cleaned, washed and sterilized off site before being returned. This change in procedure is a result of standards in healthcare constantly being improved and the hospital needing to respond positively to changing situations.

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 Various planning applications have been approved to extend the hospitals facilities including most recently planning permission for 3 single storey extensions, 1 extension on piers and a new staff room within existing roof space (LPA Ref: 3/08/1832/FP) and a single storey pre-admission extension in the courtyard(LPA Ref:3/09/0047/FP).

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 The Environment Agency raises no objections to the proposals.
- 3.2 Veolia Water advises that the site lies within Redricks Lane Pumping Station Groundwater protection where construction works and operation of the proposed development should be done in accordance with the relevant British Standards and Best Management Practices in order to significantly reduce the ground water pollution risk.
- 3.3 The Environmental Health Unit does not raise any objections to the proposal subject to the inclusion of a condition regarding refuse facilities being included on any planning permission.

4.0 Town Council Representations

- 4.1 Sawbridgeworth Town Council raises no objections to the proposal.

5.0 Other Representations

5.1 The application has been advertised by way of site notice and neighbour notification.

5.2 No letters of representation have been received.

6.0 Policy

6.1 The relevant Local Plan policies in this application include the following:-

GBC1	Appropriate Development in the Green Belt
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
TR7	Car Parking- Standards

7.0 Considerations

7.1 The main issues for consideration are:

- The appropriateness of the development in the Green Belt;
- The appropriateness of the size, siting and design of the proposed building;
- The impact of the proposed building on the amenity of neighbouring residential properties;
- The highway, parking and access implications;
- Other considerations.

The Principle

7.2 The main determining issue in this case relates to whether the proposal is appropriate within the Green Belt, where the aims and objectives of policy are placed firmly on growth restraint.

7.3 Within the Green Belt under the provisions of Local Plan Policy GBC1, permission will not normally be given for the construction of new buildings or changes of use, other than for those purposes listed under the policy as appropriate development. Officers do not consider that the proposed development falls within any of the these exception categories. The proposal therefore constitutes “inappropriate” development and consequently it needs to be considered whether there are any very special circumstances in this case to warrant a decision that overrides Green Belt policy.

7.4 It is noted that the buildings at the hospital fall within the settlement of

Sawbridgeworth wherein such a development would be, in principle, acceptable, whilst the service area where the building is proposed falls within the Green Belt. In the accompanying supporting information the applicant has indicated that the building's siting is critical because of the complex procedures which govern the logistics of healthcare provision. The building must directly link into the operating theatres existing 'dirty corridor' and therefore could not be relocated to an area outside the Green Belt.

- 7.5 Taking this into account, in addition to the fact that the building is limited in size; would be located within an existing service area on lower ground and is only proposed for a temporary 5 year period, officers consider that in this case very special circumstances do exist. Furthermore officers are of the view that the proposed development would not unduly harm the openness of the Green Belt or prejudice the aims and objectives of Policy GBC1 of the Local Plan. Officers therefore consider very special circumstances exist in this case to warrant a decision that overrides Green Belt policy.

Size /scale/design/siting

- 7.6 The proposal is for a portakabin style building, which would not match the main building in terms of either its design or materials of construction. Whilst the provision of a permanent extension designed to complement the main hospital building would be preferred it is noted that the application is for a temporary permission and is proposed due to changing operational circumstances.
- 7.7 The building will be located on lower ground, within an existing service area and is of limited size. The wider site is well screened from the surrounding area by mature landscaping and the development would not be visible from outside the site. Officers therefore consider that the proposed building would not significantly adversely impact on the character and appearance of the existing building or the locality and, subject to the permission being for a temporary period only, would comply with the requirements of Policy ENV1.

Neighbour amenity

- 7.8 The proposed building due to its location, size and the heavy boundary treatment will not be visible from any surrounding properties, and consequently would not have a significant adverse impact on their amenities as required by Policy ENV1.

Highway, parking and access implications

- 7.9 The proposal would not result in an increase in bedrooms at the hospital

or staff and therefore the existing parking arrangements are acceptable.

- 7.10 With regards to access and highway generation, officers are satisfied that the proposal would not impact upon the current infrastructure at the site; that there would not be a significant increase in traffic and that the existing access arrangements on to the public highway are acceptable.

Conditions

- 7.11 Environmental Health has requested a condition regarding details of refuse facilities to be provided. However, given that the building is being specifically used for the storage and removal of dirty equipment and measures are already in place for this, as outlined in the supporting statement, as well as the hospital already having refuse facilities for general waste in place, officers do not consider it necessary in this case to include such a condition.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 To conclude, for the reasons set out above, officers are satisfied that very special circumstances exist in this case to warrant departing from Green Belt policy. Furthermore, officers are satisfied that the proposed development would not adversely impact on the openness of the Green Belt and that matters relating to neighbour amenity, the size, siting and design of the building and parking and access are acceptable.
- 8.2 Officers therefore recommend that planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the conditions set out at the start of this report.