

BOROUGH OF KETTERING

Committee	Full Planning Committee - 27/06/2017	Item No: 5.2
Report Originator	Christina Riley Senior Development Officer	Application No: KET/2016/0801
Wards Affected	Rothwell	
Location	The Woodlands Hospital, Rothwell Road, Kettering	
Proposal	Full Application: Front, side and rear extensions to main hospital block with side extension to physio block. Enlarged sub-station and new switch room with external plant replacement	
Applicant	Ramsay Healthcare UK LTD	

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- To describe the above proposals
- To identify and report on the issues arising from it
- To state a recommendation on the application

2. RECOMMENDATION

THE DEVELOPMENT CONTROL MANAGER RECOMMENDS that this application be APPROVED subject to the following Condition(s):-

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this planning permission.

REASON: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) and to prevent an accumulation of unimplemented planning permissions.

2. The materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall match, in type, colour and texture, those on the existing building.

REASON: In the interests of visual amenity in accordance policy 8 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

3. Prior to first use of the extensions a scheme of landscaping which shall specify species, planting sizes, spacing and numbers of trees and shrubs to be planted and any existing trees to be retained shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. The approved scheme shall be carried out in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building, unless these works are carried out earlier. Any newly approved trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the date of planting, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the next planting season with others of similar size and species.

REASON: To improve the appearance of the site in the interests of visual amenity in accordance with Policy 8 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

4. In the event that unexpected contamination is found at any time when carrying out the development hereby approved, it must be reported immediately to the Local Planning Authority. Development works at the site shall cease and an investigation and risk assessment undertaken to assess the nature and extent of the unexpected contamination. A written report of the findings shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority, together with a scheme to remediate, if required, prior to further development on site taking place. Only once written approval from the Local Planning Authority has been given shall development works recommence.

REASON: To ensure that risks from land contamination to the future users of the land and neighbouring land are minimised in accordance with Policies 6 and 8 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

5. No development shall take place until a plan prepared to a scale of not less than 1:500 showing details of existing and intended final ground and finished floor levels has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details.

REASON: Finished Floor Levels are necessary prior to commencement to preserve the character of the area in accordance with Policy 8 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy.

Officers Report for KET/2016/0801

This application is reported for Committee decision because there are unresolved, material objections to the proposal.

3.0 Information

Relevant Planning History

KET/2015/0851 - Formation of 29 no. car parking spaces. Approved 08/12/15.

KET/2015/0801 - Single storey ground floor infill extension and installation of 2 no. wall mounted chiller units. Relocation of 4 no. chiller units. Approved 11/11/2015.

KET/2015/0664 - Replacement portacabin store with office. Approved 14/10/2015.

KET/2011/0313 - Front, side and rear extensions, elevation alterations, sewage treatment plant, new generator and chiller compounds, mobile MRI base and 4 no. car parking spaces. Approved 22/08/2011.

KET/2011/0184 - Alterations to hard surfacing of parking area. Approved 18/05/2011.

KET/2010/0430 - 28 additional car parking spaces. Approved 17/08/2010.

KET/2007/1106 - Installation of new external door and ramp on south elevation and enlargement of existing external door on north elevation. Approved 10/01/2008.

KET/2006/0119 - Revisions to and resurfacing of existing car parking area including upgrading of link path. Approved 09/03/2006.

KET/2005/0460 - Retention of 2 no. Portakabins for office and store on part of existing car park. Approved 05/07/2005.

KE/03/0808 - Various single storey extensions to front, rear and side and admin building within grounds. Approved 28/04/2004.

KE/03/0206 - Installation of 2 no. portakabins for office and store on part of existing car park area. Approved 24/04/2003.

KE/88/1255 - Erection of Independent Hospital. Approved. 14/12/1988.

Site Visit

Officer's site inspection was carried out on 11.01.2016.

Site Description

The application site is a hospital complex on the south side of the A14, located

in open countryside to the west of Kettering. The site is accessed from the A14 (towards Rothwell), via junction 6 a small on/off slip road. Kettering bound exits onto the A14 via a single lane tunnel which passes under the A14.

The site slopes downwards from the northeast to southwest with the northern boundary land level approximately 8 metres higher than the land levels at the southern boundary. At the site boundaries there is substantial woodland screening, particularly to the north, which acts as a visual and sound buffer from the A14.

Due to the change in land levels at the site, the L-shaped red brick hospital building varies in height between two and three-storey with the three-storey elements located at the south end of the site (at the lower ground level), reducing to two-storey the further north (towards the A14) the building is set. As a result, the ground floor in the two-storey part is level with the first floor in the three-storey part. The whole building is covered by a hipped grey concrete tile roof, and all windows and doors are dark brown PVCu. There is some decorative buff brickwork at second floor level on the three-storey element at the south end of the site and all sills and lintels are buff soldier bricks. The majority of the windows have a horizontal emphasis and are regularly spaced within the brickwork.

To the east of the main hospital building is a separate single storey square red brick building with a hipped roof called Schofield House, which is a purpose built outpatient's physiotherapy department for Woodlands Hospital.

There is a car park to the north and east of the hospital building. To the west and north-west of the main hospital building, between the building and the boundary of the site is a service yard area which contains various plant, machinery and single storey storage sheds for use by the hospital.

Consent was given in 2015 (KET/2015/0851) for an extension to the car park, in an area lying between the southern end of the main hospital and Scofield House and surrounding development. This consent has been implemented.

Other surrounding development includes Marval Software Ltd which is located immediately to the east of the application site, and Rothwell Grange Farm and Rothwell Grange Court, a small business park, which are located opposite the site on the north side of the A14.

Proposed Development

The application proposes various extensions and additional plant buildings which are detailed below. The work is required to deal with increased patients from the private sector and NHS referred patients. A net additional gross internal floor space of 720 sq. m. is proposed. The total gross internal floor space is proposed to rise from 4,262 to 4,982 sq. m.

Extension 1 – Single storey and two storey extension to front (eastern elevation) of the main hospital, to provide an additional operating theatre and ancillary accommodation at ground floor, with staff rest room over and plant

area on the flat roof above. Due to the levels difference within the site, the ground floor of the extension is actually level with the first floor in the three-storey part, and the first floor level in the two storey element is level with second floor in the three storey element. Internal alterations will need to be made to the existing building to allow access through to the proposed extension.

Extension 2 – Single storey front extension to entrance to provide additional lobby space.

Extension 3 – Single storey extension to south elevation to provide consultant and treatment rooms, plus an office for the hospital manager.

Extension 4 – Three storey extension which wraps around the south-western corner of the main hospital. The ground floor will house an MRI scanner, with wards on the 1st and 2nd floor. The extension will have a hipped roof with a flat centre section, which will house additional plant. Internal alterations will need to be made to the existing building to allow access through to the proposed extension.

Extension 5 – Single story side extension to southern elevation of Schofield House to provide two additional treatment rooms.

Other works proposed include:

A raised platform to house the AHU (Air Handling Unit) plant equipment required for the operating theatre. Two ducts will pass from this platform into the roof of the existing hospital and from there to the existing plant room. The additional units are needed because of the additional theatre. The platform is located in the car park to the north of the main hospital; with the lowest point being 3m high which will allow cars to park under it. A 5.5m timber hit and miss screen is proposed around the north, east and west elevations.

New Sub-station measuring 2.5m x 2.5m - Dark Green

New Switch room measuring 5m x 4m – Dark Green

The works proposed include internal works to access the extensions and allow better operation within the hospital. These works do not require planning permission but are included noted here for the sake of completeness.

Any Constraints Affecting the Site

Open Countryside

A14

4.0 Consultation and Customer Impact

Rothwell Town Council – No objection

Highways England – There are no records of accidents at this junction of the A14, however the junction with the A14 is considered to be sub-standard. As a

result Highways England asked for additional information to allow the impact of the proposal on the A14 to be taken into account.

The applicants submitted an Updated Transport Assessment, Risk Assessment and have discussed possible mitigation (included a Vehicle Activated Sign, discussed in more detail below) to reduce the risk at the junction. As a result of the additional information submitted Highways England now has 'No Objections' to the proposal.

Highway Authority – Transport Statement should be updated to include additional information relating to i) visibility splays; and ii) car parking.

On submission of an amended Transport Statement the Local Highway Authority has no objection to the proposal, subject to conditions relating to mud on the road.

The Local Highway Authority was also consulted on the possibility of a Vehicle Activated Sign and had no objection.

Environmental Health – no objection, request that conditions relating to contaminated land, construction and radon are imposed.

Neighbours – one letter has been received objecting to the proposal on the following grounds: i) application proposes significant extensions and alterations to an already incongruous building in the open countryside, parts of the site and its buildings, particularly those on the southern boundary of the site are highly visible from Thorpe Malsor, and a number of footpaths; ii) incongruous design, including non-traditional materials, height (in places 3 stories) and lack of windows); iii) the removal of 4 trees and no replacement tree planting is unacceptable and will increase the visual impact of the proposal; iv) intensification of use in what an unsustainable location which is not serviced by public transport; v) no increase in car parking on the site.

5.0 **Planning Policy**

National Planning Policy Framework.

Paragraph 11 (presumption in favour of sustainable development)

Paragraph 17 (core planning principles)

Policy 1. Building a strong, competitive economy

Policy 3: Supporting a prosperous rural economy

Policy 7. Requiring good design

Development Plan Policies

North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy

Policy 1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development

Policy 8: North Northamptonshire Place Shaping Principles

Policy 11: The Network of Urban and Rural Areas

Policy 22: Delivering Economic Prosperity

Policy 23: Distribution of New Jobs
Policy 25: Rural Economic Development and Diversification

Local Plan

7. Environment: Protection of the Open Countryside

6.0 Financial/Resource Implications

None

7.0 Planning Considerations

The key issues for consideration in this application are:-

1. The principle of development.
2. Character and Appearance and Impact on Open Countryside
3. Amenity
4. The effect of the proposal on parking and highway safety.

1. The Principle of Development

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires local planning authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the Development Plan unless material planning considerations indicate otherwise.

The application site is within Open Countryside where National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), policies 11 and 23 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (NNJCS) and Policy 7 of the Local Plan for Kettering Borough, normally seek to direct employment development to existing settlements. Policy 22 of the NNJCS prioritises the enhancement of existing employment sites and Policy 3 of the NPPF and Policy 25 of the NNJCS supports the expansion of existing businesses in rural areas subject to certain criteria, including the protection of the environment and a recognition that facilities with access by foot, cycle or public transport provide the greatest opportunity for sustainable rural development.

Although the application is in open countryside, it does relate to extensions to an existing hospital site within the existing hospital grounds. The principle of the use of this site for a hospital has been established since the granting of planning permission in 1988 and is a material consideration in the determination of this application.

It is recognised that the application site is not in the most sustainable of locations and the proposal will result in additional traffic to an existing site which is not serviced by public transport. The operators of the hospital operate a Cycle to Work scheme where staff can apply for a new bicycle with up to 30% discount, there is a cycle route on the northern side of the A14 which runs from Kettering to Rothwell and from which Woodlands Hospital can be accessed via the tunnel under the A14. The applicants also propose a car sharing campaign to try and reduce car use. It is considered that these

measures are all that might reasonably be expected of the applicant bearing in mind the existing use of the site.

In light of the above measures taken to reduce reliance on the car and the fact that the principle of a hospital on this site has already been established it is considered that the extensions to the hospital are acceptable in principle, despite its location.

Provided the character and quality of the wider countryside is protected and there is no adverse impact on character and appearance of the existing built environment, neighbour amenity and the highway network, the principle of development for this proposal is therefore established.

2. Character and Appearance and Impact on Open Countryside

Good design, character and appearance of proposals are promoted by Section 7 'Requiring Good Design' of the National Planning Policy Framework. Policy 8 of North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy requires that development responds to the sites immediate and wider context and local character.

The Core Principles of the NPPF sets out the requirement to protect the intrinsic value of the open countryside and Policy 3 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Spatial Strategy states (amongst other things) that development should conserve and where possible enhance the existing character and qualities of the local landscape.

The Woodland Hospital is an established use within a small complex of buildings developed on land formerly part of Rothwell Grange Farm located on sites to the north and south of the A14.

The proposal is for a number of extensions and plant buildings all located within the existing boundaries of the site. The impact of each is considered below.

Extension 1 is on the eastern elevation of the site and faces into the site. It is surrounded by existing hospital buildings to the north, south and west, and in part by the higher ground level and Schofield House to the east. As a result this extension will not be visible in the wider landscape and there will be only limited views from the neighbouring offices. This aspect of the application is considered acceptable in relation to design and impact on the character and appearance of the open countryside.

Extension 2 is a single storey, roughly triangular shaped extension, located at the main entrance to the hospital, and will provide additional lobby space. The extension is small and subservient to the existing building, using materials and detailing which will match the main hospital. It will not be possible to view this extension from the open countryside to the south, east and west as it will be screened by the main hospital building and Schofield House. Views from the neighbouring employment property will be minimal and partially screened by the increase in ground level from the east to west of the site. This element of the proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Extension 3 is a single storey extension which runs along roughly 2/5th of the southern elevation of the main hospital building. This extension will house additional consultant and treatment rooms, plus an office for the hospital manager. The objector has expressed concern about the impact of this proposal as they consider it will be visible from the open countryside and residential properties in Thorpe Malsor and at Thorpe Malsor Reservoir.

The extension is small and subservient to the existing building and follows the roof style and pitch, fenestration layout/style and detailing of the host building. It is considered that views of this extension from the surrounding countryside, or footpaths will be minimal due to the small nature of the works and partial screening by an existing hedgerow on the southern boundary of the site. This element of the proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Extension 4 is the largest and will be the most visible from outside the site, in particular from the south and west. It is three stories high and wraps around the south-western corner of the main hospital building. There are no windows on the ground floor, for reasons discussed below. An external staircase (fire escape) wraps around the north-western corner of the extension. The objector has expressed concern at the impact of this extension in particular, due to its height, lack of windows and materials, on the open countryside and when viewed from dwellings in The Square, Thorpe Malsor, the dwelling at Thorpe Malsor Reservoir and a number of footpaths.

Due to the height of the building it will be possible to view the extension from open countryside to the south and west of the site. Despite being three stories, the ridge of the roof is still lower than the ridge line of the main hospital by 1m. The extension has been designed as far as possible to reflect the existing building in terms of roof pitch, materials and detailing. In particular, the use of matching materials will allow the proposal to blend in with existing building, thus reducing its overall impact in design terms, and its impact on the open countryside.

The nearest publically accessible space to the site is Glen Baulk Road, a public footpath lying to the south-east of the site, this is over 400m from the site. The Square, Thorpe Malsor is over 900m away and the dwelling at Thorpe Malsor Reservoir is 850m away. Due to these distances it is considered that views of the extensions will merge into the view of the existing hospital, especially in matching materials are used.

The objectors have also commented on the lack of windows in the building. There are no windows proposed at ground floor level and in normal circumstances it is agreed that this would be a preferred design feature. In this instance however there are operational reasons that a windowless room is preferred. The ground floor is housing an MRI scanner, which is sensitive to outside interference and which requires a 'Faraday cage' around it to help prevent this. The insertion of windows could make it harder for this 'cage' to work. The two further stories and roof of the extension have been designed to reflect the existing building in terms of roof pitch, materials and detailing.

Windows on the southern elevation to the second floor match those on the second floor of the main hospital. Those on the first floor do not match in size, but do carry over the detailing (brick cills and headers). Limited windows are proposed on the western elevation.

Due to the distances (discussed above) between the extension and locations from which the public can gain a view it is not considered that the lack of windows to the ground floor, or the smaller windows on the first floor will have a significant adverse impact on the character and appearance on the open countryside when viewed from the wider area. The impact on the site itself of this extension will be limited as it is largely screened by existing buildings. The area around the windowless ground floor is not likely to be experienced by many of those using the site. As a result the extension is considered acceptable in relation to its impact on the site as a whole.

The fire escape will be screened from view from open countryside to the south by the extension.

Extension 5 is to the southern elevation of Schofield House. The extension is small and subservient to the existing building and follows the roof style and pitch, fenestration layout/style and detailing of the host building. It is considered that views of this extension from the surrounding countryside, or footpaths will be minimal due to the small nature of the works and partial screening by an existing hedgerow on the southern boundary of the site. This element of the proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable.

The cumulative impact of Extensions 3, 4 and 5 which will all be glimpsed from the open countryside to the south of the site must also be considered. Whilst it is accepted that these extensions will be seen, this will be from considerable distances (as explained above) and they will be viewed against the already present hospital building. The use of materials that will match existing will allow these extensions to 'blend in' to the hospital more than the traditional materials suggested by the objector. The applicant has agreed to provide additional planting to replace the trees that are to be lost as a result of the proposal; this will also help to limit the impact of the development, especially in relation to Extension 4. Conditions will be added to this effect. It is therefore considered that the limited cumulative impact of these extensions in design terms and on the open countryside is acceptable.

To the north-west of the main hospital building, located in the service yard area, a new sub-station and a new switch room are proposed. These buildings are of the style and design that one would expect to see and are therefore expectable in this respect. Views of these buildings will be shielded from outside the site by the hospital building and by the existing wooded area at the north of the site, and by the increase in ground level from south to north and therefore do not intrude into the open countryside. This element of the proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of design and its impact on the open countryside.

The raised platform to house the AHU (Air Handling Unit) plant equipment

required for the operating theatre is located to the east of the sub-station and switch room, in the car park to the north of the main hospital. The lowest point of the platform is 3m high which will allow cars to park under it, thus limiting loss of parking spaces. The AHU will be located on top of the platform and two ducts will pass from the AHU into the roof of the existing hospital and from there to the existing plant room.

It is accepted that the platform, AHU and timber screen are not perhaps the most attractive method available for providing the plant equipment, however this arrangement does mean that car parking spaces remain available below the platform. The timber hit and miss screen will hide the platform and AHU from within the site itself. Views of the platform and screen from the open countryside will be negligible as they will be obscured by the existing hospital and the substantial tree planting and bund to the A14 located in the north-eastern corner of the site. It is therefore considered that this aspect of the proposal is acceptable.

As a result of the above it is considered that the proposed development will not have an adverse impact on the quality of the surrounding area or open countryside. The proposal is therefore in accordance with Section 7 of the NPPF, policy 7 of the Local Plan for Kettering Borough and policy 8 of the NNJCS which requires new development to conserve and respect the open countryside, landscape character and its surroundings.

3. Amenity

Policy 8 of the NNJCS requires development to protect amenity by not resulting in an unacceptable impact on amenity by reason of (amongst other criteria) noise, loss of light or overlooking. The application site has limited neighbours, with open countryside to the south and west and the A14 to the north. To the east of the application site is Rothwell Grange, a property in a commercial use, this is the nearest building to the application site. Of the work proposed, the closest to the Rothwell Grange is the ground floor side extension to house two additional treatment rooms at Schofield House, the Physiotherapy department for the hospital. This extension is single storey and is located over 15m from the Rothwell Grange. One window is proposed in the eastern elevation, this will overlook the grounds of Rothwell Grange.

The remaining works proposed are all over 60m from Rothwell Grange. They are all extensions to the main hospital, which is located on ground that slopes downwards away from Rothwell Grange. The switch room and AHU plant platform are screened by the existing hospital and the MRI extension is partially screened by the existing hospital. The difference in ground levels, plus the distance between the extensions and the neighbouring property means that they will not impact on Rothwell Grange.

The proposed use is unlikely to create significant overlooking, noise etc. over and above that already generated by the use of the site as a hospital. In addition, the neighbouring properties are all non-domestic and as such are less sensitive to amenity issues than dwellings. It is therefore considered that any loss of amenity will be slight and not significant enough to warrant a

refusal of planning permission.

As there are no dwellings close to the site it is not considered necessary to have conditions relating to working hours. A condition relating to unexpected contamination has been added, plus an informative with regard to radon.

The proposals comply with policy 8 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy which requires new development not to result in an unacceptable impact on the amenities of neighbouring properties.

4. Highway Safety and Parking

Policy 8 of the NNJCS requires development to have a satisfactory means of access and parking. In addition it requires development to not have an adverse impact on highway safety. The proposal will lead to an additional 12 full-time equivalent staff and more patients accessing the site.

The site is accessed off Junction 6 of the A14. Junction 6 is considered to be sub-standard by Highways England and they asked for the submission of additional information. The Local Highway Authority requested clarification in relation to visibility splays at the site access with the unnamed road that runs underneath the A14. As a result the applicants submitted an Updated Transport Assessment, and a Safety Risk Assessment of junction 6.

The revised Transport Assessment was submitted and the Local Highway Authority has no objection to the proposal subject to parking meeting NCC Standards. (discussed below)

The submitted Risk Assessment classified the risks at the junction that would be associated with the development as 'Low'. Highways England agreed with this assessment but asked that the applicants consider possible mitigation to reduce the risk at the junction.

Various mitigation measures including i) changes to signage and lining to encourage motorists not to use the west bound on-slip and ii) a vehicle activated sign warning drivers of 'Merging Traffic Ahead' have been considered. All the mitigation proposed had some difficulties and safety concerns. As a result Highways England have 'concluded that the applicant has used reasonable endeavours to identify appropriate mitigation but no deliverable solution has been identified. In the absence of evidence of an existing safety issue at the junction we do not consider that the residual cumulative impacts of the development would be considered severe' and now have no objection to the proposal.

NCC Highways Standards have not been adopted by this authority; nevertheless they provide a useful guide in assessing the parking requirements of development proposal. Based on these requirements the proposal results in a need for 100 car parking spaces, (including 9 disabled spaces) and 6 motor cycle spaces. There is already a car park on site, although some spaces will be lost due to the theatre extension and the creation of a separate Ambulance parking/unloading area close to the main

entrance. Some minor changes to incorporate the need for larger sizes for disabled parking spaces have also been made.

The application shows 136 spaces, (including 9 disabled spaces) and 6 motor cycle spaces, which is over the amount suggested by NCC Highways Standards. It should be noted that 6 spaces will be taken up periodically by a Mobile CT scanner; on these days there will still be 130 spaces available for use, which again meets the requirements suggested by NCC Highways Standards. The proposal is therefore considered to be acceptable in parking terms.

It is also noted that the standard parking bays are smaller than the 2.5m x 5m now suggested by NCC Highways. The spaces did however meet the standards in place at the time they were given consent. It is considered that it would be unreasonable to request the size of existing spaces be changed as a result of this application especially as there are more spaces that required. The disabled parking spaces do meet NCC's current requirements.

Comments on other points raised by proposal

No other issues raised.

Conclusion

It is considered that this proposal complies with national planning policy contained in Policies 1 and 7 of the National Planning Policy Framework and Policies 8, 11, 22, 23 and 25 of the North Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy. It will not have a detrimental impact upon the main building, the character of the site in which it is located, or the wider open countryside. Due to its location within the site it will not impact upon neighbouring amenity. As such it is recommended that permission is granted subject to the imposition of suitable conditions.

Background Papers

Title of Document:

Date:

Contact Officer:

Christina Riley, Senior Development Officer on 01536
534316

Previous Reports/Minutes

Ref:

Date: