

# PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT



**ITEM: 06**

**Application Number:** 13/00523/LBC

**Applicant:** Eagle One Homes Ltd

**Description of Application:** Change of use, conversion and alterations to existing building to provide 12 apartments and new 4/5 storey building containing 51 retirement flats with ancillary car parking, cycle and refuse storage (demolition of existing extension)

**Type of Application:** Listed Building

**Site Address:** PLYMOUTH HOSPITALS NHS TRUST, PLYMOUTH  
ROYAL EYE INFIRMARY, APSLEY ROAD PLYMOUTH

**Ward:** Drake

**Valid Date of Application:** 22/03/2013

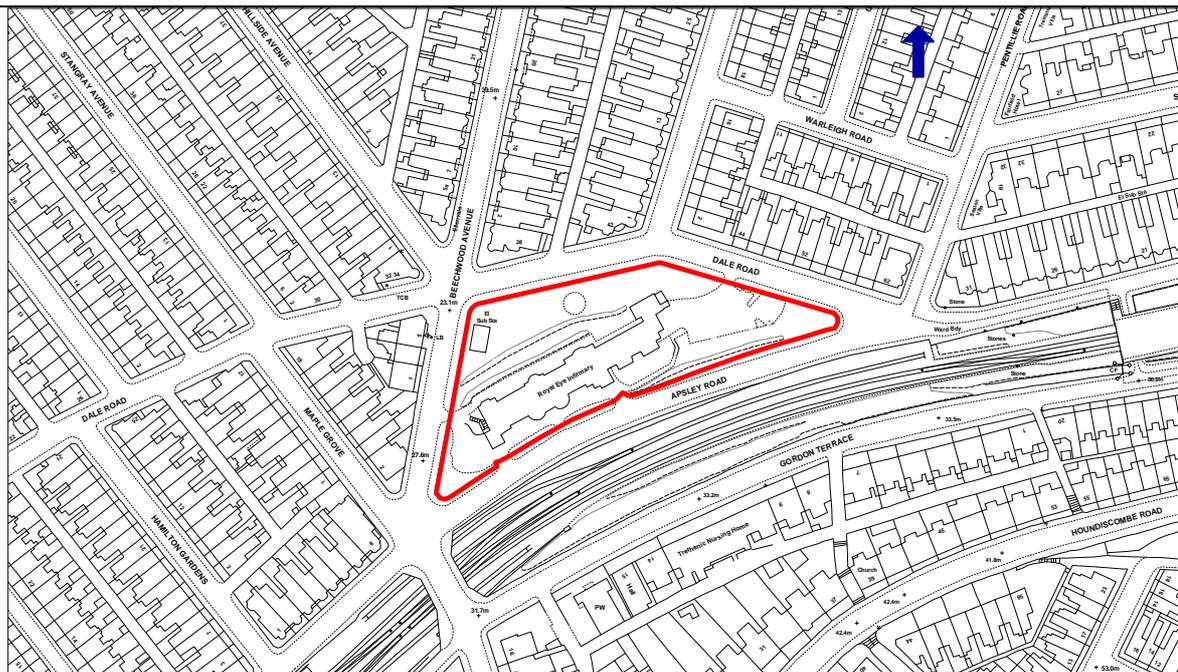
**8/13 Week Date:** **17/05/2013**

**Decision Category:** Major - more than 5 Letters of Representation received and Member referral

**Case Officer :** Robert Heard

**Recommendation:** Grant Conditionally

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This application has been referred to Planning Committee at the request of Councillor Ricketts.

### **Site Description**

1. The site is located in a central, predominantly residential area to the west of Mutley Plain and to the north of Plymouth City Centre. The surrounding development is characterised by terraced streets that mostly comprise of Victorian era housing, arranged in a non-uniform street pattern derived from historic ownership boundaries.
2. Measuring approximately 0.59 of a hectare, the site is bound on all sides by public highway and forms an irregular shaped island. Immediately to the south of the site is the main city railway line, with terraced housing to the north, east and west. The topography of the site slopes down from south to north. The level change across the site is approximately 6m at its greatest.
3. The site is currently occupied by a substantial and imposing building known as the Plymouth Royal Eye Infirmary, a grade II Listed Building Constructed in 1901 and recently vacated by the local health authority. The last use of the building was as an eye infirmary, as originally constructed. It is a red brick Victorian structure with a significant 1930s (as well as other smaller, more recent) extension at the east end. The existing building is in a poor state of repair.
4. The building sits comfortably within the site curtilage, which is landscaped with a lawn area and car parking, and surrounded by many mature trees, some of which are protected. Access to the site can be taken from all sides. However, Apsley Road to the south and Dale Road to the north east is where the main vehicle access points are located (at different levels).
5. Unlike many areas of Plymouth, the immediate surrounding area is characterised by housing that is predominantly finished in brick, but there is also evidence of local stone and render, with slate being used on the roofs of much of the surrounding housing. Within the area, corner plots are sometimes defined with differing building features and help to present an attractive book end to many of the nearby terraced streets.

### **Proposal Description**

6. Listed Building Consent for the works associated with planning application I3/00521/FUL to redevelop the site by converting the existing former eye hospital into 12 apartments, with a new detached 4/5 storey building adjacent providing 51 retirement flats, with ancillary car parking, cycle and refuse storage.

7. The works include demolition of the existing 1938 extension and associated internal works necessary to facilitate the change of use to residential apartments from a former eye hospital.

### **Pre-Application Enquiry**

8. 12/01270/MAJ – Development proposal for retirement accommodation and conversion of listed REI building into apartments.

### **Relevant Planning History**

9. 12/01797/FUL and 12/01799/LBC - Change of use, conversion and alterations to existing building to provide 12 apartments and new 4/5 storey building containing 55 retirement flats with ancillary car parking, cycle and refuse storage (demolition of existing extension). WITHDRAWN.

### **Consultation Responses**

10. Victorian Society  
Comments awaited.

### **Representations**

11. 26 letters of representation received, objecting to the application on the following grounds:
  - Lack of parking;
  - No requirement for retirement accommodation in the area;
  - The development will become student accommodation;
  - The new build is not in keeping with the existing REI building;
  - The proposed access points will be dangerous;
  - Loss of views from some of the surrounding development;
  - The new build is too high and not respectful of the existing REI building;
  - The application was not publicised correctly;
  - Properties on Dale Road will be subject to shadowing.
12. The issues raised above relate to the planning application (13/00521/FUL) at the site for conversion of the existing building into apartments and the provision of a new building for retirement accommodation. They do not raise any issues that refer specifically to the conversion works and alterations proposed by this application.

### **Analysis**

13. The main consideration with regards to this application for listed building consent is the impact that the proposed development will have on the existing listed building and its setting.

Impact upon existing REI building

14. The Royal Eye Infirmary was formally opened in 1901 and has remained in use as an eye hospital up until the end of 2012. The proposed development is a result of the need to find a new viable use for the redundant building and site. Since the NHS has vacated the building, the need for a new use to be implemented has become urgent if the listed building is not to lose any fabric of historic interest.
15. The building is prominent in the area by virtue of its size, style, construction, materials and setting. It stands out as a large, tall, predominantly red coloured building, with classical detailing, on its own green site, surrounded by smaller, densely arranged, two storey Victorian terraced houses. There are two main parts to the current building; the original, classically detailed, Victorian section which was opened in 1901 and an eastern extension, of a more utilitarian style, which was added in 1938.
16. Both parts of the building are constructed of red brick. The original part has Douling stone (limestone) dressings: string courses, window surrounds and transoms, door surrounds and eaves corncing. The original part has a steeply sloping roof, covered in plain, clay tiles. The new part of the building has a flat roof. The original part of the building is constructed as a fine, symmetrical composition. The south elevation has a central entrance flanked by curved wings, topped with half conical roofs fitted with crested ridges, and there are shallow, square wings, or pavilions, at either end of the elevation.
17. The north elevation has a central curved bay, with faceted shallow bays at each end. The south central curved wings and the section between them over the entrance porch are of three full storeys, elsewhere the third storey is accommodated in the steeply sloping roof, lit by dormer windows. All windows are original, multi-pane, vertical sliding sashes, except the first floor window of the north elevation, central bay which noticeably has no glazing bars. The lack of glazing bars is because this room is the original operating theatre and large sheets of plate glass were fitted there, to maximise light.
18. Internally it is apparent that there has been much subdivision of large rooms, all carried out prior to the listing of the building in 1998, but some original partitions, joinery and plasterwork remain. The features of greatest interest that remain are the curving stairs fitted in the south elevation, central wings, doors and door architraves, fire places and pantry fittings.

19. The condition of the building is beginning to decline. The building is suffering failures for which the cost of remedial work, because of the extent of the building, will be significant. The problems include rotting windows, failing rainwater goods, movement and decay in the stone dressings, notably the cornice, and slipping roof tiles. Because of the now rapidly decaying condition of the building and its vacant state it is considered to be a Building at Risk, current Risk Level E (Under repair or in fair to good repair, but no obvious user identified, or under threat of vacancy with no obvious new user), but with the very real risk of escalating to Risk Level A (Immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric) if a new use and occupation are not implemented quickly.
20. With regards to the proposed removal of the 1938 extension, whilst it may have been of architectural significance at the time of construction, it has been altered significantly and is no longer considered to retain architectural or historic significance. The plan form and external appearance of the extension were much altered as part of the major works to the hospital between 1976 – 1978, when the main operating theatre was moved from the original hospital to the extension. The loss of any remaining architectural or historic interest that the extension may be considered to have, is considered to be outweighed by the benefits offered to the listed building by the removal of the extension. The benefits presented by the removal of the much altered 1938 extension are the restoration of the original mass of the historic hospital building and the opportunity to construct a new building next to it that will help to fund the repair of the existing REI building.
21. It is also relevant that the storey heights of the 1938 extension, particularly on the ground floor at 4.2m, would not allow efficient re-use of the building. Conversion of the floor plan would be difficult and expensive, due to the load bearing construction. Further, the building has no insulation, nor double glazed windows, the provision of which would only add to the already very high cost of conversion for the original building. Considering the above it is considered by officers appropriate to remove this section to enable the proposed scheme to be realised.
22. Concerning the proposed use of the building as apartments, it is not considered to be a realistic expectation that a new hospital use for the building would be found nor would the retention of a hospital use necessarily be the optimum use for the listed building, as a modern hospital use would require significant changes to be made to the building. Residential conversion is proposed as it is considered to be the most appropriate use for the area, being close to local amenities and accessible to the city centre.
23. With regards to proposed external alterations, other than the removal of the 1938 extension, which is considered to be beneficial to the heritage significance of the building, the only alteration to the elevations of the existing REI listed building is the refurbishment of the fire escape against the western gable. It is considered by officers that the proposal does not include any significant changes to the elevations.

24. The interior, to accommodate the proposed new use, does require the building to be subdivided. The subdivision proposed is considered by officers to be appropriate and according to the applicant, could be reversed if required in the future. It is considered by officers that the proposed development would help to safeguard the future of the existing REI listed building, and that with regards to the impact of the development upon it, the application is compliant with Policy CS03 (Historic Environment) of the Core Strategy.
- Impact upon the setting of the existing REI building
25. The layout of the proposed retirement block is reflective of the existing Royal Eye Infirmary (REI) building and faces south onto Apsley Road, overlooking the existing railway line. Removal of the existing 1930s extension allows for the new build to sit comfortably alongside the existing listed building, oriented on the same axis and providing an imposing street frontage to Apsley Road. The existing building line is respected and the demolition of the existing 1930 extension allows the existing and proposed buildings to sit together but with clear separation between them.
26. It is considered by officers that the layout of the proposed development respects both the positioning and orientation of the existing listed building on the site, whilst being consistent with the established pattern of development in the surrounding area, which is characterised by a traditional layout with dwellings fronting onto the public highway. The proposed development provides a street frontage to both Apsley Road and Dale Road and is considered a sensible solution to the constraints and opportunities that the site presents.
27. With regards to scale, the existing REI building is large, with generous proportions, high ceilings and a big curtilage. The scale of the proposed building has been carefully considered and whilst containing more storeys, its overall height is less than the existing REI building. This is due to the high floor to ceiling heights in the existing building, which were constructed at a time when building regulations were much different to today's modern standards. Despite the difference in floor to ceiling heights (necessary to ensure compliance with current building regulations), the scale of the proposed new build is very similar to the existing REI building, ensuring that both buildings sit alongside each other comfortably. The overall height of the proposed building, being slightly lower than the ridge height of the existing REI building, ensures that with regards to bulk and massing, the proposed building will be subservient to the existing listed building.
28. The scale of the new build element of the proposal reduces towards the rear of the site where it provides a frontage onto Dale Road. This follows the existing topography at the site and ensures that the massing of the proposal is reduced when the building line is closer to the existing residential development on Dale Road.

29. Overall, the scale and massing of the proposed development is considered acceptable. The proposed new build is of an appropriate size, being large enough to have a presence at the site whilst not being dominated by the existing REI building. The separation distance between the buildings helps to ensure that the setting of the original REI building is not harmed and that the buildings are clearly individual.
30. Concerning appearance and design, the existing REI building has a strong presence in the area, being a unique and imposing building that has a distinctive symmetrical plan and elevation. The application proposes to restore the original symmetry and balance of the existing listed building by removing the 1938 extension. Where the extension is removed it is proposed to restore the walls and re-insert windows in their original positions. The only difference to the layout of the original east elevation will be an escape staircase that is required for emergency exit from the building. The existing dormer windows will be retained and refurbished and the original chimneys will be restored.
31. The design of the proposed new build is contemporary, but with subtle reference to the existing REI building through repetition of materials and features. It was considered that a pastiche style development would never be able to successfully replicate the high quality design and appearance of the existing building, which is a spectacular example of architecture from a previous period. Any attempt to copy the existing building would in officers' view lessen its impact and destroy its uniqueness, whilst significantly harming its setting.
32. The proposed new build has thus been designed to complement the existing building and not compete with it. Whilst the storey heights cannot be repeated due to current building regulations requirements, the simple string course eaves trim of the existing REI is repeated on the new build, to ensure there is consistency in the design and treatment of the elevations. The top floor of the proposed new build has been recessed and treated in a different finish and colour to the main building in order to reference the roof of the existing REI building, so that despite the difference in floor to ceiling heights, the overall proportions of the existing REI building are respected.
33. The proposed layout of the site and scale, massing and design of the proposed new build apartments is considered acceptable, being complimentary to the existing listed REI building and compatible with the existing surrounding townscape. In summary, it is considered that the proposed retirement accommodation will provide a positive addition to the streetscene and help to improve local visual amenity, whilst securing the long term future of the existing REI listed building and respecting its setting.. It is therefore compliant with Policies CS02 (Design) and CS03 (Historic Environment) and CS34 (Planning Application Consideration) of the Core Strategy.

## Human Rights

34. Human Rights Act - The development has been assessed against the provisions of the Human Rights Act, and in particular Article 1 of the First Protocol and Article 8 of the Act itself. This Act gives further effect to the rights included in the European Convention on Human Rights. In arriving at this recommendation, due regard has been given to the applicant's reasonable development rights and expectations which have been balanced and weighed against the wider community interests, as expressed through third party interests / the Development Plan and Central Government Guidance.

### **Section 106 Obligations**

35. None required.

### **Equalities & Diversities issues**

36. None raised. Application is for Listed Building Consent only.

### **Conclusions**

37. It is considered that the proposed development will not have a detrimental impact upon the existing grade II listed REI building, or its setting. It will help to secure the long term future of the building and retain its historic fabric. The application is thus recommended for approval subject to conditions.

### **Recommendation**

In respect of the application dated **22/03/2013** and the submitted drawings 1767 (RP) 001: Site Location Plan; 1767 (RP) 002: Site Plan As Existing; 1767 (RP) 003: Demolition Tree Removal Plan; 1767 (RP) 004: Floor Plans As Existing; 1767 (RP) 005: Floor Plans As Existing; 1767 (RP) 006: Elevations As Existing; 1767 (RP) 007: Site Plan; 1767 (RP) 008: New Block Roof and Fourth Floor Plans; 1767 (RP) 009: New Block First Second and Third Floor Plans; 1767 (RP) 010: Ground Floor Plan; 1767 (RP) 011: Existing Block Proposed Floor Plans; 1767 (RP) 012: Site Elevations; 1767 (RP) 013: New Block Elevations; 1767 (RP) 014: New Block Elevations; 1767 (RP) 015: Sections; 1767 (RP) 016: Site Sections and accompanying Heritage Appraisal and Impact Assessment.,it is recommended to: **Grant Conditionally**

### **Conditions**

#### **TIME LIMIT FOR COMMENCEMENT (1)**

(1) The works hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

#### **Reason:**

To comply with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

## APPROVED PLANS (2)

(2) The works hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans: 1767 (RP) 001: Site Location Plan; 1767 (RP) 002: Site Plan As Existing; 1767 (RP) 003: Demolition Tree Removal Plan; 1767 (RP) 004: Floor Plans As Existing; 1767 (RP) 005: Floor Plans As Existing; 1767 (RP) 006: Elevations As Existing; 1767 (RP) 007: Site Plan; 1767 (RP) 008: New Block Roof and Fourth Floor Plans; 1767 (RP) 009: New Block First Second and Third Floor Plans; 1767 (RP) 010: Ground Floor Plan; 1767 (RP) 011: Existing Block Proposed Floor Plans; 1767 (RP) 012: Site Elevations; 1767 (RP) 013: New Block Elevations; 1767 (RP) 014: New Block Elevations; 1767 (RP) 015: Sections; 1767 (RP) 016: Site Sections.

### Reason:

For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of good planning, in accordance with policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

## SCHEDULE OF WORKS

(3) No works shall commence until a detailed schedule of all proposed repair, refurbishment and new works to the Royal Eye Infirmary has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said schedule shall include details of design, construction methods, materials and finishes of all proposed works. The works shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the approved details.

### Reason:

To ensure appropriate design and quality and that the details of the proposed work do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

## BUILDINGS RECORDING

(4) No works shall commence until provision has been made for the recording of the 1938 extension in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority. This work shall be carried out at all times in strict accordance with the approved scheme and in accordance with other such details as may subsequently be agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

### Reason:

To ensure an adequate archival record of the 1938 extension prior to its demolition, and to ensure that the proposed development works do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

## STONEHOUSE LEAT

(5) No part of the development allowed by this permission shall be commenced until the applicant (or their agent or his successors in title) has made provision, to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority, for a programme of archaeological investigation and recording in accordance with a written scheme of investigation (WSI) which has been submitted by the applicant and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out at all times in strict accordance with the approved scheme and in accordance with other such details as may subsequently be agreed in writing by the Planning Authority.

### Reason:

To ensure an adequate investigation and recording of any remains of the Stonehouse Leat that may be affected by the proposed development, and to ensure that the proposed development works do not conflict with Policy CS03 of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007.

### INFORMATIVE: CONDITIONAL APPROVAL

(1) In accordance with the requirements of Article 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010 and paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework the Council has worked in a positive and pro-active way, including pre-application discussions, and has imposed planning conditions to enable the grant of planning permission.

### **Statement of Reasons for Approval and Relevant Policies**

Having regard to the main planning considerations, which in this case are considered to be: the effect on the Listed Building, the proposal is not considered to be demonstrably harmful. In the absence of any other overriding considerations, and with the imposition of the specified conditions, the proposed works are acceptable and comply with (1) policies of the Plymouth Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2006-2021) 2007 and supporting Development Plan Documents and Supplementary Planning Documents (the status of these documents is set out within the City of Plymouth Local Development Scheme) and (b) relevant Government Policy Statements and Government Circulars, as follows:

CS34 - Planning Application Consideration

CS03 - Historic Environment

CS02 - Design

NPPF - National Planning Policy Framework March 2012