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Land at Brucegate, Berwick-upon-Tweed

Planning Statement

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

07 August 2023

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Contents

1.0	Introduction	1
	Scope of Report	1
	Structure of Report	1
2.0	Site Context	2
	Site and Surroundings	2
	Accessibility	2
	Planning History	2
3.0	Proposed Development	3
4.0	Planning Policy Context	4
	National Planning Policy Framework	4
	The Development Plan	4
5.0	Planning Policy Assessment	6
	Assessment Against the Development Plan	6
6.0	Public Benefits	9
7.0	Proposed Planning Condition	10
8.0	Conclusion	11

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust ('the Trust') and accompanies a full planning application for the development of a temporary inpatient building on land at Brucegate, Berwick-upon-Tweed.

Scope of Report

- 1.2 The purpose of this statement is to set out the background to this application and to address the planning policy considerations raised by the development. It should be read alongside the following accompanying documents:

- Completed application forms and ownership certificates;
- Application drawings prepared by P+HS Architects;
- Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by Lichfields;
- Transport Statement prepared by Tetra Tech; and
- Ecology Checklist.

Structure of Report

- 1.3 The remainder of the statement is structured as follows:
- Section 2.0 describes the context to the application site, including a description of the site itself, its accessibility and surroundings, as well as relevant planning history;
 - Section 3.0 summarises the proposed development;
 - Section 4.0 describes the planning policy context, including the National Planning Policy Framework and the adopted Development Plan;
 - Section 5.0 addresses the conformity of the proposed development with the adopted development plan and considers the public benefits associated with the proposals;
 - Section 6.0 sets out a proposed planning condition relating to the temporary proposals; and
 - Section 7.0 provides conclusions on the statement.

2.0 **Site Context**

Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The application site comprises land at Brucegate, which is located within Berwick-upon-Tweed to the north of the town centre, and forms part of Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area. The site comprises hardstanding currently used as car parking associated with the Trust's physiotherapy and maternity department.
- 2.2 The site itself is bounded as follows:
- To the north by residential properties on High Greens which connects the site to Castlegate/A1167 and Berwick Town Centre;
 - To the south by the residential properties of Temperance Terrace and Castlegate Court;
 - To the east by Brucegate and Berwick Infirmary, as well as temporary access gates and hoardings associated with the demolition works and development on the Infirmary site; and
 - To the west by further residential development and the maternity unit and physiotherapy department.

Accessibility

- 2.3 The site is accessible by a choice of means of transport. In particular, a network of pedestrian footways helps to link the site to both Berwick Town Centre, and the surrounding residential areas for those travelling on foot. The site lies approximately 270m walk from the nearest bus stop on Castlegate, where there are bus services to nearby residential areas, including Highfields, North Road, Chapel Street, Golden Square and Newfields, as well as Tweedmouth, East Ord, Spittal, Scremerston, Norham and Wooler and other surrounding settlements. There are also bus stops located near Berwick Train Station, to the north west of the site.
- 2.4 The site is accessible by car from the town centre and nearby residential areas, as well as from the A1167/Castlegate via High Gardens. These roads also provide access to the A1 via the A6105 and to the A698, connecting the site to the wider area of North Northumberland.
- 2.5 Further details of the accessibility of the proposed development are provided in the accompanying Transport Statement prepared by Tetra Tech.

Planning History

- 2.6 Based on a review of Northumberland County Council's planning public access system, there is no recent planning history for the application site. Historically, planning permission was granted in January 1990 for the demolition of store buildings on the application site (ref. N/89/B/LB69).
- 2.7 To the north of the application site, planning permission was granted in November 1999 (ref. N/99/B/0740) for the conversion of former hospital buildings to form 16 residential flats.
- 2.8 There are no other relevant planning permissions for the application site.

3.0 Proposed Development

- 3.1 The development proposed as part of the subject application will create temporary inpatient facilities to support the existing healthcare provision in Berwick, serving the residents of Berwick and the surrounding area.
- 3.2 The proposed development comprises the installation of a modular building with a floorspace of 437 sqm. The building will be one-storey and have kingspan external wall panels in goosewing grey, windows along the north and south elevations and 3no. access ramps along the northern elevation. The building will provide space for 2no. 4-bed bays with circulation spaces, waiting area, lobby, toilets and utility space also provided.
- 3.3 The proposed development is illustrated in the accompanying application drawings prepared by P+HS Architects.
- 3.4 It is intended that the proposed building will remain in situ for a period of 2 years. The proposed building is required to provide temporary inpatient facilities. Once the temporary period ends, the structure will be removed from site and the land reinstated to its former use and condition.

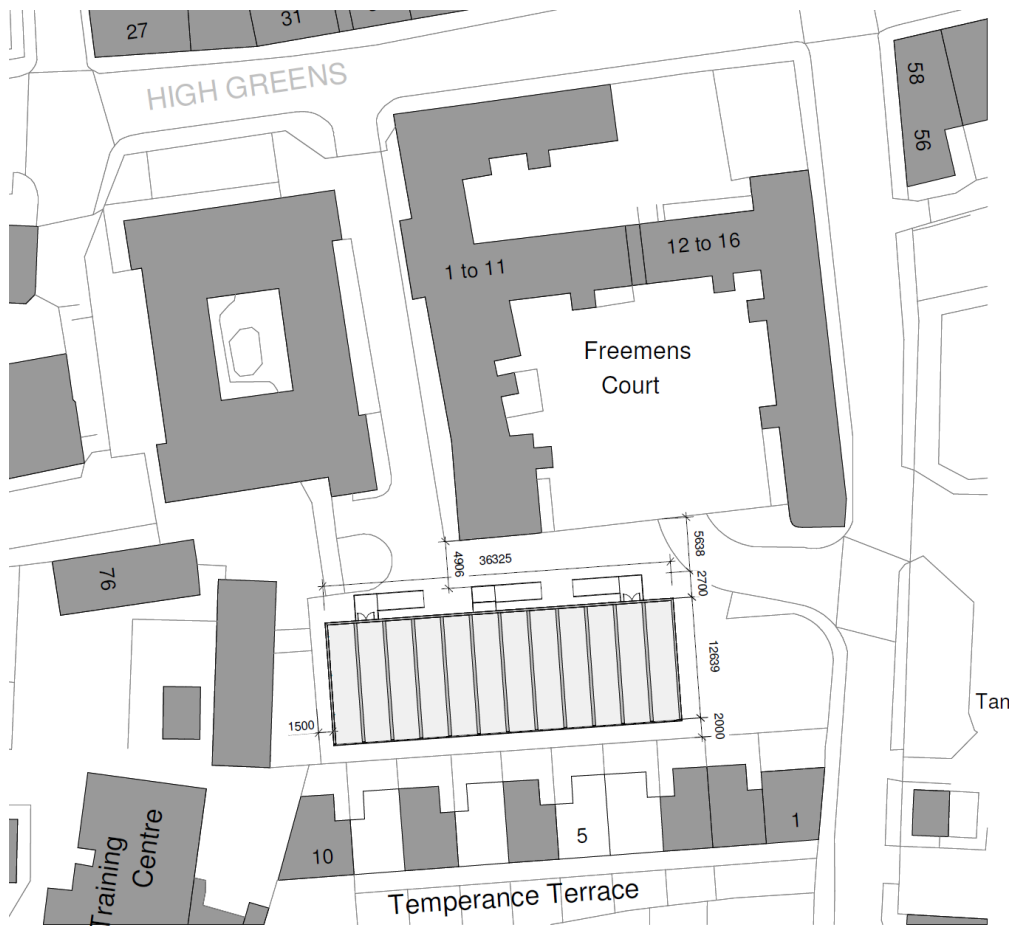


Figure 1: Proposed Site Plan

4.0 **Planning Policy Context**

National Planning Policy Framework

- 4.1 The latest version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published in July 2021. The document sets out the Government’s economic, environmental and social planning policies for England.
- 4.2 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF makes clear that Local Planning Authorities (‘LPAs’) should approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date the development plan without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, granting permission unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole.
- 4.3 Paragraph 96 states that, *“to ensure faster delivery of other public service infrastructure such as... hospitals... local planning authorities should also work proactively and positively with promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to plan for required facilities.”*
- 4.4 Paragraph 123 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should take a positive approach to proposals seeking to make more effective use of sites that provide community services, such as hospitals.
- 4.5 Guidance on proposals affecting heritage assets is provided at Paragraphs 189 to 208. When determining applications, the NPPF requires applicants to *“describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made to their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets’ importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance...”* (Paragraph 194).
- 4.6 Paragraph 202 states where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

The Development Plan

- 4.7 The Northumberland Local Plan, adopted 2022, comprises the adopted development plan for the application site. The relevant planning policies are set out below.
- 4.8 Policy INF 2 considers community services and facilities. Policy INF2 states the improvement in the quantity, quality, accessibility and range of community services and facilities, and the provision of new services and facilities where these will meet an identified need will be supported, subject to conformity with policies elsewhere in the Local Plan, and any made neighbourhood plans, which seek to ensure any significant adverse effects on the environment, habitats, heritage assets and local amenity can be avoided through good design and siting of development or that those effects can be suitably compensated for or mitigated.

- 4.9 Policy QOP2 relates to good design and amenity and states that the physical presence and design of the development should preserve the character of the area and should not have a visually obtrusive or overbearing impact on neighbouring uses.
- 4.10 Policy ENV1 sets out the approaches to assessing the impact of the development on the natural, historic and built environment. Policy ENV1 states that the character and/or significance of Northumberland's distinctive and valued natural, historic and built environments, will be conserved, protected and enhanced.
- 4.11 Policy ENV7 considers the historic environment and heritage assets and explains that development proposals will be assessed and decisions made that ensure the conservation and enhancement of the significance, quality and integrity of Northumberland's heritage assets and their settings. Development proposals that would result in substantial harm to or total loss of the significance of designated heritage assets will not be supported unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that would outweigh the harm or loss. Where development proposals would cause less than substantial harm to the significance of designated heritage assets, this will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing the optimum use that is viable and justifiable.
- 4.12 Policy ENV9 states that within a conservation area it will be ensured that development enhances and reinforces the local distinctiveness of the conservation area, while, wherever possible, better revealing its significance. Development must respect existing architectural and historic character and cultural associations, by having regard to:
- Historic plot boundaries, layouts, densities and patterns of development; and
 - The design, positioning, grouping, form, massing, scale, features, detailing and the use of materials in existing buildings and structures; and
 - The contribution made by the public realm, private spaces and other open areas, including hard and soft landscaping features, trees, hedges, walls, fences, watercourses and surfacing.
- 4.13 Policy TRA 1 promotes sustainable connections and explains that the Council will support development that promotes a spatial distribution which creates accessible development, reduces the need to travel by car and maximises the use of sustainable modes of transport. Policy TRA 1 promotes sustainable transport choices, including supporting, providing and connecting to networks for walking, cycling and public transport, ensures delivery of cycle parking and requires development proposals which generate significant amounts of movements to be supported by transport assessments/transport statements and travel plans, and where appropriate delivery/servicing plans.

5.0 **Planning Policy Assessment**

Assessment Against the Development Plan

5.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compensation Act 2004 states that:

“If regard is to be had to the Development Plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”

5.2 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF also confirms that local authorities should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. This means that local planning authorities should approve proposals that accord with the development plan without delay. Where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless:

- the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
- any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

5.3 The remainder of this section considers the principle of development against the adopted development plan, having regard to the provisions of the NPPF.

Principle of Development

5.4 The application site is not allocated for any specific use in the adopted Northumberland Local Plan (2020) however, Policy INF2 supports the improvement in the quantity, quality, accessibility and range of community services and facilities, and the provision of new services and facilities where these will meet an identified need. In addition, Paragraph 123 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should take a positive approach to proposals seeking to make more effective use of sites that provide community services, such as hospitals.

5.5 The applicant has identified a need to provide a proposed temporary building in order to meet short term demands for inpatient facilities in Berwick and the surrounding area. The proposed building will serve residents in Berwick and support the existing healthcare facilities elsewhere in the Town.

5.6 The new building has been designed to utilise the land within the Trust’s ownership at Brucegate by providing a practical facility meeting the need to accommodate inpatient beds. Proposed for a temporary period of 2 years, the building will ensure inpatient facilities continue to be provided for the Berwick community.

5.7 In this context, it is considered that the proposed development accords with Policy INF2 of the adopted development plan and also the provisions of the NPPF in respect of healthcare and community services.

Heritage

- 5.8 Policy ENV7 of the adopted Local Plan explains that development proposals will be assessed, and decisions made that ensure the conservation and enhancement of the significance, quality and integrity of Northumberland's heritage assets. In addition, Policy ENV 9 sets out the requirements of development within conservation areas. Policy ENV 9 states opportunities will be sought to, and development will be encouraged that will, help to preserve or enhance the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 5.9 A Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) prepared by Lichfields accompanies this planning application. The Assessment identifies above-ground heritage assets that may be affected by the proposed development. In accordance with paragraph 194 of the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF'), it establishes the significance of these assets, including an understanding of their setting and how this contributes to significance.
- 5.10 The heritage assets identified in the HIA which have the potential to be affected by the proposed development include the Berwick-upon-Tweed Conservation Area, the former Church of St Mary (Grade II listed), Berwick Infirmary (non-designated) and the former Berwick Union Workhouse (non-designated).
- 5.11 The HIA concludes that the proposed development would result in a minor adverse effect upon the character and appearance of a localised part of the conservation area, which would also have a minor adverse effect upon the setting of the former Church of St Mary. However, these adverse effects would be temporary and would be reversed once the building is removed in future.
- 5.12 The proposed development would sustain the significance of the surrounding non-designated heritage assets despite having minor adverse effects upon the setting of the former workhouse. This is because the setting of the workhouse, and particularly the application site, does not contribute to its architectural and historic significance. In this context, it can accommodate change within its setting without it affecting its significance.
- 5.13 The design of the proposed development reflects its temporary nature and as such it is designed purely for functionality and is not intended to display any architectural detail or interest externally that would ordinarily be expected from a more permanent structure. In this context, it is not designed to relate to the surrounding historic environment or contribute to the local distinctiveness of the conservation area. However, the character and appearance of the conservation area is recognised as an important consideration which is why this relatively enclosed site has been chosen and the height of the unit has been kept to a minimum to ensure that its visual impact is reduced whilst it remains on the site.
- 5.14 Having regard to the above, it is considered that the application accords with the relevant legislative requirements and adopted planning policies ENV7 and ENV9.

Residential Amenity and Design

- 5.15 Policy QOP2 relates to good design and amenity and states that the physical presence and design of the development should preserve the character of the area and should not have a visually obtrusive or overbearing impact on neighbouring uses.

- 5.16 The proposed development is sited to manage and protect residential amenity as much as possible, whilst also providing an essential facility to support inpatient needs for Berwick residents. The building comprises a one-storey modular building with windows along the north and south elevations. The windows along the southern elevation are below the height of the existing wall to the rear of the properties along Temperance Terrace. Therefore, the windows will not overlook nor impact upon the privacy of residents.
- 5.17 In terms of noise generation, no fixed external plant is proposed as part of the development. Instead, the temporary building utilises utilities and services from the existing neighbouring facilities within the Trust's demise. Therefore, there should be no significant adverse impact upon the amenity of nearby residential receptors due to noise.
- 5.18 During the construction of the proposed building, as the site comprises an area of existing hard standing and given the building is a prefabricated modular building (which will be delivered, assembled and placed on site) with no permanent infrastructure works, noise and disruption from construction should arise only during a very limited period of time.
- 5.19 In addition, and as set out previously in this statement, the proposed building is required on a temporary basis, for a period of up to 2 years. At the end of the two year period, the proposed building will be dismantled and removed, with the site reinstated to its original condition.
- 5.20 On the basis of the above, the proposed development will operate without negatively impacting upon residential amenity and is therefore in accordance with the adopted Policy QOP2.

Highways and Accessibility

- 5.21 Policy TRA 1 promotes sustainable connections and explains that the Council will support development that promotes a spatial distribution which creates accessible development, reduces the need to travel by car and maximises the use of sustainable modes of transport. In this context, a Transport Statement, prepared by Tetra Tech, has been submitted as part of this application.
- 5.22 The statement considers the operational impact of the development on the local road network. It concludes that the proposals would have no severe residual impact upon the existing highway network, given the proposals are temporary in nature.
- 5.23 On the basis of the above, it is consider that the application accords with Policy TRA1 of the adopted development plan.

6.0 Public Benefits

- 6.1 The NPPF advises at paragraph 202 that, where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 6.2 The Heritage Impact Assessment prepared to accompany this application concludes that the proposed development would result in a minor adverse effect upon the character and appearance of a localised part of the conservation area, which would also have a minor adverse effect upon the setting of the former Church of St Mary. However, these adverse effects would be temporary and would be reversed once the building is removed in future.
- 6.3 Notwithstanding this, the proposed temporary inpatient building will provide an essential facility for the Berwick area. It will provide support to the existing healthcare provision in Berwick upon Tweed, serving residents of the Town and the wider area. The application proposals would therefore give rise to the following public benefits:
- Providing an inpatient facility to support existing healthcare provision in Berwick;
 - Retaining inpatient facilities within Berwick, for Berwick residents and residents of the surrounding area;
 - Maintaining services close to patient's homes within the heart of Berwick-upon-Tweed;
 - Retaining associated healthcare employment within Berwick-upon-Tweed;
 - Utilising an existing hardstanding area, near to existing healthcare facilities, negating the need to use an undeveloped site;
 - Impact and disruption from the construction period will be limited given the proposals comprise a prefabricated modular building; and
 - The proposals will be temporary and the land reinstated to its original condition following the removal of the temporary building.
- 6.4 These public benefits, along with the essential need for inpatient facilities, should be considered when determining the planning application.

7.0 **Proposed Planning Condition**

7.1 As set out earlier in this Statement, the proposed development comprises a temporary inpatient building on land at Brucegate, Berwick upon Tweed.

7.2 In order to secure the temporary use of the site for an inpatient building, and ensure the land is reinstated to its original condition, we propose the following condition is attached to any planning permission:

“The permission hereby granted shall be until the [INSERT DATE] and on the expiration of this period, the use and all associated structures hereby approved shall cease/be removed and the site returned to its former condition, or such alternative scheme may be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.”

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, in order to accompany a full planning application in relation to a proposed temporary building on land at Brucegate, Berwick upon Tweed, Northumberland.
- 8.2 The application site comprises an area of hardstanding located to the west of Brucegate and Berwick Infirmary. The site provides an opportunity to utilise an existing area of hardstanding to accommodate a temporary building for inpatient facilities.
- 8.3 It has been demonstrated that the proposed development is in accordance with policies within the adopted development plan, when taken as a whole, including Policy ENV7 and ENV9 for impact on heritage assets and conservation areas and QOP2 for design and amenity.
- 8.4 The proposed development would not result in significant impact on Berwick Conservation Area or in terms of residential amenity, particularly given the proposals are temporary, the building does not overlook nearby residential properties and no fixed external plant is proposed.
- 8.5 The proposed development would provide essential inpatient facilities on a temporary basis and will support the existing healthcare facilities within the surrounding area.
- 8.6 In the context of all of the above, the proposed development is considered to be in conformity with the adopted development plan and the accompanying application documents demonstrate that any harm arising from the scheme in terms of heritage, residential amenity and transport can be adequately mitigated against, and should be balanced against the public benefits arising from the proposals.
- 8.7 As such, and in line with the presumption in favour of sustainable development set out in the NPPF, the application should be approved without delay.

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