

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

Description: Application to extend current Night Shelter provision to year round

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 problematic relationships with substances (illegal and legal) and/or alcohol. 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 eight 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, which contains the four external sleeping pods that are the subject of these applications.

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 8 in total internal sleeping pods (following associated approval 19/01986/FUL) – Granted Conditionally and implemented in December 2020

21/01663/FUL – 4 external individual sleeping pods – Granted Conditionally 12 Nov 2021

23/00120/FUL – Build Extension to accommodate 2 showers/2 toilets - Granted 27th March 2023.

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 1st October until the 31st March and for a period of 5 years until the 31st 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 8 no. 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 31st December 2020.

Since then, 4 no. external sleeping pods have been provided in the enclosed courtyard to the south of the shelter Permission 21/01663/FUL. These pods were considered to be incidental to the Sui Generis use of the building.

Plymouth is experiencing 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. During the month of November 2023 there were 91 people sleeping rough in the city.

From a grant provided by the Night Shelter Transformation Fund we were able to build a small extension on the side of the existing provision to provide an additional 2 toilets and 2 showers.

The facility will continue to be managed by Bournemouth Churches Housing Association (BCHA) and supported by Hamoaze House and 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. During the period October 2022 to March 2023, 121 rough sleepers have 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 Hamoaze House site. The existing night shelter (east/right wing of Hamoaze House), the astro-turfed courtyard and a large stone wall to the rear of the site provide approximately 22 metres of separation from the enclosed courtyard in which the 4no. external pods are sited to the blank gable end wall of the nearest 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 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 managed by the Operational Manager supported by support workers, volunteer workers, concierge and a 2.5 Complex Needs Support Workers offering "wraparound support" (funded by the Night Shelter Transformation Fund until March 2025). There will be at least two members of staff on site during the hours of operation.

There is already in place a comprehensive Operational Manual / Management Plan and Emergency Accommodation Agreement, which seek to address the issues raised in the public representations including the behaviour of individuals during journeys to and from the shelter. 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 2bays 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 3 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.

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 of the heritage asset. 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 Night Shelter provision to all year round at a time when homelessness 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.