

3/10/0255/FP - New pedestrian entrance with external canopy (opposite Post Office Walk) and conversion of redundant toilet block into office at EHDC Car Park, Gascoyne Way, Hertford, SG14 1LG for East Herts District Council

Date of Receipt: 12.02.2010

Type: Full – Minor

Parish: HERTFORD

Ward: HERTFORD - CASTLE

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Samples of Materials (2E12)

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 SD1, SD2, TR2, TR7, ENV1, ENV4. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies 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 and comprises the Gascoyne Way Multi-storey Car Park, situated between the A414 Gascoyne Way to the south east, and a service road servicing the rear of the premises along Fore Street to the north west. The site is adjacent to Hertford Town Centre and the surrounding area is characterised by a mix of domestic residences and shops/commercial premises.
- 1.2 This application has been submitted by East Herts Council for the refurbishment of the existing car park including the construction of a new pedestrian entrance with a canopy above, and the conversion of the disused public conveniences to an office for parking management operatives. As part of the proposal existing recycling bins are to be removed and new cycle parking is proposed nearer to Post Office Walk. Internally, parking spaces will be more generously spaced for users including provisions for disabled, parent and child spaces, electric charging bays and motorcycle parking.

3/10/0255/FP

- 1.3 Gascoyne Way currently provides parking for a total of 361 vehicles, of which 135 are short stay spaces and 226 are long stay. The Hertford Police Station car park (subject of a separate application to this committee: 3/10/0279/FP) is proposed to offer 204 long stay parking spaces whilst the works take place on this site. The short stay parking provided at Gascoyne Way is proposed to be met by the Hartham Lane car park.
- 1.4 The refurbishment of the building also includes the repair and repainting of the external façades with clear anti-carbonation paint. Other works include new lighting; paving and modernisation of the passenger lifts. These works do not, of themselves, require planning permission however.

2.0 Site History

- 2.1 There is no relevant planning history for this site.

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 The Environment Agency assessed the application as having a low environmental risk and therefore provide no further comments.
- 3.2 Hertfordshire Constabulary commented as follows: The loss of the toilet block is regrettable; however, it is redundant and therefore no longer required for use by the general public. There are no areas of the proposal which lead to any security concerns.
- 3.3 County Highways do not wish to restrict the grant of permission subject to the condition that parking, and storage and delivery of materials is provided on site on land which is not public highway. They also say that it would be preferable if the works could be phased, but do not consider that there would be a significant highway impact particularly if parking at the former police station site is brought in before these works commence.
- 3.4 The Conservation Officer has already given advice prior to submission. Her comments have been taken on board within the submission and any further comments will be referred orally to the committee.

4.0 Town Council Representations

- 4.1 Hertford Town Council raised concerns about the aesthetics of the scheme particularly the gloss white canopy and feel that the development will do little to enhance the Conservation Area. Although they acknowledge it is not a planning matter they also had concerns about the complete closure of the facility for a prolonged length of time.

5.0 Other Representations

- 5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice and site notice.
- 5.2 At the time of writing, no letters of representation had been received.

6.0 Policy

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

SD1	Making Development More Sustainable
SD2	Settlement Hierarchy
TR2	Access to New Developments
TR7	Car Parking – Standards
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV4	Access for Disabled People

- 6.2 In addition to the above it is considered that Planning Policy Statement 1, (Delivering Sustainable Development), Planning Policy Statement 4 (Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth), and Planning Policy Guidance 13 (Transport) are considerations within this application.

7.0 Considerations

Principle of Development

- 7.1 The site lies in the built-up area of Hertford wherein new developments and changes of use are acceptable in principle. The site is also within the Hertford Conservation Area, and the main issues in this case therefore relate to the quality of design; visual impact of the development on the Conservation Area; any impacts on town centre vitality; and provisions for pedestrians and cyclists.
- 7.2 The proposed internal works to the car park do not need planning permission in themselves and whilst providing for a positive enhancement of the facility are not a material consideration in relation to this application.

Quality of Design

- 7.3 The new entrance canopy at the western end of the car park is proposed to be made of high quality materials with a zinc roof, and powder coated tubular rails. The Town Council's concern was about a white gloss finish to the roof, but this is only proposed for the canopy columns. The roof will be finished in zinc, which is considered appropriate for this location.

3/10/0255/FP

- 7.4 The canopy is simple in its design and the proposed walkway which runs directly into the car park avoids the need to pass through the stairwell and will provide easier access for pedestrians generally, and particularly for disabled people.
- 7.5 The existing exit at the eastern end of the car park will also be improved with a section of wall being removed to make access to the car park easier for pedestrians. An improved pedestrian crossing is also proposed.
- 7.6 The existing toilet block will be brought back into use as an office for parking management operatives. Bringing the building back into use will provide a greater presence within the area and may help to discourage anti social activities.

Visual Impact on the Conservation Area

- 7.7 Some of the proposed materials are outlined on the plan, however, a condition is recommended for samples of materials to be supplied to ensure that the finish is of a high quality which enhances the character of the Conservation Area.
- 7.8 The design is considered to be of good quality and in keeping with the Conservation Area.

Town Centre Vitality

- 7.9 The improvements to the pedestrian exits from the car park will enhance the links with the town centre.
- 7.10 At the western end the new walkway will enable the ground floor of the car park to connect more directly to Post Office Walk. This direct connection is strongly supported, and will also be beneficial for any disabled car park users.
- 7.11 The second exit provided at the eastern end of the car park provides a link to Fore Street, and makes access more convenient and pleasant enabling users to avoid the stairwell route. The new crossing at this point will help improve the links to the town centre.
- 7.12 These works will help contribute to the objectives of Planning Policy Statement 4 which requires adequate provision of good quality secure parking in town centres to encourage investment and maintain their viability and vitality.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Overall, Officers consider that the proposal will be beneficial for the town centre. The new entrances, and walkways will improve the links from the car park to the town centre and changing the toilet block into an office will provide a presence in the area which could help to discourage anti social activities.
- 8.2 The detailed design is acceptable and will preserve and enhance the appearance and character of the Conservation Area.
- 8.3 The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out above.