

3/10/0279/FP - Change of use of a 204 space car park for a temporary period to provide long stay pay and display parking during the refurbishment of Gascoyne Way car park at Former Hertford Police Station, Ware Road, Hertford for East Herts Council.

Date of Receipt: 16.02.2010

Type: Full - Major

Parish: HERTFORD

Ward: HERTFORD - KINGSMEAD

RECOMMENDATION

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

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. The applicant shall notify the Local Planning Authority in writing when public parking commences on the site edged red on the submitted drawings. The use shall then cease within 6 months of this date, or following completion of the refurbishment works at Gascoyne Way, whichever is sooner.

Reason

The proposed use does not represent the best use of this brownfield site and is only acceptable as a temporary expedient.

3. Prior to the commencement of development, specification details and locations of the proposed pay and display machines shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and shall be implemented in accordance with those approved details.

Reason

In the interests of the appearance of the development, and in accordance with policy ENV1 of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007.

Directives

1. Other legislation (01OL)
2. The applicant is advised that they must seek the written approval of the Highway Authority before placing any signs within the public highway. The applicant will need to contact the Eastern Herts Highways Area Office (01438 757880) for further information and to determine the necessary procedures.

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

3/10/0279/FP

April 2007), and in particular policies SD1, SD2, TR2, TR5, TR7, ENV1, ENV2 and ENV11. 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 an unused area of car parking associated with the former Hertford Police Station site, located to the south of Ware Road and to the north of Stanstead Road. The surrounding area is characterised by predominantly two storey residential dwellings with Kingsmead School located to the southeast.
- 1.2 This application has been made by East Herts Council to use the existing ancillary 204 space police station car park as a public pay and display car park for a period of approximately 6 months whilst refurbishment works are undertaken at Gascoyne Way car park. The site is proposed solely as a long stay public car park. The existing short stay parking provided at Gascoyne Way will be met by the Hartham Lane car park. Gascoyne Way currently provides parking for a total of 361 vehicles, of which 135 are short stay spaces and 226 are long stay.
- 1.3 Members may be aware that Officers are currently dealing with an application for a mixed use redevelopment of the whole Police Station site. This is likely to come before Members for determination in May.

2.0 Site History

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

3.0 Consultation Responses

- 3.1 County Highways do not wish to restrict the grant of permission. They make the following comments:-

This application is a consequence of the impending closure of the Gascoyne Way multi-storey car park to allow for major refurbishment to be undertaken. Whilst the application is for the establishment of a facility for 204 vehicles I am aware that from capacity surveys of existing town centre car parks the anticipated use is significantly lower than that figure. In these circumstances and taking into account the previous use of the site and the approved redevelopment proposals I confirm that the highway authority

have no grounds to oppose the current application.

“The scheme does not propose or require any alteration to the existing access arrangements or off-site highway works other than the placement of signage to assist motorists. In these circumstances I have no conditions to impose. I would however recommend inclusion of an advisory note to ensure that the proposed signage is undertaken in accordance with Highways Act requirements.”

4.0 Town Council Representations

4.1 Hertford Town Council make the following comments:-

“Kingsmead Ward Members in particular were incensed at the proposal to wish upon their community, the damaging road traffic effect and damage to the visual amenity of the police station site; the product of a decision to close a car park facility almost a mile away. They were concerned about the potential additional 200 vehicle movements entrancing and 200 vehicle exiting movements on the already congested Ware Road and Stanstead Road.

Recognising that the intention in the planning description for pay and display parking was not a planning matter, the ward members keenly criticised the decision to charge. Had there been a proposal to provide a park and ride facility, members’ anger would have been reduced. Ward Members reminded the Committee that the value of the openness of this site is unique in a ward with little open space.”

5.0 Other Representations

5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.

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
TR5	Dual Use of Private Car Parks
TR7	Car Parking – Standards
ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality

3/10/0279/FP

ENV2 Landscaping
ENV11 Protection of Existing Trees

- 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. PPS1 encourages vacant and underused land to be brought into beneficial use. While car parking does not represent the best use of the site, in principle I see no objection to a temporary use given the need to meet the shortfall while Gascoyne Way is refurbished. The main issues in this case therefore relate to detailed matters of highway impacts, impact on trees and neighbouring amenity.
- 7.2 The provision of 2 no. pay and display machines are mentioned in the Design and Access Statement but have not been identified on the submitted drawings. These would be considered acceptable in principle and could be considered as de minimis development. However a condition is recommended to require full details of these machines prior to the commencement of development.
- 7.3 Signage will also be displayed; however the applicant states that this will comply with deemed consent. No application for Advertisement Consent is therefore required at this stage.

Access and Parking

- 7.4 No changes are proposed to the layout of the site, or the existing access arrangements. Vehicular access to the car park will remain from Stanstead Road with egress onto both Ware Road and Stanstead Road; however the exit onto Ware Road will be restricted to left turns only to minimise highway conflicts. Vehicles travelling towards Ware can then make a U-turn on the roundabout to travel back towards Ware. Given that this is the existing arrangement, there will be no significant impact on highway safety.
- 7.5 The nature of the site as a long stay car park only, means that the volumes and frequency of traffic movements would not differ significantly compared to the previous active use of the site as a police station. There will therefore be no harmful impact on residential amenity or the wider highway network.

3/10/0279/FP

- 7.6 Although the application is proposed as a 204 space car park; the applicant estimates that the car park would only be used by 20-30 vehicles a day, arriving between 0800 and 0900 and leaving between 1700 and 1800. This prediction is based on previous vehicle counts in Gascoyne Way and space counts in existing Hertford town centre car parks. The estimated number of vehicle movements would also be reduced during the holiday season.
- 7.7 The reason for this proposed temporary change of use is to facilitate the refurbishment of the Gascoyne Way car park, which is considered necessary given its current condition. Although it would be preferable to provide an alternative parking facility in a more central location in Hertford, there are unfortunately no other reasonable alternative sites. The police station site is currently vacant and provides sufficient space within a reasonable walking distance (approximately three quarters of a mile). There is also a bus route that links the site to the town centre. The location is therefore considered to be acceptable from a sustainability point of view.
- 7.8 It is noted that 22 fewer long stay spaces will be available at the police station site compared to Gascoyne Way; however this is not considered to be an unacceptable reduction. Further, the number of spaces available at Gascoyne Way is likely to be reduced by 31 following completion of the refurbishment works.
- 7.9 Disabled parking will remain within more central town centre locations. However, blue badge parking will be available free of charge at the police station car park.

Trees and Hedgerows

- 7.10 The site is covered by an area Tree Preservation Order, confirmed in 1991, which includes a number of mature trees along the boundaries of the site with a few smaller trees within the centre of the site. However, this application proposes no change to the layout of the site and will therefore not impact on these established trees. The existing established hedges will also be retained and will assist in screening the car park from the surrounding area.
- 7.11 There is currently very limited planting within the car park area, and no further planting is proposed. Although it would be preferable to improve the landscaping of the site, this would be an unreasonable requirement for a temporary permission.

Temporary Restriction

- 7.12 Planning Policy Statement 4 requires adequate provision of good quality secure parking in town centres to encourage investment and maintain

viability and vitality. The refurbishment of Gascoyne Way will therefore contribute to this objective; however it would be necessary to complete the refurbishment works as soon as possible in order to provide adequate town centre parking. It is anticipated that the works to Gascoyne Way will be completed within a period of 6 months. This is considered to be a reasonable length of time for the proposed refurbishment, and a condition is therefore recommended to restrict the temporary use to a 6 month period.

- 7.13 The wording of the condition is also recommended to require the parking to be moved back to Gascoyne Way if the refurbishment works are completed before the expiry of 6 months. This is necessary because retention of both car parks would result in an overprovision of public pay and display parking in Hertford that would encourage an unsustainable dependence on the private vehicle. This follows national guidance set out in Planning Policy Guidance 13. Further, a permanent car park in this location would not represent the best use of land in accordance with Planning Policy Statement 1.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 Overall, Officers consider that the proposed change of use will not significantly differ from the previous use in terms of traffic volumes and frequency of movements. The site is proposed as a long stay car park only, and there will be no change to the access arrangements or number of parking spaces. There will also be no harmful impact on neighbouring amenity or existing trees.
- 8.2 The application is therefore recommended for approval subject to the conditions set out above.