

5e 3/10/2214/FP - Demolition of existing footbridge and construction of new vehicle and footbridge at EHDC Car Park, St Andrews Street, Hertford, SG14 1JA for East Herts Council

Date of Receipt: 17:12:2010

Type: Full – Minor

Parish: HERTFORD

Ward: HERTFORD - BENGEO

RECOMMENDATION:

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

1. Three year time limit (1T12)
2. Approved Plans (2E10) 3515 – 01, HFB/001/A; TH1
3. Programme of archaeological works (2E02)
4. Tree retention and protection (4P05)
5. Prior to the first use of the bridge hereby permitted, details of any gates or similar measures to secure the bridge and prevent general vehicle access into Castle Grounds shall be submitted and as approved by the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason : In order to ensure that any measures required to secure the Castle Grounds at night are appropriately designed in the interests of the appearance and character of this part of the Conservation Area and in accordance with Policies ENV3 and BH6 of the adopted East Herts Local Plan 2007.

6. Prior to the commencement of works, detailed drawings of the new ramp to the car park indicating levels, gradient and surface materials shall be provided at scale not less than 1:20. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of clarity and to ensure the crossing is satisfactorily designed and usable by wheelchair users and in accordance with policies ENV1 and ENV4 of the adopted East Herts Local Plan 2007.

7. Prior to the commencement of above ground building, details of the timber side panels for the bridge shall be provided and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter

be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance and design of the development within the Conservation Area and in accordance with policies ENV1 and BH6 of the adopted East Herts Local Plan 2007.

8. Details of provisions to reuse the existing stone steps either within the development or in the vicinity of the site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance and design of the development within the Conservation Area and in accordance with policies ENV1 and BH6 of the adopted East Herts Local Plan 2007.

9. Prior to the commencement of works a scheme to provide Flood Compensation measures within the vicinity of the site to a standard of 1 in a 100 year plus climate change shall be submitted and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The bridge soffit level shall be set no lower than 39.25m above ordnance datum (AOD). The development shall thereafter be implemented in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: In the interests of providing mitigation for flooding within the area as part of the development and in accordance with policy ENV19 of the adopted East Herts Local Plan 2007.

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 the saved policies of the East Herts Local Plan Second Review April 2007), and in particular policies ENV1, ENV4, BH6 and national guidance in PPS1, PPS5 and PPG13. The balance of the considerations having regard to those policies and the other material considerations relevant in this case 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. The proposed bridge is at the location of the existing pedestrian only footbridge which crosses the channel of water separating the St Andrews Street Public

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Car Park from the Hertford Castle grounds, a valuable recreation space within the town.

- 1.2 The proposal is to remove the existing bridge, approximate internal width of 1m, and replace it with a wider footbridge with internal width of 2.75m in a design of timber and steel similar to existing nearby bridges. The wider bridge will be provided with ramped approaches to cross the water channel; the existing footbridge is not compliant with the Disability Discrimination Act due to 3 high steps on the St Andrew Street Car Park side. The new bridge will also enable occasional access for maintenance vehicles to the grounds.
- 1.3 The plans originally included proposals to reduce the profile of the river bank upstream from the bridge, but due to concerns about damage to riverbank tree roots this element has been omitted. The reduction in flood risk can be addressed by a planning condition to provide for modest regrading of levels within the Castle Grounds as enhanced flood water capacity. It has also been stated that as part of general maintenance works the ditch will be dredged and a nearby fence adjacent to a local path running up to St Andrews Street will be removed.
- 1.4 The design of the proposed bridge will be in timber and steel, with steel railings painted green to match others in the vicinity. Existing stone steps will be reused within the development.

2.0 Site History:

- 2.1 The existing footbridge dates from the 1960's and is a simple timber bridge but not of historic interest. The bridge was granted planning permission in April 1964 (Ref: 3/64/0726).
- 2.2 Planning permission was granted in 2007 for a replacement widened footbridge over the River Lea near to the Hertford Theatre (formerly Castle Hall) which linked St Andrews Car Park to the town centre (Ref: 3/07/1973/FP). This bridge is approximately 2m wide between the side rails.

3.0 Consultation Responses:

- 3.1 The County Archaeologist has requested a programme of archaeological works. Although the impact of the bridge is relatively limited it also involves the reduction of the profile to the south river channel beneath and upstream from the bridge

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- 3.2 The Environment Agency has no objection and welcomed the submitted Flood Risk Assessment. With the withdrawal of the re-profiling works they have clarified that they do not require these but request a planning condition that the planning permission be carried out including provision of flood storage to a 1 in 100 year plus climate change standard and a bridge soffit level no lower than 39.25m above Ordnance Datum.
- 3.3 The Conservation Officer has commented that the existing bridge is of no special interest but is in a location with heritage constraints such as the setting of the Grade 1 listed Gatehouse and the setting of Castle Mound which is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. She is concerned that the bridge will be three times wider than the existing and the combination of scale and proposed materials will create a dominant structure of industrial appearance out of keeping with the open green setting. In order to mitigate the impact, materials with softer impacts are recommended, timber for the railings and bricks for the abutments. As maintenance vehicles will not cross the bridge at speed she sees no need for reinforcement of railings. She also shares the Town Council's concerns about security of the Castle Grounds at night.
- 3.4 The Landscape Officer has informally advised of concerns with the original proposed excavations along the river (these measures have now been deleted from the application).

4.0 Town Council Representations:

- 4.1 Hertford Town Council has welcomed the improvements to access under DDA compliance but expressed concern at the potential for an unsafe landing for wheelchair users at the car park end; it feels access into the grounds is negated by the steps at the second bridge. As access is available from all other entry points the need was questioned.
- 4.2 Greater concern was expressed about night time security and if permission is granted it was requested that security gates be fitted to the bridge to ensure the security of the Castle was maintained.

5.0 Other Representations:

- 5.1 The applications have been advertised by way of press notice, site notice and neighbour notification.
- 5.2 No letters of representation have been received.

6.0 Policy:

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

ENV1	Design and Environmental Quality
ENV4	Access for Disabled People
ENV19	Development in areas liable to flood
BH6	New development in Conservation Areas

6.2 In addition, the following National policy guidance is relevant:-

Planning Policy Guidance 1, Delivering Sustainable Development,
Planning Policy Statement 5: Planning for Sustainable Economic
Growth

7.0 Considerations:

Principle of development.

7.1 The site is within the main town of Hertford wherein development is generally acceptable in accordance with the local plan strategy. The bridge provides for improved disabled access and this accords with adopted local plan policy ENV4. The proposal is therefore one which is supported by the local plan and acceptable in principle although there are detailed matters to be considered including the design and appearance of the structure within this part of the Conservation Area; the implications for flooding; the security of the Castle Grounds and any impacts on existing trees.

Design and access.

7.2 The design of the structure is to be of timber and steel. The use of timber panels for the bridge is now suggested to achieve an improved finish to the bridge and in response to the Conservation Officers concerns. It will be desirable for the finish to co-ordinate with other bridges provided around the River Lea and this part of the Castle grounds. So final approval of materials is recommended to be agreed by planning condition.

Flooding.

7.3 The bridge is situated partly in flood zone 2 and partly in flood zone 3. The new bridge will lie lower than the existing bridge in order to provide

an acceptable gradient for the ramps. As a result there will be a small net increase to the loss of storage but this can be compensated for by compensatory measures elsewhere in the grounds by a modest lowering of ground levels. The details of this will be determined by a planning condition and the Environment Agency are willing to agree this approach.

Security considerations.

- 7.4 The bridge can provide an access for vehicles into the car park similar to others at The Wash and the end of Castle Street, each of these are gated as the grounds are secured at night. While this is primarily a management rather than a planning issue, it is recommended, on appearance grounds, that the details of any gates or other security measures be provided and agreed via a planning condition.

8.0 Conclusion:

- 8.1 The proposal is one which provides for necessary occasional vehicle access for maintenance vehicles. However it will also improve access into the Castle Grounds for pedestrians such as parents with pushchairs and wheelchair users and other disabled people.
- 8.2 The detailed design of the bridge, subject to the final agreement of materials will be complementary to other bridges agreed in the area and will preserve and enhance the character and appearance of this part of the Conservation Area.
- 8.3 The proposal will not result in any increased flooding risk due to compensatory measures which are modest in extent and can be agreed by planning condition. The original compensatory measures to re-profile the river bank are withdrawn due to concerns about tree damage.
- 8.4 Subject to the proposed conditions I consider the application to be acceptable and to offer improved public links to the public recreational area of Castle grounds, in particular for the disabled. Accordingly I recommend the application be granted.