
2022/0198

Applicant: Mr Rob McKenzie

Change of use to new teaching medical centre for Barnsley College and associated external alterations including sideways and upward extensions to create a new first floor, various types of cladding and windows and a cantilevered overhang on frontage

Electric Theatre, Falcon Street, Barnsley, S70 2EY

Site Description

The application site is in relation to the Electric Theatre – otherwise known as the Falcon Centre – located on Falcon Street in Barnsley Town Centre. The theatre is a Barnsley College-owned and operated building, adjacent to the much larger educational buildings, the Sci-Tech Centre (to the East) and the Old Mill Campus and associated urban park to the West. The telephone exchange is located immediately to the North. The building is a detached educational building with a clad exterior facing onto Falcon Street, designed with a pitched roof. Falcon Street has a West to East slope with the base of the Eastern side of the building built on a significantly lower level than the Western side. The building is currently used for educational purposes as well as for curriculum-based events

The site is located within the Town Centre boundary in what could be described as the College/Educational Quarter of the Town Centre with the aforementioned educational buildings and the college-operated urban park, as well as the nearby Sixth Form College and Church Street building approximately 200m to the South and the STEM Centre and MVT building located approximately 150m to the North. The wider Honeywell College Campus is also located approximately 250m to the North but this is separated from the site by numerous buildings and other infrastructure with no direct link to the Honeywell Campus.





Planning History

B/97/0131/BA – Erection of new examination hall (Historic)

B/98/1035/BA/AD – Display of one internally illuminated sign and various identification signs (Historic)

B/02/0683/BA – Installation of new windows (Historic)

2006/0488 – Display of illuminated fascia signs to college (Historic)

2010/1465 – Refurbishment and extension of existing college building including new atrium to form performing arts centre (Approved with conditions)

2011/1428 – Variation of conditions 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 8 & 9 of application 2010/1465 – refurbishment and extension of existing college building including new atrium to form performing arts centre (Approved with conditions)

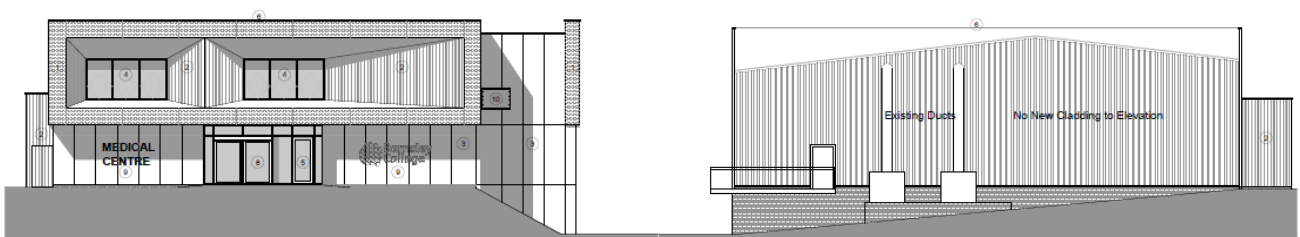
Proposed Development

The applicant seeks approval for the change of use and general refurbishment of the building into a teaching medical centre – however the building will remain under the same use class as will not be change from educational purposes. Apart from the change of use, the development including the following elements:

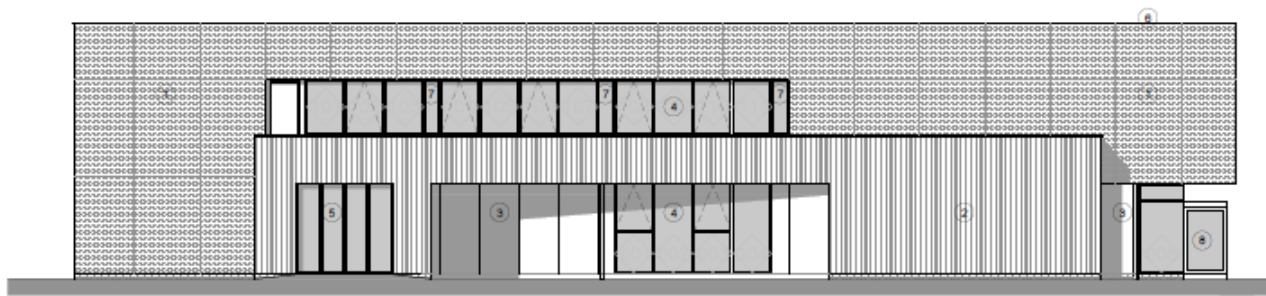
1. Upward extension to the building
2. Various types of cladding being installed on the exterior of the building
3. New windows to the front (South-facing) and Western-facing elevations at ground floor and first floor level with a balcony/canopy attached to the West elevation
4. The introduction of a cantilevered overhang onto the frontage of the building
5. Addition of signage to the front elevation

More generally, the building will be 'squared off' with the existing pitched roof altered to a flat roof, and the footprint of the building slightly increased with the addition of a canopy/balcony to the Western side of the building which serves a secondary use as an escape route from the first floor. The extensions will facilitate the renovation of the first floor of the building, making it more usable in line with the proposed use. The cladding to the exterior of the building is a mix of lightweight concrete panels, vertical timber cladding and black cladding panels. The Northern elevation will remain unchanged.

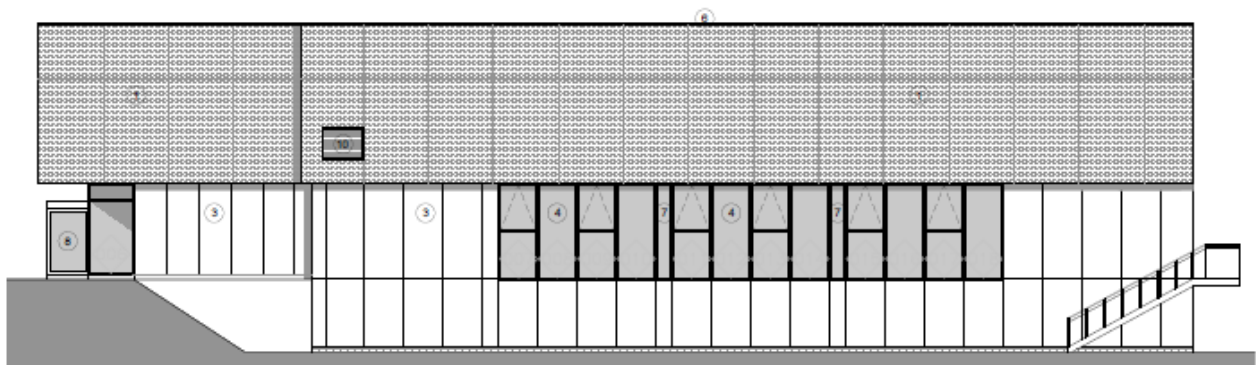
Proposed South and North Elevations



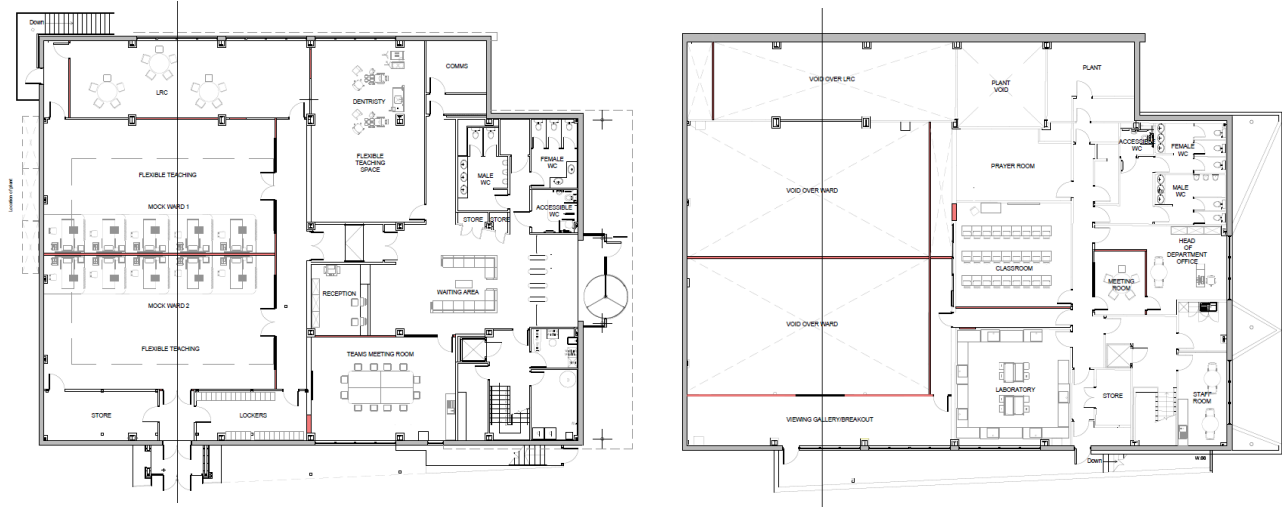
Proposed West Elevation



Proposed East Elevation



Proposed ground and first floor plans



Policy Context

Planning decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise and the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making. The development plan consists of the Core Strategy, saved Unitary Development Plan policies. The Council has also adopted a series of Supplementary Planning Documents and Supplementary Planning Guidance Notes, which are other material considerations.

Local Plan

The Local Plan (adopted January 2019), alongside the Joint Waste Plan and relevant neighbourhood plans, form the statutory development plan for Barnsley. It establishes policies and proposals for the development and use of land up to the year 2033 and will be used when considering planning applications and to coordinate investment decisions that affect the towns, villages and countryside of Barnsley. The Local Plan supersedes the remaining saved policies from the Unitary Development Plan (adopted in the year 2000) and the Core Strategy (adopted in 2011). In reference to this application, the following policies are relevant:

SD1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development – When considering development proposals, The Local Planning Authority will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework. We will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.

GD1: General Development – Development will be approved if there will be no significant adverse effect on the living conditions and residential amenity of existing and future residents.

LG2: The Location of Growth – Priority will be given the development in the following locations:

- Urban Barnsley
- Principal Towns of Cudworth, Wombwell, Hoyland, Goldthorpe (which includes Thurnscoe and Bolton on Dearne), Penistone and Royston; and
- Villages.

Urban Barnsley will be expected to accommodate significantly more growth than any individual Principal Town, and the Principal Towns will be expected to accommodate significantly more growth than the villages, to accord with their place in the settlement hierarchy.

E4: Protecting Existing Employment Land – Land or premises currently or last used for employment purposes will be retained in order to safeguard existing or potential jobs. The development of employment land and premises for non-employment uses will only take place if:

- Development would not result in a significant loss of existing jobs or employment potential;
- There will still be an adequate supply of employment land or premises in the locality; and
- The land or premises cannot satisfactorily support continued employment use.

If the above criteria can be satisfied then redevelopment will be allowed.

D1: High Quality Design and Place Making – Development is expected to be of a high quality design and will be expected to respect, take advantage of and reinforce the distinctive, local character and other features of Barnsley.

T3: New Development and Sustainable Travel – New development will be expected to reduce the need to travel, be accessible to public transport and meet the needs of pedestrians and cyclists.

T4: New Development and Transport Safety – New development will be expected to be designed and built to provide all transport users within and surrounding the development with safe, secure and convenient access and movement.

Poll1: Pollution Control and Protection – Development will be expected to demonstrate that it is not likely to result, directly or indirectly, in an increase in air, surface water and groundwater, noise, smell, dust, vibration, light or other pollution which would unacceptably affect or cause a nuisance to the natural and built environment or to people. Developers will be expected to minimise the effects of any possible pollution and provide mitigation measures where appropriate.

HE1: The Historic Environment – we will positively encourage developments which will help in the management, conservation, understanding and enjoyment of Barnsley's Historic environment, especially of those assets which are at risk.

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction - Development will be expected to minimise resource and energy consumption through the inclusion of sustainable design and construction features, where this is technically feasible and viable. All non-residential development will be expected, to achieve a minimum standard of BREEAM 'Very Good' (or any future national equivalent). This should be supported by preliminary assessments at planning application stage.

I1: Infrastructure and Planning Obligations – Development must be supported by appropriate physical, social, economic and communications infrastructure, including provision for broadband.

I2: Educational and Community Facilities – The Local Planning Authority will support the provision of schools, educational facilities and other community facilities. New schools, educational and community

facilities such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship, should be located centrally to the communities they serve, in places where they will be accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Such uses will be protected from development unless it can be demonstrated that the sites and premises are no longer required by the existing or an alternative community facility.

NPPF

The National Planning Policy Framework sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. At the heart is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Development proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, permission should be granted unless any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework as a whole; or where specific policies in the Framework indicate development should be restricted or unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

In respect of this application, the policies above are considered to reflect the 4th Core Principle in the NPPF, which relates to high quality design and good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. They also reflect the advice in paragraph 124 (general design considerations) and paragraph 130, which state that 'permission should be refused for development of poor design that fails to take the opportunities available for improving the character and quality of an area and the way it functions'.

SPDs/SPGs

SPD 'Parking' provides parking requirements for all types of development.

Siting of new buildings provides guidance and design principles that will apply to the consideration of planning applications for non-residential buildings in proximity to existing residential properties.

Other material considerations

South Yorkshire Residential Design Guide - 2011

Consultations

Commercial Services – No comments

Conservation Officer – The proposal is on Falcon Street, which is entirely modern and is shielded from views looking East to a greater degree by the main college building. This is technically in the setting of the Church Street, Regent Street, Market Hill Conservation area, however It is suggested that the presence of the main college building, the Sci Tech Centre to the rear of the site plus the hard landscaping to the southeast of the college inform this part of the setting most strongly. The character of the buildings are resolutely modern, high rise and of little value to the Conservation Area setting or its significance. The Chronicle building marks the northern boundary of the conservation area, but this is the rear of the building where the frontage contributes the most. The site is relatively set down as the gradient drops down to the east and so views from the east looking down Eastgate from the Huddersfield Road Conservation Area are constrained and limited. Consequently, I see no harm to the setting or appearance of either conservation areas in the vicinity.

Enterprising Barnsley – Supports the application.

Highway Drainage – No objection, the plans can be checked by Building Control.

Highways DC – No objection.

Pollution Control – No objection

PROW Officer – There are no recorded public rights of way affected by this application. There is however a well-used, unrecorded path running alongside the proposed extension which may require a minor realignment. The applicant should be aware that if any unrecorded routes have been used unchallenged by the public for 20+ years, or for a lesser period under common law, those routes may have acquired public access rights. Members of the public may apply to have such rights formally recorded and if an application is

made, the Council has a legal duty to research the claimed rights and reach a decision based exclusively on the available evidence about the status of the claimed routes. If the applicant has questions about any unrecorded routes, they should contact publicrightsofway@barnsley.gov.uk to discuss.

SYMAS – The site is not located in a coal mining referral area and therefore I have no concerns/objections. If planning permission is granted it is recommended that the coal authority standing advice is attached to the decision notice.

Sustainability – No comment

Town Centre Manager – No comment

Urban Design Officer (two responses):

First response - OK with the remodelling with its revised elevational treatment in terms of shape/depth/height. The remodelling makes it more contemporary, distinctive and memorable and more in keeping with its neighbouring Barnsley College buildings. The depth and modelling on the front elevation is welcomed. Although I can't say I'm keen on the extensive use of black coloured cladding on buildings (as they are visually draining) I note that in this particular location it will provide a visual foil to the extensive use of silver/ grey cladding on the Sci-Tech building. Requested more information on the materials in the application form, elevations and design and access statement. Concern about the lightweight concrete panels and the black cladding panels and require further detail about these two materials – ideally photographs of these materials being used in different contexts, and the specification/supplier of each.

Second response - The light grey cladding (Zinc colour – RAL 7004) and asked the architects to confirm that the lightweight concrete panels are Rieder Fibre C concrete skin, colour Liquid Black, finish: Ferro.

Ward Councillors – No comment

Yorkshire Water – No comment

Representations

Neighbour notification letters were sent to neighbouring properties and a site notice was placed nearby; no comments were received.

Assessment

Principle of Development

The application site is a Barnsley College owned and operated building located within the Town Centre College Quarter and whilst the proposed development will change the use of the building to a medical teaching centre, it will not take it out of educational purposes/use. Local Plan Policy I2 states that the Local Planning Authority will support the provision of schools, educational facilities and other community facilities, which should be located centrally to the communities they serve, in places where they will be accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. The proposed development will make the building more usable whilst giving it a much needed internal and external renovation, helping to support the development of educational facilities within the Town Centre, Borough and region as a whole. The proposed development is considered to be in compliance with Local Plan Policy I2 and is acceptable in principle.

Visual Amenity/Impact on Historic Environment

The first paragraph of Section 5.1 – Design Ethos – in the Design and Access Statement (prepared and submitted by Stem Architects) reads:

'The proposed change of use of the existing college building from a performing arts centre to a medical centre serves as an opportunity to ultimately improve the general aesthetics of the building. The existing building is relatively unassuming, tired in appearance and has more in common with a industrial unit than a contemporary college building. Compared to neighbouring college buildings it has a negative impact on the immediate vicinity and the proposed works ultimately aim to improve the building to be more in keeping with the nature of these surrounding buildings; giving an opportunity for the building to have a positive impact contextually.'

This is considered by the Local Authority to be an accurate summary of the existing building, the surrounding area and what the proposed development seeks to achieve. The existing building is a detached, clad building nestled in between, and somewhat dominated by the much larger Sci-Tech building to the East and the Old Mill Lane campus building to the West. Compared to these more modern buildings, the electric theatre appears rather dated and the application is considered to be an opportunity to modernise and completely renovate the building. Clearly some thought has gone into the overall design of the building to bring it in line with the external appearance of modern educational buildings both in the borough and elsewhere in the UK.

The proposed development primarily centres around the change of use to the building, keeping it within general educational purposes, but also relates to largescale renovation works to both the interior and external of the building which completely change the character and appearance of the building. Typically, local design policies seek to retain the character of existing buildings and areas but given that the theatre is not considered to have much positive impact on the surrounding area, the complete redevelopment is considered appropriate in this instance. Generally, the renovation works result in the external appearance of the building being very similar in character to more modern educational buildings, with a clear precedent set directly adjacent at the Old Mill Lane Campus. Specifically, the development includes extending the building upwards which will effectively 'square off' the building, altering the pitched roof into a flat roof – which is similar to the Old Mill campus and the Sci-tech building, alongside other Town Centre buildings. The upward extension raises the roof height from 7.6m (at the roof ridge) to 8m when measured from the ground floor level to the front/South of the building. This raise in the roof height is nominal and clearly when situated next to the much larger buildings is not considered excessive. The development also includes the addition of a cantilevered overhang to the main elevation/frontage, facing onto Falcon Street which is considered to add depth and an interesting feature to the frontage, rather than the current bland front elevation. The overhang is constructed from lightweight concrete panels in grey and vertical timber cladding.

The Main/Southern access will be significantly re-designed from a singular access door to a revolving door and a separate singular door leading to a turnstile area, providing access into the reception and waiting area. The development also includes the addition of several new windows to the ground floor and first floor of the West elevation and a cantilever over the re-designed Southern-facing entrance with 2 large, horizontal windows on the frontage at the first floor. The Western elevation at the first floor has a row of windows around half the width of the length of the building with a door from the viewing gallery into a newly formed balcony area, which serves as an escape route. The re-designed Southern elevation will include the addition of 2 signs, one of which spells out 'Medical Centre' and the other with Barnsley College's logo. All of these smaller details are considered to be acceptable and complete the general significant re-design of the building, bringing it in line with the more contemporary external appearance of the building which is similar to modern educational buildings in Barnsley.

The Urban Design Officer has been consulted on the proposal given the significant change in character and appearance. No objection was received, but further information was sought largely in reference to the proposed external cladding. Upon receipt of this information, alongside photographs and previous examples of the cladding – particularly the lightweight concrete cladding – the Urban Design Officer was satisfied that all of the cladding is a high-quality material. The agent confirmed that the light grey cladding (numbered as 1 on the elevations) is a light grey colour (with an RAL close to RAL 7004). The black cladding (numbered as 3 on the elevations) is Rieder Fibre C concrete skin in liquid black colour, Ferro finish. These will be conditioned in any forthcoming approval notice.

The site is in very close proximity to the Church Street/Regent Street/Market Hill Conservation Area, situated approximately 30m to the North-West of the Northern boundary of the Conservation Area. This places a greater emphasis on high quality design as the proposed development, in line with Local Plan Policy HE1 as it will have a direct impact on the setting of the Conservation Area. The Conservation Officer has therefore been consulted on the proposal and notes that the redevelopment works to the building is significant but the building itself is largely screened from the main section of the Conservation Area to the East by the Old Mill Campus building. The front of the Falcon Centre faces onto the Chronicle building which forms the Northern boundary of the Conservation Area but faces onto the rear of the building. There is also the Huddersfield Road Conservation Area to the North-West but again the main college building in the area largely screens the site and proposed development from view. It is the Conservation Officer's opinion that the development, whilst contemporary, does not harm the setting of either nearby conservation areas and generally fits in well with the more modern nearby educational buildings, which are larger in scale.

All in all, the proposed development proposes significantly redevelops the building, it is felt that the proposed renovation works are in line with Local Plan Policy D1 in that it improves the architectural quality of a fairly non-descript Town Centre Building which does not contribute positively to the surrounding area or relate well to the more contemporary educational buildings nearby. The proposal has been assessed by the Conservation Area given the close proximity to two nearby conservation areas and whilst the redevelopment works are contemporary, there is little perceived harm to the setting or appearance of either Conservation Area, in line with Local Plan Policy HE1. Likewise, the Council's Urban Design Officer has been consulted and has not raised any objection to the proposal subject to conditions specifically referring the chosen and agreed upon external materials. The proposed development is therefore considered to be acceptable in terms of visual amenity.

Residential Amenity

The building is located within the Town Centre, but nonetheless is fairly close to residential properties – the closest of which are on Old Mill Lane which are c. 100m to the North. The existing building is used for both educational and curriculum-based events which will be continued by the proposed change of use and associated redevelopment works. The use of the building will likely be intensified but the change of use will largely keep the character and use of the building unchanged in terms of its character and impact on the surrounding area. The nearest properties are considered to be at a significant distance away from the building with all of the uses primarily occurring inside of the building where the noise and general disturbance will be contained. Additionally, the much larger Old Mill Lane Campus, the telephone exchange to the North and the Scitech Centre will act somewhat as a buffer in all directions.

A new 160-seat auditorium being formed but this is primarily for curriculum-based events, with the change of use not significantly changing the character of the building or how it interacts with the surrounding area. The opening hours of the building will remain as Monday to Friday 08:30am-5pm. It is not felt that the development will exacerbate or intensify the use of the building as an event space which would detrimentally impact on the residential amenity of the surrounding area.

The building is being significantly renovated both internally and externally, but these are largely cosmetic alterations to the building apart from the building's height being raised nominally from 7.6m to 8m, which will have no/very little impact on residential amenity. The proposed development is considered to be in line with Local Plan Policy GD1: General Development and is acceptable in terms of its impact on residential amenity.

Highways Safety

The proposed development is largely on the existing footprint of the building, however the floor space of the building is being marginally increased by 9sqm. The use of the building will most likely be intensified for the proposed use compared to the existing which will perhaps increase the parking requirements to cater for students and staff, but the site is located within the Town Centre with an abundance of Town Centre car parks and public transport links. Barnsley Interchange is located c.300m from the site and clearly the site is in a sustainable location. Despite the use being intensified, the site is well catered by public car parks and public transport and is in compliance with Local Plan Policy T4 and is acceptable in terms of highways safety.

Public Right of Ways

The site is immediately adjacent to the College Urban Park which has an established well-used, yet unrecorded route going through it from Falcon Street (South) to Old Mill Lane (North). The Public Rights of Way Officer has been consulted and has stated that the path may require a minor realignment for the development. It can be claimed by the public that the route has been used unchallenged by the public for 20+ years, and that the route may have acquired public access rights. Members of the public may apply to have such rights formally recorded and the Council has a legal duty to research the status of the claimed route. An informative was recommended by the PROW officer.

Coal Mining Risk

The site is not located in an area which is at a High Risk Development Area as defined by the Coal Authority and therefore a coal mining risk assessment is not required.

Flood Risk

The site is not located within a defined Flood Risk Zone and is not considered to be at risk of flooding.

Drainage

Colleagues in drainage have assessed the proposal and have not raised any objection to the proposal, stating that it can be checked by colleagues in Building Control.

Conclusion

The proposed development seeks to change the use of the Electric Theatre – otherwise known as the Falcon Centre – located on Falcon Street in Barnsley Town Centre into a medical training centre, which still falls under an educational use. The development includes significant internal and external renovation of the building. The change of use will keep it within educational purposes, in compliance with Local Plan Policy I2.

The existing building is a rather dated building which is not considered to contribute positively to the surrounding area, with the development taking the opportunity at completely renovating the building to give it a new identity and bring it in line with the character of modern educational buildings – including the two adjacent ones (Old Mill Campus and the Scitech Centre). The development effectively 'squares' the building off with a nominal upward extension to form a flat roof with a height of 8m compared to the existing roof ridge height of 7.6m when measured from the base of the front elevation. Other associated changes to the building are proposed such as a new frontage to the South elevation, a new entrance to the West elevation, windows, addition of cladding and signage. The Urban Design Officer and Conservation Officer at the Authority were consulted on these changes who did not object to the overall design, however the urban design officer sought confirmation on the cladding details. The 2 nearby conservation areas (Regent Street/Church Street/Market Hill and Huddersfield Road) were not considered to be negatively affected by the proposal. The overall design changes are considered to be positive and acceptable, in line with Local Plan Policy D1 and HE1. The site is in a sustainable location, within the College Quarter of the Town Centre and whilst there are residential dwellings nearby – 100m to the North – the use of the building will largely be the same as it is already. The development will form a new 160-seat auditorium within the building, but it is already used for curriculum-based events. Likewise, given the Town Centre location and the fact that floorspace is only being increased by 9sqm, the impact on parking and highways safety is considered to be acceptable.

The proposed development is considered to be in compliance with relevant Local and National Planning Policies and the application is recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

Recommendation

Approve subject to conditions