

Item No. 8

APPLICATION NUMBER	CB/13/01022/FULL
LOCATION	Houghton Hall Park, Houghton Hall Business Park, Houghton Regis
PROPOSAL	New Heritage Hub (visitors centre) with expansion of the existing car park.
PARISH	Houghton Regis
WARD	Houghton Hall
WARD COUNCILLORS	Cllrs Mrs Goodchild & Jones
CASE OFFICER	Abel Bunu
DATE REGISTERED	15 April 2013
EXPIRY DATE	10 June 2013
APPLICANT	Central Bedfordshire Council
AGENT	Nicolas Tye Architects
REASON FOR COMMITTEE TO DETERMINE	The application site is owned by Central Bedfordshire Council
RECOMMENDED DECISION	Full Application - Approval

Recommended Reasons for Granting

The proposed development would, preserve the character and appearance of the historic environment, advance awareness of the heritage assets and would not be prejudicial to highway safety thereby conforming to the development plan comprising Policies, BE7, BE8, SD1 and T10 of the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review and Policies 1,2, 22, 27,43 & 45 of the emerging Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire and national advice contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and the supplementary planning guidance, 'Design in Central Bedfordshire, A Guide for Development', 2010.

Site Location:

The application site is situated in the south eastern corner of Houghton Hall Park, which lies to the west of Park Road North in the Houghton Regis Conservation Area. Houghton Hall Park is a 19th century designed landscape associated with Houghton Hall, a 17th century Grade II Listed Building situated at the centre of Houghton Regis town. The site is bounded on the south east by Houghton Hall Business Park and a considerable area of parkland, approximately 16,5 ha in the north and west beyond which are mainly residential properties. The site is currently occupied by an existing visitors car park, an area of parkland, trees and shrub.

The Application:

seeks permission to erect a heritage hub and the expansion of the existing car park in order to enhance Houghton Hall Park by improving its accessibility and providing

complementary facilities within the park whilst sensitively conserving and restoring appropriate elements of the historic environment in order to promote the enjoyment of the park by the local community. The scheme would incorporate the following:

- An amphitheatre to the rear of the building to provide space for external functions, group gathering space or relaxation with views into the wider park area.
- Two flexible meeting rooms with a maximum sitting capacity of 50 people. The rooms could be adapted for various other uses like teaching space, community meetings for local businesses and organisations or for private functions like weddings.
- A large flexible multi-function cafe and exhibition area where visitors could learn about the park and the local community.
- Enlargement of the existing car park. The existing car park has 23 spaces. The car park extension would create an additional 53 car parking spaces (including disabled provision). There will additionally be space for a coach. The total capacity of the extended car park would therefore be 76 spaces and a coach space.

Design detail submitted in support of the application

- The building would be a rectilinear curved design with a gentle sloping mono-pitched roof.
- The roof would be of highly insulated aluminium standing seam, brown in colour to blend with the surrounding landscape.
- The facade would have polyester powder coated aluminium thermally broken framed windows with double glazed units to achieve high levels of thermal performance.
- The building would be constructed of a steel frame with the envelope constructed of timber frame walls.
- The building would incorporate sustainable construction methods based on the need to be energy efficient. Consideration would be given to the use of alternative renewable energy sources and materials.
- Solar panels would be installed to assist in heating water. The provision of a ground source heat pump would be considered subject to the availability of funds.
- Natural daylight into the building would be maximised by the provision of full height windows and the provision of sun pipes or rooflights to reduce the need for artificial light.

RELEVANT POLICIES:

National Planning Policy Framework (27 March 2012)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published on 27th March 2012 and replaced most of the previous national planning policy documents PPS's and PPGs. The following sections of the NPPF are considered relevant to this application.

Paragraphs 6 to 17 : Achieving Sustainable Development.
Section 4 : Promoting Sustainable Transport

Section 7: Requiring good design.

Section 12: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment.

South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review Policies

The NPPF advises of the weight to be attached to existing local plans for plans adopted prior to the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, as in the case of the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review. Due weight can be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the framework. It is considered that the following policies are broadly consistent with the framework, with the exception of policy T10, and significant weight should be attached to them.

SD1 Sustainability Keynote

BE8 Design Considerations

BE7 Historic Parks and Gardens

T10 Parking in New Developments

Endorsed Core Strategy - South

The Pre-Submission Core Strategy for Southern Central Bedfordshire was endorsed for Development Management purposes by the Executive in August 2011 following the decision of The Luton and South Bedfordshire Joint Committee's resolution on the 29th July 2011 to seek the withdrawal of the Luton and southern Central Bedfordshire Joint Core Strategy.

Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire

Having regard to the National Planning Policy Framework, significant weight is given to the policies contained within the emerging Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire, which is consistent with the NPPF. The draft Development Strategy is due to be submitted to the Secretary of State in May 2013 and the following policies are considered relevant to the determination of this application:

Policy 1 : Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy 22 : Leisure and Open space provision

Policy 27 : Car Parking

Policy 43: High Quality Development

Policy 45 : The Historic Environment

Supplementary Planning Guidance

Central Bedfordshire Design Guide: A Guide for Development (2010):

Design supplement 5 : The Historic Environment

Design Supplement 7 : Movement, Streets and Places

Local Transport Plan: Appendix F - Parking Standards

Planning History

None

Representations: (Parish & Neighbours)

Town Council	To be reported at the meeting.
Neighbours 19 Easthill Road,	Objections <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The look of Houghton Hall Park would be spoiled• How would it be funded in the future?• Vandalism and unsocial behaviour• Security at night• Not necessary to have a visitors centre when other options are available close by, eg expanding the cricket pavilion on the Green, Houghton Regis Library or the Community Centre.

Consultations/Publicity responses

Conservation Officer	I am happy for approval to be granted subject to the application of standard Conditions in respect of the following:
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(Prior to commencement)
the submission and agreement of the following:
-external wall and roof materials, including rainwater goods.
-external finishes schedule (including colourings).

Archaeologist	<p>The proposed development site lies within the boundary of Houghton Hall Park (HER 7024) landscaped grounds and under the terms of the <i>National Planning Policy Framework</i> (NPPF) this is a heritage asset with archaeological and historic interest. Houghton Hall Park is a small designed landscape associated with Houghton Hall (HER 5687, LB 38/186 – Grade II*) and the Brandreth family, who were major landowners in Houghton Regis from the 17th to 20th centuries. The Hall dates to the end of the 17th century, although it has undergone extensive remodelling. Historic maps indicate the parkland developed from the middle of the 18th century onwards and while small, it appears to have followed the trend of other designed landscapes of this period; comprising a formal garden and kitchen garden and a more “naturalised” landscape of carefully planted woodlands, specimen trees and pathways. The latter was separated from the former by a ha-ha, which created a physical barrier (to prevent livestock from straying in to the formal areas) without interrupting the views across the parkland.</p>
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The Conservation Statement (Central Bedfordshire Council, January 2012) provides a more detailed assessment of Houghton Hall Park. It is not however a

heritage asset assessment and does not deal with the impact of the proposed development on the historic environment, which this application is apparently designed to enhance. The documents that accompany this application provide limited information on the impact or potential impact on the heritage assets with archaeological and historical interest. Nevertheless, there will be an impact and it will be irreversible, affecting any surviving archaeological deposits present on the site and the significance of the heritage assets with both archaeological and historic interest. This does not present an over-riding constraint on the development providing that the applicant takes appropriate measures to record and advance understanding of all the heritage assets affected by the development. This will be achieved by the implementation of a scheme of heritage asset resource management that will include the investigation and recording of any archaeological deposits, their post excavation analysis and the publication of the results of this work. It will contain a consideration of the impact of the development on the designed landscape and the assets with historic interest. In order to secure this, please attach an appropriate condition to any permission granted in respect of this application.

Ecologist

To be reported at the meeting.

Highways Officer

The proposal is for a visitors' centre consisting of a small shop (15m²), restaurant (56m²), and assembly rooms (226m²) with the provision of 70 car parking spaces and 1 coach parking space. For the intended use, the parking provision appears to be adequate.

Cycle parking for neither visitors nor staff has been provided nor facilities to allow staff who travel by cycle to change which is a failing of the application. A pedestrian crossing is shown within the site and I question if this is appropriate or should just be a raised table. However this is not a highway issue.

In a highway context I recommend that appropriate conditions be included if planning approval is to be issued.

Environmental Health Officer

To be reported at the meeting.

Tree and Landscape Officer

I have already had informal pre-application site discussions with Paul Burgess regarding the need to allow sufficient clearance from the mature trees situated along the frontage of the site with Park Road North. These trees have not been indicated on the plans I have

received from Nicolas Tye Architects.

The trees being removed from the interior of the site are noted to be young specimens, planted within the last 15 to 20 years as part of a substantial native screening belt between the adjacent business park. The trees can be easily replaced.

I have no objections to the application, but would request a replacement planting condition and a tree protection Plan to safeguard the trees along Park Road North.

Waste Planning Officer To be reported at the meeting.

English Heritage To be reported at the meeting.

Environment Agency To be reported at the meeting.

Determining Issues

The main considerations of the application are;

1. Whether or not the development is acceptable in principle
2. Impact on the character and appearance of the Historic Environment
3. Impact on off-street parking provision and highway safety
4. Other matters

Considerations

1. Whether or not the development is acceptable in principle

Whilst Houghton Hall Park is not included in the English Heritage Register of Historic Parks and Gardens, it is nevertheless recognised as a local heritage asset with archaeological and historic landscape interest and is also one of the twelve parks and gardens protected by local plan policy. Policy BE7 of the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review specifically sets the criteria for development proposals in the historic parks and gardens. The policy states that :

The Local Planning Authority will encourage the conservation, enhancement and restoration of the historic parks and gardens identified as of importance in this plan and on the Proposals Map. Planning permission will not be granted for development that would unacceptably harm the character or appearance of such areas and their settings, or result in the loss of significant features.

This policy guidance is echoed in the emerging Development Strategy in Policies 43 and 45 and national advice contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.(sections 11 and 12). In this case, the proposed development is seen as a wider strategy to conserve, enhance and manage the surviving heritage features of this historic environment for the benefit of the local residents. Furthermore, stakeholder consultation sessions that involved potential

users and members confirmed general support for the proposed development. It is therefore considered that the proposed development is acceptable in principle as it would conform to local and national policy with regards the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment.

2. Impact on the character and appearance of the Historic Environment

The proposed design, including the choice of construction materials would complement the character and appearance of the historic environment. The design closely follows similar successful developments elsewhere in the Council area, in particular, the Marston Vale Visitors Centre near Bedford. With conditions to control the external appearance of the building, it is considered that the development would not detract from the character and appearance of the historic environment. It is also considered that the existing planting around the site that could be secured by a landscaping condition would soften the appearance of the building in wider views.

3. Impact on off-street parking provision and highway safety

The proposed expansion to the existing car park would ensure that the development makes adequate off-street parking provision for the visitors such that no additional demand would be generated for on-street parking on the adjoining highways. Subject to the imposition of conditions recommended by the Highways Officer, the development would therefore not be prejudicial to highway safety.

4. Other matters

Objections

The analysis of the impact of the development on the character and appearance of the area confirms that the scheme would enhance the historic environment and not spoil it contrary to the objector's views. With regards the future funding of the Visitors Centre, it is anticipated that a bid would be submitted for the Heritage Lottery 'Parks for People' funding programme which would be used together with any revenue obtained from hiring out the building for different social functions to sustain the development in the future. There is no evidence that the proposed development would be any more prone to night time security risks or anti-social behaviour than any other developments in the area. However, the design incorporates features to actively minimise damage through vandalism by incorporating roller shutters, appropriate lighting and cctv coverage would be considered depending on affordability. The proposed development is tied to the historic environment and its continued management and hence offers a unique opportunity to raise awareness about the remaining heritage assets in the park whereas the other community facilities mentioned by the objector serve completely different purposes. The application site has a current car park and main road access that would reduce additional traffic into the town centre and viewed in the context of the proposed link road into the Woodside industrial site, it makes this the ideal site to locate a facility that also blends in to an existing business park. The other sites have limited car parking and the pavilion site does not have a car park and is too close to existing residential properties. The Library and Community centre are potentially too far away from the site to enable them to be interactive with the park site.

Human Rights issues

The application proposal raises some human rights issues as reflected by the

objections received. However, taking into account the mitigation measures that could be secured by planning conditions, the human rights of the general public who stand to benefit from the development and the fact that the development would support national objectives in the NPPF, it is considered that withholding planning permission against this background would severely infringe the human rights of the intended beneficiaries and this is an overriding consideration.

Equality Act 2010

The proposed building would have a generously sized entrance designed to enable access by all, accessible parking, clear signage, accessible toilet provisions and aids for communication and hence would be compliant with the Disability Discrimination Access legislation.

Recommendation

That Planning Permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following:

RECOMMENDED CONDITIONS

- 1 The development shall begin not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 **Before development begins and notwithstanding the details submitted with the application, details of the materials and colours to be used for the external walls and roofs of the proposed building including rainwater goods shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall thereafter be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**

Reason: To ensure that the development does not detract from the character and appearance of the historic environment.
(Policies BE8, S.B.L.P.R and 43 & 45 D.S.C.B).

- 3 **Prior to development, a Tree Protection Plan shall be submitted to the Local Planning Authority indicating the position and build specification of protective fencing that shall create a Construction Exclusion Zone around the north-eastern boundary of the site at sufficient distance from the trees to comply with the requirements of BS 5837 : 2012.**

Reason: To ensure the satisfactory retention and protection of mature trees located along the frontage with Park Road North along the north-eastern boundary of the site, to secure their good health, stability screening and amenity value.
(Policies BE8, S.B.L.P.R and 43 D.S.C.B).

- 4 Before the premises are occupied all on site vehicular areas shall be surfaced in a manner to the Local Planning Authority's approval so as to ensure satisfactory parking of vehicles outside highway limits. Arrangements

shall be made for surface water from the site to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge into the highway.

Reason: In order to minimise danger, obstruction, and inconvenience to users of the highway and of the premises.
(Policy 43 D.S.C.B).

- 5 **Development shall not begin until details of secure cycle storage for staff and cycle parking for visitors have been approved by the Local Planning Authority and the building shall not be occupied until the said storage and parking have been constructed in accordance with the approved details.**

Reason: In order to promote sustainable modes of transport.
(Policies 27 & 43 D.S.C.B).

- 6 **Development shall not begin until details of welfare facilities for staff who cycle to the site have been approved by the Local Planning Authority and the building shall not be occupied until the said facilities have been provided in accordance with the approved details.**

Reason: In order to promote sustainable modes of transport.
(Policy 43 D.S.C.B).

- 7 **No development shall commence until a wheel cleaning facility has been provided at all site exits in accordance with a scheme to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The wheel cleaner(s) shall be removed from the site once the roadworks necessary to provide adequate access from the public highway have been completed (apart from final surfacing) to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.**

Reason: In the interests of the amenity and to prevent the deposit of mud or other extraneous material on the highway during the construction period.
(Policy 43 D.S.C.B).

- 8 **Development shall not commence until a scheme detailing provision for on site parking for construction workers for the duration of the construction period has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme shall be implemented throughout the construction period.**

Reason: To ensure adequate off street parking during construction in the interests of road safety.
(Policy 43 D.S.C.B).

- 9 **No development shall take place until a written scheme of heritage asset resource management; that includes post excavation analysis and publication has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The said development shall only be implemented in full accordance with the approved scheme.”**

Reason: To record and advance understanding of the heritage assets which will be unavoidably affected as a consequence of the development.

(Policy 45 D.S.C.B and paragraph 141 of the National Planning Policy Framework).

- 10 The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the details shown on the submitted plans, numbers 1428.01.00, 1428.01.01, 1428.02.01, 1428.02.02, 1428.02.03, 1428.02.04, 1428.02.05 & 1428.02.06.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt.

Notes to Applicant

1. In accordance with Article 31 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2010, the reason for any condition above relates to the Policies as referred to in the South Bedfordshire Local Plan Review (SBLPR) and the emerging Development Strategy for Central Bedfordshire (DSCB).
2. This permission relates only to that required under the Town & Country Planning Acts and does not include any consent or approval under any other enactment or under the Building Regulations. Any other consent or approval which is necessary must be obtained from the appropriate authority.
3. The applicants attention is drawn to their responsibility under The Equality Act 2010 and with particular regard to access arrangements for the disabled.

The Equality Act 2010 requires that service providers must think ahead and make reasonable adjustments to address barriers that impede disabled people.

These requirements are as follows:

- Where a provision, criterion or practice puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage to take reasonable steps to avoid that disadvantage;
- Where a physical feature puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage to avoid that disadvantage or adopt a reasonable alternative method of providing the service or exercising the function;
- Where not providing an auxiliary aid puts disabled people at a substantial disadvantage to provide that auxiliary aid.

In doing this, it is a good idea to consider the range of disabilities that your actual or potential service users might have. You should not wait until a disabled person experiences difficulties using a service, as this may make it too late to make the necessary adjustment.

For further information on disability access contact:

The Centre for Accessible Environments (www.cae.org.uk)
Central Bedfordshire Access Group (www.centralbedsaccessgroup.co.uk)

Statement required by the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2012 - Article 31

Planning permission has been recommended for this proposal. The Council acted pro-actively through early engagement with the applicant at the pre-application stage which led to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted pro-actively to secure a sustainable form of development in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2012.

DECISION

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