

## **Planning and Heritage Statement**

**Site:** Hamoaze House, Mount Wise Garrison, Cumberland Road, Plymouth, PL1 4JQ

**Description:** Change of use of part of the existing day centre for drug and alcohol rehabilitation (Class E(f), formerly Class D1) to a shelter for homeless persons (Sui Generis); and provision of 4no. external sleeping pods in the enclosed courtyard

### **Site Description:**

Hamoaze House is a large Grade II listed Georgian house located in the Devonport ward of Plymouth. The house was built for the Duke of Richmond in 1795 and later extended. Today the building is owned by the registered charity Hamoaze House, which seeks to preserve and safeguard the health, well-being and recovery of all persons affected by drug (illegal and legal) and/or alcohol dependency. The building is currently used as a day centre for drug and alcohol rehabilitation, which falls under Use Class E(f) (formerly D1), although the planning permission ref. 19/01986/FUL permits temporary use of the east/right wing of the building as a winter night shelter for homeless persons.

Prior to this permission the east/right wing was a seldom used vacant space that had at one point been used as a nursery. The existing night shelter is accessed via the double doors that open on to George Street. These doors open on to a corridor, either side of which there are two bedrooms that contain the four internal sleeping pods permitted by application ref. 20/01669/LBC, in addition to kitchen facilities, a WC and a staff office. The door at the west/left end of the corridor is locked to separate the night shelter from the rest of Hamoaze House. Users of the night shelter have access to the enclosed external courtyard to the south and two external sleeping pods have been provided in this space. Access to the astro-turfed courtyard to the north is not provided.

### **Relevant Planning History:**

19/01986/FUL - Change of use of part of the existing day centre for drug and alcohol rehabilitation (Class E(f), formerly Class D1) to a night shelter for homeless persons (Sui Generis) – Granted Conditionally and implemented in January 2020

20/01669/LBC - Installation of 8no. internal sleeping pods (following associated approval 19/01986/FUL) – Granted Conditionally and implemented in December 2020

### **Proposal and Rationale:**

Plymouth City Council's Community Connections Department secured planning permission for a temporary change of use of the east/right wing of Hamoaze House to a winter night shelter on 21/01/2020 (ref. 19/01986/FUL). That permission is subject to conditions that restrict operation of the night shelter to between the 1<sup>st</sup> October until the 31<sup>st</sup> March and for a period of 5 years until the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024. At the time there was no requirement to submit an application for listed building consent as the full application proposed no alterations to the building, thus there was no impact on the designated heritage asset.

This planning permission was implemented in January 2020 but the winter night shelter closed in March 2020 following the Government's announcement that all dormitory style accommodation should close in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On 03/12/2020, the Community Connection Department secured listed building consent (ref. 20/01669/LBC) to install 8no. internal sleeping pods in the east/right wing bedrooms to provide separation between occupants in accordance with Government guidance. This planning permission was implemented in December 2020 and the Night Shelter reopened on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020.

Since then, 2no. 'Amazing Grace Spaces' sleeping pods have been provided in the external enclosed courtyard to the south of the shelter under permitted development rights (prior approval was not sought). These pods were considered to be incidental to the Sui Generis use of the building.

The sleeping pods have provided a safe environment during the pandemic and they have encouraged more people to come in off the streets, who may have otherwise continued to sleep rough, because of not wanting to share a room with other people. Plymouth has experienced a growing number of people experiencing homelessness, addiction, offending and poor mental health as a result of welfare reforms, under-funding and increasing health inequalities. These have been further compounded by the COVID-19 pandemic. There are currently over 250 single homeless people at risk of rough sleeping accommodated in temporary accommodation provided by Plymouth Alliance partners and this is expected to increase with rising unemployment, which is currently at a five year high, and scaling back of Government support schemes.

Therefore there is need to provide additional homeless accommodation and there is a need to open the winter night shelter as a day and night shelter and on a permanent year-round basis in order to prevent loss of life, reduce rough sleeping to as near zero as possible and support people back into settled accommodation, preventing a return to the streets. The internal sleeping pods were necessary as a result of changes to the way that temporary accommodation can be provided due to COVID-19, but these have rendered the east/right wing of the building, which was already seldom used, unusable for six months of the year outside of the winter months. This application therefore proposes a permanent change of use of the east/right wing of Hamoaze House for day and night homeless provision for 12 months of the year.

Further, the application seeks permission to provide 4no. external sleeping pods within the enclosed courtyard of Hamoaze House (2no. existing and 2no. additional pods). The sleeping pods will be 2.4m x 1.82m x 2.18m and will contain a bed, side table, light, USB phone charger and hand sanitizer. Access to the pods is controlled via a coded smart lock for security. The pods are constructed with timber frames and they have insulation sandwiched between plywood and encapsulated with fibreglass and a fire retardant topcoat. They have an internal space of 2.24m x 1.2m with a gross internal floor area of 2.7m<sup>2</sup>. Please see the photograph of the existing external sleeping pods in Appendix 1.

The facility will continue to be managed by Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA) and supported by the Plymouth Alliance.

## **Planning Statement**

The primary planning considerations are the contribution towards meeting local housing need, impacts on residential amenity and impacts on designated heritage assets:

### **Housing Need**

Plymouth has experienced a growing number of people experiencing homelessness, addiction, offending and poor mental health as a result of welfare reforms, under-funding and increasing health inequalities. The impact of COVID 19 has also been significant. In March 2020, the Government issued a directive to all Local Authorities to bring 'Everyone In' in response to COVID-19. This required all those currently rough sleeping to be accommodated, any existing dormitory style accommodation to close down and those accessing the facilities to be accommodated in a

COVID-19 safe environment. During this period over 213 people in Plymouth have been accommodated under the directive and the demand on homelessness services has been significant.

There are currently over 250 single homeless people at risk of rough sleeping accommodated in temporary accommodation provided by commissioned partners in The Plymouth Alliance. In addition, there remains a number of people sleeping rough who are unable to access other forms of accommodation. This shelter forms part of the supported accommodation offer and provides a safe place to stay for those unable to access other forms of accommodation due to their individual circumstances.

The numbers are expected to rise as the impacts of the COVID-19 induced recession take effect. This application proposes to provide 12 permanent beds to prevent loss of life, reduce rough sleeping to as near zero as possible and support people back into settled accommodation to prevent a return to the streets. Since the shelter was re-opened on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 2020, 33 rough sleepers have been accommodated with 24 of those having been moved on to more long term accommodation. This application will therefore help to address housing need in the city in line with Policy DEV7 of the JLP.

### **Impacts on Residential Amenity**

The site is bound by Mount Wise House offices, private gardens and outdoor recreational space to the east, south and west respectively. A terrace of residential dwellings lies to the north/rear of the site. The astro-turf and a large stone wall to the rear of the site provide approximately 15 metres of separation from the night shelter to the blank gable end wall of the adjacent dwelling. The application site and the adjacent dwellings are historic buildings in a densely developed part of the city. The relationship between the two buildings is established and considered acceptable in planning terms.

The application proposes no significant intensification of use of the building and the night shelter occupants will be similar in character to existing users of the building (i.e. complex needs). The courtyard in which the 4no. external pods will be located is fully enclosed and accessible only via the east/right wing of the building, thus the external pods will not impact upon users of Hamoaze House. The facility will be managed by BCHA, which is a member of the Plymouth Housing Development Partnership and has a proven track record of managing temporary accommodation and supporting vulnerable persons in the City. The facility will be staffed by 5 FTE skilled support workers including an operational manager during the hours of operation.

The Public Protection Service has confirmed that it has not logged a single complaint regarding the night shelter since it opened in January 2020. Nevertheless, the applicant has submitted a comprehensive Operational Manual / Management Plan and it would be willing to agree a planning condition to ensure that the facility is managed in line with the Management Plan. This should address any residential amenity concerns and ensure that the proposal accords with Policy DEV1 of the JLP.

### **Heritage Assessment**

Hamoaze House was first listed as a Grade II listed building on 01/05/1975 under list entry 1386257. The list entry states:

Large house on naval base. 1795, built for the Duke of Richmond and later extended. Plymouth limestone ashlar with mid-floor and sill strings; dry slate hipped roofs behind moulded stone parapets; ashlar stacks to rear of front wings and rendered end stacks to centre block. Large double-

depth plan with 3-storey-over-basement centre block and flanking 2-storey wings, plus various extensions at rear.

EXTERIOR: symmetrical 3:5:3-window front with original and copy sashes with glazing bars under flat arches, shorter windows to upper floors. Central enclosed stone porch with moulded and dentilled entablature and fanlight to round-arched doorway with panelled doors; round-arched side windows. Added to the porch is an open cast-iron trellised verandah with 2 bays on either side of the porch and with a glazed balcony under a hipped roof to 1st floor above. Good side doorway to George Street.

INTERIOR: has many original features of interest including open-well staircase with turned balusters to lower flights and stick balusters higher up.

SUBSIDIARY FEATURES: original wrought-iron forecourt railings. One of a fine group of buildings. (The Buildings of England: Pevsner N: Devon: London: 1989-: 676 & 677; PSA Historic Buildings Register: DOE: Southern England (Devon South West): 88).

Hamoaze House is a high quality building that serves as an important reminder of Plymouth's naval and maritime heritage. Internally the building has many of its original features including the attractive open-well staircase with turned balustrades. However, the photographs in Appendix 2 clearly demonstrate that the rooms that were altered in accordance to 20/01669/LBC have little historic merit, with painted walls and plain skirting boards and with no other wall or ceiling features.

The works that were completed in accordance with 20/01669/LBC were undertaken in such a way that the work could be reversed if the use ends. All aspects that have been attached to the historic fabric were affixed with wall plates and screws and all electrical cables were run in attic spaces or surface mounted on existing walls in trunking. These alterations are not visible from the street and they are considered minimal compared to the scale of the building. As a result, the Planning Officer for 20/01669/LBC confirmed that the harm to the asset would be less than substantial, and the Historic Environment Officer considered the proposal acceptable and in line with Policy DEV21 of the JLP due to the clear and convincing justification, which delivers clear public benefits.

This application seeks to ensure these works are permanent. This will help to safeguard the long term use and maintenance of the building by providing a year-round and permanent use, which will help to preserve the building, for example by heating it. The 4 no. external sleeping pods will be located in the enclosed courtyard, which provides little of historic merit, and they will not be visible from outside of the curtilage of the building. These are temporary structures that are not fixed to the hardstanding. It is therefore considered that the external pods will provide negligible harm to the designated heritage asset.

The proposal is considered necessary to reduce rough sleeping and there is a clear and convincing justification that serves the public interest. These public benefits are considered to outweigh the less than substantial harm that the heritage asset will undergo as a result of the development. The application is therefore considered to accord with Policy DEV21 of the JLP and paragraphs 189-202 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

## **Conclusion**

This application seeks to extend the conditions secured against permissions 19/01986/FUL and 20/01669/LBC to enable the shelter to be used as a day and night shelter all year around and on a permanent basis. Further, the applications seeks to provide 4no. external sleeping pods to increase provision at a time when homeless and unemployment is on the up due to welfare reforms, urban policy and macroeconomics.

The proposals will help to meet housing need and there are provisions in place to mitigate against harmful impacts on residential amenity. The application therefore accords with policies DEV1 and DEV7 of the JLP. Further, there is a clear and convincing justification that will deliver clear public benefits that outweigh the less than substantial harm to the heritage asset, in line with Policy DEV21 of the JLP and paragraphs 189-202 of the NPPF. The application is therefore in accordance with the development plan and the NPPF.

Please do not hesitate to contact the applicant if you require any further information.

**Appendix 1: Existing external sleeping pods in the enclosed courtyard (February 2021).**



**Appendix 2: Internal photographs from before and after implementation of 20/01669/LBC**

Room 1 before



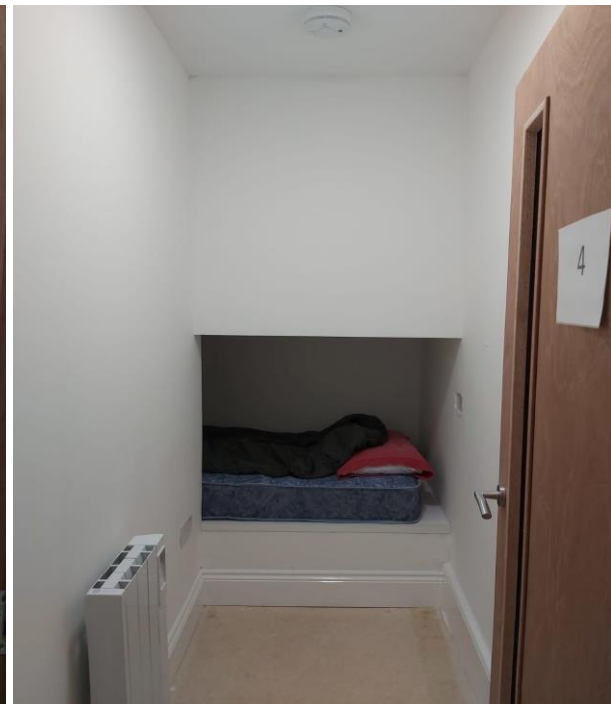
Room 2 before



Room 1 (pod 2) after



Room 1 (pod 4) after



Room 1 after

