OFFICER REPORT

Case No: 24/02226/FUL **Full Planning Application**

Proposal: **Replacement of existing aluminum single glazed windows with new UPVC double glazed windows, alongside the replacement of two access doors to the main entrance of the building.**

Location: **Ramsey Health Centre Mews Close Ramsey**

Applicant: **Mr Kenneth Holmes**

Grid Ref: **528604 285132**

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application site is located at Ramsey Health Centre, situated on Mews Close within a built-up area of Ramsey. The application site falls within the Ramsey Conservation Area, with no Listed Buildings in the immediate vicinity. The site is in Flood Zone 1 of the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning and therefore is thus not liable to flood.

This application seeks permission for the replacement of existing aluminium single glazed windows with new UPVC double glazed windows, alongside the replacement of two access doors to the main entrance of the building.

Officers have scrutinised the plans and have familiarised themselves with the site and surrounding area.

During the lifetime of the application, the description has been revised to reflect that application also included the replacement of two access doors to the main entrance of the building. Given the neutral impact, on the balance of fairness further consultation on this matter was not considered to be necessary.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

The National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF 2024) sets out the three objectives - economic, social and environmental - of the planning system to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF 2024 at paragraph 10 provides as follows: 'So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development (paragraph 11).'

The NPPF 2024 sets out the Government's planning policies for (amongst other things):

* delivering a sufficient supply of homes;
* building a strong, competitive economy;
* achieving well-designed, beautiful and safe places;
* conserving and enhancing the natural, built and historic environment.

Planning Practice Guidance and the National Design Guide 2021 are also relevant and material considerations.

For full details visit the government website: https://www.gov.uk

PLANNING POLICIES

Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 - adopted May 2019

LP2: Strategy for Development
LP4: Contributing to Infrastructure Delivery
LP7: Spatial Planning Areas
LP11: Design Context
LP12: Design Implementation
LP14: Amenity
LP22: Local Services and Community Facilities
LP30: Biodiversity and Geodiversity
LP34: Heritage Assets and their Settings

Huntingdonshire Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (2017)

* Place Making Principles parts 3.7 Building Form and 3.8 Building Detailing

Huntingdonshire Townscape and Landscape Assessment Supplementary Planning Document (2022)

Ramsey Conservation Area Character Assessment (2005)

Local policies are viewable at https://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

Given the nature of the site there is a wide and varied planning history associated with it. The history from 1974 onwards is available to view on HDC's Public Access Site. The most recent, relevant history is detailed below:

95/01169/FUL - Erection of extension to waiting room Ramsey Health Centre Mews Close Ramsey (Permission)

0600037FUL - Extension to health centre (Permission)

CONSULTATIONS

Ramsey Town Council - Support the application.

HDC Conservation Officer - No objections to the application.

REPRESENTATIONS

None received at the time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

When determining planning applications, it is necessary to establish what weight should be given to each plan's policies in order to come to a decision. The following legislation, government policy and guidance outline how this should be done.

As set out within the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (Section 38(6)) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (Section 70(2)) in dealing with planning applications the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to have provisions of the development plan, so far as material

to the application, and to any other material considerations. This is reiterated within paragraph 47 of the NPPF (2024). The development plan is defined in Section 38(3)(b) of the 2004 Act as "the development plan documents (taken as a whole) that have been adopted or approved in that area".

In Huntingdonshire the Development Plan consists of a number of adopted neighbourhood plans, however, there is not an adopted neighbourhood plan in place for Ramsey. Therefore, in this case no neighbourhood plans are given weight in the determination of this application.

The statutory term 'material considerations' has been broadly construed to include any consideration relevant in the circumstances which bears on the use or development of the land: Cala Homes (South) Ltd v Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government & Anor [2011] EWHC 97 (Admin); [2011] 1 P. & C.R. 22, per Lindblom J. Whilst accepting that the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the Development Plan, paragraph 2 confirms that it is a material consideration and significant weight is given to this in determining applications.

The main issues to consider are:

- The Principle of Development
- Design and Visual Amenity
- Impact on Heritage Assets
- Residential Amenity
- Biodiversity

*The Principle of Development

Policy LP22 of the Local Plan to 2036 defines health centres as a local service and community facility. In this case, the site is considered to fall within the built-up area of the Ramsey Spatial Planning Area and the development consists of the enhancement of the existing local service. Such development is therefore supported where it:

a. is of a scale to serve local needs;
b. comprises up to a maximum of 600m² net internal floorspace for a main town centre use; and
c. provides for a new service or facility or it retains or enhances an existing service or facility, including through the provision of premises suitable for mixed use or multiple community functions.

Part b. is not considered relevant for this development due to the proposal not involving the extension of the existing local service, and the application site does not fall within the main town centre. It is however considered that the existing scale of the health centre is acceptable to serve local needs in this case. Regarding part c., it can be concluded that the replacement of aluminium single glazed windows with UPVC double glazed windows and the replacement of the access doors would enhance the existing facility through reducing heat loss and being more thermally efficient.

Taking the above into account, the proposal clearly accords with the aims of Policy LP22 of the Local Plan to 2036 and is therefore considered to be acceptable in principle subject to compliance with other relevant policies and considerations.

*Design and Visual Amenity

The application site comprises of the Health Centre alongside ancillary parking. The proposal consists of the replacement of aluminium single glazed windows with UPVC double glazed windows, alongside the replacement of 2 access doors to the main entrance of the building. The existing doors will be replaced with new doors which match existing, so will have no negative impact on the character or appearance of the building. The proposed UPVC double glazed windows are finished in white, which matches the colour of the existing aluminium windows.

Although the design of top hung windows differs from the existing sash windows, this is not uncharacteristic of development in the surrounding area, with many dwellings in the vicinity having top hung windows. As this is the case, it is not considered that this would have any adverse impact on the design or visual amenity of the area, and therefore is considered acceptable in this regard.

Overall, taking the above factors into consideration the proposed development is considered to be acceptable with regard to design and visual amenity and would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the character or appearance of the area. It therefore accords with Policies LP2, LP11 and LP12 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Impact on Heritage Assets

Due to the location of the application site within the Ramsey Conservation Area, the following must be taken into account:

Section 72 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area.

Section 66 of the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990 states that in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the Local Planning Authority shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

Para. 205 of the NPPF sets out that 'When considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance'.
Para. 206 states that 'Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification'

Local Plan policy LP34 aligns with the statutory provisions and NPPF advice.

As this is the case, HDC's Conservation Team have been consulted and having reviewed the documents state that they have no objections to the proposal, as the works will not result in harm to the significance of the Conservation Area.

Therefore, having taken into account the comments made from the Conservation Team and documents submitted as part of the application, it is considered that the proposed development is acceptable with regards to its impact on the designated heritage assets. It therefore accords with Policy LP34 of the Local Plan to 2036, the provisions of the NPPF (2024) and the Planning (LBCA) Act 1990.

*Residential Amenity

Given the scale and type of development regarding the replacement of windows and doors, and having regard to the proximity and separation to the adjacent dwellings, it is not considered that there would be any unacceptable material impacts in terms of overbearing impacts or loss of light, nor would there be any issues regarding overlooking or loss of privacy.

It is therefore considered that the proposal would not have a significant impact on residential amenity and therefore accords with Policy LP14 of Huntingdonshire District Council's Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Biodiversity

Policy LP30 of Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036 states that a development should ensure no net loss in biodiversity and achieve a net gain where possible. The application form details that the proposal would be exempt from Biodiversity Net Gain legislation as it would fall within the de minimis category and the LPA view aligns with this. Given the commercial use of the site as well as the nature and scale of the works proposed it is considered that achieving a net gain would be challenging. However, having regard to the above assessment, the proposal will result in no net loss of biodiversity and therefore broadly accords with Policy LP30 of the Local Plan to 2036 in this regard.

*Conclusion

The proposed development is considered to be compliant with the relevant national and local policy as it is:

*Acceptable in principle

And it:

* Would not be harmful to the character or appearance of the area;
* Would not have a harmful impact upon the designated heritage assets;
* Would not have a significantly detrimental impact upon the amenity of neighbours;
* Is acceptable with regards to the impact on biodiversity;
* There are no other material planning considerations which lead to the conclusion that the proposal is unacceptable.

Taking national and local planning policies into account, and having regard for all relevant material considerations, it is recommended that planning permission be granted, subject to the imposition of appropriate conditions.

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CONTACT OFFICER:
Enquiries about this report to **Josh France**