



REGULATORY SERVICES COMMITTEE

9 January 2014

REPORT

Subject Heading:

**P1405.13 – Car Park, rear of Town Hall,
Main Road, Romford – emergency
power generator (received 13
November 2013)**

Report Author and contact details:

Helen Oakerbee
Planning Manager (Applications)
Helen.oakerbee@havering.gov.uk
01708 432800

Policy context:

Local Development Framework
The London Plan
National Planning Policy Framework

Financial summary:

None

The subject matter of this report deals with the following Council Objectives

Clean, safe and green borough	[x]
Excellence in education and learning	[x]
Opportunities for all through economic, social and cultural activity	[x]
Value and enhance the life of every individual	[x]
High customer satisfaction and a stable council tax	[x]

SUMMARY

This report concerns a planning application for the erection of a single-storey structure to accommodate an essential emergency back-up generator within its own fenced off section in the existing car park at the rear of the Town Hall. The application site comprises Council owned land. Staff consider that the proposal generally accords with policies relating to Listed Buildings and with the Local Development Framework Core Strategy and Development Control Policies Development Plan Document, and it is therefore recommended that planning permission be granted.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended planning permission is granted, subject to the following conditions:

1. Time limit: The development to which this permission relates must be commenced not later than three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with the requirements of section 91 of the Town and Country Act 1990.

2. Accordance with plans: The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out otherwise than in complete accordance with the approved plans, particulars and specifications as detailed on page 1 of the decision notice.

Reason: The Local Planning Authority consider it essential that the whole of the development is carried out and that no departure whatsoever is made from the details approved, since the development would not necessarily be acceptable if partly carried out or carried out differently in any degree from the details submitted.

3. External materials: The extension shall be erected in the materials specified on the planning application form and on drawing Town Hall – GEN01 rev B approved by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the proposed development will harmonise with the character of the surrounding area and to mitigate the proposed development's effect on the setting of the Grade II listed Town Hall in particular.

4. Noise mitigation: The development hereby permitted is only to be used for the purpose of an emergency stand-by power generator facility, which is to be operated as follows:

- Standby mode: Diesel engine to be switched off under normal, non-emergency circumstances
- Regular test mode: Diesel engine to be switched on, for a duration of up to one hour, to occur up to one time every month; the engine may only be switched on for this purpose within the hours of 8:00AM and 6:00PM.
- Maintenance mode: Diesel engine switched on for a maximum period of 3 hours, and only for the purposes of periodical servicing and non-major repairs; the engine may only be switched on for this purpose within the hours of 8:00AM and 6:00PM. In case of repairs that would require the engine to be run for a period in excess of 3 hours, the generator unit should be taken off-site for repair works to be undertaken.
- Emergency supply mode: Diesel engine switched on as required, in the event of and pending the resolution of, a mains power supply failure. Generator to revert to Standby mode, as soon as the mains power supply has been reliably restored.

Reason: To ensure that the proposed development would not result in material harm to surrounding residential occupiers in terms of noise.

INFORMATIVES

1. Statement Required by Article 31 (cc) of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management) Order 2010: No significant problems were identified during the consideration of the application, and therefore it has been determined in accordance with paragraphs 186-187 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012.

Mayoral CIL

The proposed development comprises under 100 sqm of floorspace and therefore no Mayoral CIL is payable.

REPORT DETAIL

1. Site Description

- 1.1 The application site forms part of the operational Town Hall complex, which is located within Romford Town Centre, to the north of the highway junction between Main Road and St Edwards Way, and consists of Havering Town Hall and its associated outbuildings and car parks.

- 1.2 The part of the site to which this application relates is a 20.5 sq.m plot, which sits at the eastern corner of the existing car park within the western part of the complex, to the rear of the Town Hall building.
- 1.3 The proposed generator site is surrounded by a fenced off car park that extends to its west, and to the south, east and north soft landscaped strips are separated by metal railings. The Town Hall building is set behind the landscaped strips. Immediately north of the site, there is an access gate from the car park to the eastern landscaped area.
- 1.4 A single storey pre-fabricated outbuilding has been positioned within the landscaping area, in between the application site and the Town Hall's north wing. The landscaped area also contains two large cylindrical perspex bicycle stores.
- 1.5 The application sits within the setting of the Town Hall building, which is a flat roofed Grade II Listed Building of two/three stories in height in grey brick with black window frames. It has an imposing south-facing frontage and a number of non-original extensions and outbuildings, respectively to the west and the rear.

2. Description of Proposal

- 2.1 The proposal is for the erection of a single-storey flat roofed structure to accommodate an essential diesel-fuelled emergency power generator within a dedicated fenced off section in the existing car park at the rear of the Town Hall.
- 2.2 The proposed generator is being procured by the London Borough of Havering Asset Management (Technical Services) under directive from the Corporate Management Team, as part of the Corporate Office Property Strategy, to improve the Council's business resilience.
- 2.3 The proposed location has been selected due to the need for the generator to be close to the electrical intake point within the west wing.
- 2.4 The proposed development has been specified in discussion with Staff and the Council's Heritage Officer, which has resulted in a number of changes to the scheme during the application submission stage. The final proposed structure would be 1.14m wide by 3.45m long with a roof height of 2.3m above ground level, it would be finished in forest green powder coated metal and it would be accessed via a door on the north-west elevation. The rectangular structure would be placed with its short elevation facing the north-western Town Hall wing and it would be set within its own 20.5 sqm rectangular plot within the eastern corner of the car park. This dedicated plot is proposed to be surrounded by the car park's existing 1.2m high black metal perimeter fence to the east, plus two new sections of matching fencing to the west, with a north-west facing gate for refuelling and maintenance access.

3. **History**

- 3.1 P1938.07: Erection of 1500mm high black vertical bar fencing system, Approved, 3 December 2007.

4. **Consultation/Representations**

- 4.1 12 neighbouring occupiers and the following statutory consultees were notified of the proposal:

- London Fire Brigade Water Team
- London Fire Brigade
- English Heritage

- 4.2 A site notice was posted and a press notice was placed in a local paper.

- 4.3 No responses have been received from neighbours.

- 4.4 The London Fire Brigade (water office) have written that they are satisfied with the proposal.

- 4.5 The Council's Emergency Planning & Business Continuity Manager has responded in support of the proposals, also providing a detailed explanation of the reasons for the proposal.

- 4.6 The Council's Heritage Officer has confirmed that the proposed development is generally acceptable, despite its location within the setting of the listed building, in light of the mitigation that has been incorporated within the proposal's specification (building proportion, orientation, materials and colour, and potential landscaping).

- 4.7 StreetCare (Highways Authority) have confirmed there is no objection on grounds of transportation.

- 4.8 The Council's Head of Asset Management has responded regarding the potential loss of car parking space, but raising no objection. Confirmation has been received that a scheme to resurface and reline the affected car park is being considered. If implemented the scheme would rationalise parking and make better use of available space in the car park. The scheme could offset the loss of parking spaces resulting from the approval of this application.

- 4.9 The Council's Environmental Health Officer has responded that based on the data sheet provided the noise level from the new emergency generator would be low to mid 40dB(A) at the nearest residential premises. Given that this would only be for restricted periods, the EHO would have no objection. The only stipulation that is sought is that routine testing takes place only between the hours of 8am and 6pm.

4.10 At the time of drafting the report the consultation period had not yet ended so any further objections and representations received will be reported orally at the Committee Meeting.

5. **Staff Comments:**

5.1 The main planning issues in this case are the principle of the proposed development, its impact on the setting of Listed Buildings, its impact on the streetscene, on surrounding occupiers, and on parking/highways. As such, Policies CP8, CP17, CP18, DC12, DC26, DC27, DC33, DC36, DC49, DC50, DC55, DC61 DC67, ROM6, ROM16, ROM20, SPD1, SPD2, SPD3 and SPD10 of the Local Development Framework are relevant. Also relevant are London Plan Policies 3.16, 4.2, 6.13, 7.4, 7.6 and 7.8 and the NPPF.

5.2 *Principle of development*

5.2.1 The proposal is for an ancillary development to the existing Town Hall to provide a power backup facility to ensure the continuity of essential Council Services.

5.2.2 The importance of the proposed development has been explained by the Council's Emergency Planning and Business Continuity officer, including that the backup power generator is essential for the continued operation of the Council's computer systems, and it is considered that the proposed generator would underpin the existing facilities at the Town Hall and therefore the Council's ability to undertake its role as a provider of essential services to the local community. This is in accordance with the objectives of policies DC27, ROM16, LP7.3 and paragraph 70 of the NPPF. Staff consider that the proposal would be acceptable in principle, subject to an assessment of the proposals' impact on historical buildings, its design and any resulting effect on the amenity of the local area as well as neighbouring occupiers, and any effect on highways / parking.

5.3 *Impact on Historical Buildings.*

5.3.1 The application site is within the vicinity of two listed sites: St Edward the Confessor Catholic Church on Park End Road (Grade II, listed 23 February 2010), and; the old Romford Town Hall, now the London Borough of Havering Town Hall (Grade II, listed 17 February 1999).

5.3.2 The St Edward the Confessor Catholic Church has various external features of special interest, while the site's presbytery, former school, church hall and all boundary walls are not of special interest. It is considered that due to the proposed development's relative position at a distance of well over 50m and on the opposite side of the road and large car park, set well inside the Town Hall compound, there is no likelihood that this heritage asset's setting will be affected by the proposed development.

- 5.3.3 The proposed generator has a footprint of 4 sqm and would be located within the existing car park at a distance of 4.1m from the rear elevation of the south-west wing and a distance of 18.4m from the western flank elevation of the north wing of the old Romford Town Hall. At 2.3m high, this proposed structure is well below a normal single storey height. In addition, it employs unobtrusive design, materials and colour scheme. The narrow elevation faces the Town Hall's northwest wing, and it would utilise the existing car park fencing as well as new fencing of materials consistent with the existing perimeter fence.
- 5.3.4 One of the NPPF's core planning principles is to conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.
- 5.3.5 The applicant has submitted a Design and Access and Heritage Statement document with the application, which refers to the Town Hall's listing.
- 5.3.6 The Town Hall's listing description explains that the majority of the special interest of the building is concentrated around the formal frontal/central parts of the building. The setting for these prominent features is provided by the Town Hall's forecourt, which would remain entirely unaffected by the application scheme.
- 5.3.7 The existing conditions at the rear of the Town Hall can be described as generally less formal, and significant building alterations and extensions have occurred since the original Town Hall building was constructed. The courtyard area where the generator is to be located has a functional nature due to the existing car park and, although the north wing borders onto a landscaped strip, the single storey prefabricated structure and large bicycle shelters within it also dominate the utilitarian character.
- 5.3.8 The listing description includes that in respect of the rear aspect of the Town Hall that faces the proposed generator site, the 1988 west extension, which is extruded further southwest from the original central and south-western parts of the building, is not of special interest. The relevant setting of the listed building for which potential harm should be considered, would relate to features of special interest along the facing flank elevation of the north wing of the Town Hall, which are noted to comprise tripartite windows apart from tall staircase windows. The existing setting of the significant windows comprises the 18m landscaped strip, including the prefabricated building and bicycle shelter and then, further away from it, the car park with the proposed generator site.
- 5.3.9 The proposed generator structure would be more sympathetically proportioned and aligned compared to the existing prefabricated building that would sit in between the proposed generator structure and the Town Hall north wing.
- 5.3.10 The Council's Heritage Officer has conducted an assessment of the proposal and has responded in support, particularly in terms of the

proposed siting and orientation of the structure, with its short elevation facing the north wing, its proposed dark green colour scheme that matches the south western extension's windows and that relates to the adjacent landscaping strips, and the new fencing being consistent with the existing fencing, which would all ensure that the structure would blend as much as possible into the surrounding developments. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would result in a negligible effect on the setting of the listed Town Hall, which is not irreversible.

5.3.11 The NPPF places great importance on the continued and appropriate use of heritage assets such as the Town Hall, and the contributions that such assets can make to sustainable communities. As explained, the proposed generator is essential to the Town Hall's intended use as a facility that serves the local community and therefore the proposal is in line with the NPPF's specific objectives for historical buildings.

5.3.12 Finally, English Heritage has been consulted on account of a proposal on the Council's own land, within the setting of a listed building. No response had been received at the time of writing this report and any further responses and objections received in relation to built heritage issues will be reported to the Committee meeting.

5.4 Design/Impact on Street/Garden Scene

5.4.1 The proposed development's design features are detailed above. The proposed design is considered to be relatively unobtrusive and it generally matches the character of the existing rear area of the Town Hall.

5.4.2 The scale of the proposed development and its proposed location approximately 40m away from the nearest public street mean that its visual effect and its effect on the local streetscape are both negligible.

5.5 Impact on Amenity

5.5.1 The nearest residential properties are situated along Park End Road, north of the junction with Church Lane, at a minimum distance of 44m from the application site. Apart from Nos 11-17 (odd) there are no properties that have potential sightlines onto the application site, although these properties' cross views are long distance and at the very least they are partially obscured. Therefore, it is considered that no harm to residential occupier's amenity would result from the proposed development in terms of daylight/sunlight, privacy, sense of overbearing or outlook.

5.5.2 The nearest occupiers to the application site would be workers and visitors inside the town hall building (west wing and north wing). Although there is no specific planning design requirement in respect of daylight/sunlight, privacy, sense of overbearing or outlook for the employment areas within the Town Hall, it is considered that the proposed development would not materially harm those occupiers' amenity in relation to such issues.

5.5.3 The proposed development's noise and air quality amenity effects have been carefully reviewed in conjunction with the Council's Environmental Health team. The Environmental Health officer has commented that a residual issue may be the timing of the periodical testing, which should only occur during the daytime (between 8am and 6pm) in order not to harm nearby occupants. A related planning condition should therefore be added in case planning permission is granted.

5.6 *Highway/Parking/Servicing*

5.6.1 There is no specific parking requirement for this particular use, but the proposed development would lead to a negligible net loss of two existing car parking bays that fall within its site area.

5.6.2 A response was received from the Council's StreetCare department confirming that there are no highways objections to this scheme.

5.6.3 The Council's Head of Asset Management has also responded regarding the potential loss of car parking space, raising no objection. The space has notionally been allocated for a future staff carpooling scheme, however, confirmation has been received that the scope to get the car park surfaced and lined is currently under consideration, which may offset the loss by encouraging staff to park in a more efficient configuration than sometimes occurs at present.

6. **Conclusions**

6.1 Staff consider that the proposal is acceptable in principle, that it would enable the sustained and appropriate use of a heritage asset, that it would not have an unacceptably harmful impact on the setting of Listed Buildings or on residential amenity, that it would be acceptable on environmental health and highways grounds, and it would therefore be in general accordance with the relevant policies contained in the LDF, London Plan and NPPF.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial Implications and risks:

None

Legal Implications and risks:

This application is considered on its merits independently of the Council's interest as owner of the site.

Human Resource Implications:

None

Equalities and Social Inclusion Implications:

The Council's planning policies are implemented with regard to Equalities and Diversity. The backup generator would contribute to business continuity for the Council, who is a provider of essential services to the local community.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

1. Application forms and plans were received on 13/11/2013 and subsequent revisions, including 12/12/2013.