

DEVELOPMENT CONTROL AND REGULATION COMMITTEE
A report by the Executive Director for Economy and Infrastructure

Application Reference No. 2/22/9005

Application Type: Full Planning Permission

Proposal: Proposed extension and internal alterations to existing library to form Aspatria Community Hub

Location: Aspatria Library, West Street, Aspatria, Cumbria, CA7 3EZ

Applicant: Cumbria County Council

Date Valid: 1 August 2022

Reason for Committee Level Decision: Application made by Executive Director for Economy and Infrastructure

1.0 RECOMMENDATION

1.1 That Planning Permission be granted subject to conditions as set out in Appendix 1 to this report

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

2.1 Planning permission is sought for a proposed extension and internal alterations to the existing library to form a community hub, at Aspatria Library, West Street, Aspatria, Cumbria, CA7 3EZ

2.2 It is proposed to construct a single extension to the front of the existing building to help form a community 'hub' and allow the provision of a number of services in one building. The extension will enhance the existing facilities and will provide a mix of facilities to include the library, a room which can be rented out by various organisations and allow some permanent space for the local children's club, together with a training room. The extension will add a total of 85 sq, metres of floor space to the building.

2.3 Currently, the facilities at the building are under used as only a library facility is offered – there is considered to be an opportunity to provide a number of services under one building.

2.4 Some of the space to the rear of the building will be utilised to provide a small play area and storage of children's equipment (prams etc.).

3.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

3.1 The existing building is located near to the centre of Aspatria and is a modern, single storey building. A car parking area is located to the front of the building, surrounded by buildings of various designs – this includes buildings associated with Beacon Hill Community School.

3.2 As mentioned above, to the north (rear) of the building is Beacon Hill Community

School with the caretaker's bungalow for the school being located immediately adjacent to the building to the southwest.

- 3.3 The building itself is of modest size with brick walls and tile roof and tiled gable walls to the front of the building. The surrounding buildings vary in style – the larger buildings of Beacon Hill Community school form the backdrop to the site and are of a similar appearance and style to the library building. More traditional stone building properties are located to the south, on the opposite of the West Street (A596). Residential properties are located to the west and south of the site.

4.0 SITE PLANNING HISTORY

- 4.1 None relevant

5.0 CONSULTATIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS

- 5.1 Allerdale Borough Council Planning Department: No objection to the proposal – consider the overall scale, design and appearance of the extension to be sympathetic to the character of the host building and the surrounding area.
- 5.2 Cumbria County Council (CCC) Highway Authority: consider that the proposed changes to the building are unlikely to lead to any material effect on the existing highway conditions at or near the site
- 5.3 CCC Lead Local Flood Authority: Note the site is located within an area of low likelihood of flooding – 1 in 1000 (0.1%) – no conditions are recommended.
- 5.4 Aspatria Town Council: No responses received
- 5.5 Aspatria ED - Mr J Lister: No response received
- 5.6 One representation has been received, but this is not a direct objection to the planning application. The comments made relate to the provision of community hub facilities already provided by another organisation in Aspatria and that the indicative uses/facilities in the proposed extended library building would not offer a true community hub experience. I do not consider the issues raised here to be material planning considerations.

6.0 PLANNING POLICY

- 6.1 [Section 38\(6\)](#) of the [Planning & Compulsory Purchase Act 2004](#) provides that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Government policy is a material consideration that must be given appropriate weight in the decision-making process.
- 6.2 [Allerdale Local Plan Part 1: Strategic and Development Management Policies 2014-2029 \(ALP P1\)](#) - adopted July 2014 – relevant policies;

Policy S4: Design principles

6.3 [The National Planning Policy Framework](#) (NPPF) was published in a revised and updated form in July 2021. The national online [Planning Practice Guidance](#) (PPG) suite was launched in March 2014 and is continually updated. Both are material considerations in the determination of planning applications. The following sections and paragraphs of the NPPF are considered to be relevant to the determination of this application:

- Section 2: Achieving sustainable development
- Section 4: Decision making
- Section 12: Achieving well designed places

7.0 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

7.1 I consider the key planning issues relevant to this proposed scheme are; the effects of the extension to the building upon its character and appearance, the effects upon adjoining occupiers and residential amenity, implications for highway safety, inclusive access provision to the building and drainage.

Would the proposed extension result in any impacts on the character of the building?

7.2 The proposed extension would be located to the front of the building and bring the building line further forward than is currently existing. The overall massing, height and design of the extension would be in keeping with the character of the existing building. Similar or matching materials would be used in the construction of the extension to allow it to be sympathetic to the original building. The increase in footprint of the building would also be proportional and in scale with the floor space of the original building and would not overpower it or be disproportionately large in comparison.

7.3 The building is set back from the main highway, behind an area of car parking and in the context of buildings associated with Beacon Hill Community School. I do not consider bringing the building line forward of the existing would result in any harm to the character of the immediate area.

7.4 I consider that the extension would maintain the character of the building and surrounding area in compliance with policies S4 and DM15 of Allerdale Local Plan, part 1.

Would the proposed extension result in any significant harm to residential amenity?

7.5 The existing building is not located very close to residential properties, except for the caretaker's bungalow associated with the school, location directly to the south-west. There are other residential properties further to the west of the site.

The caretakers bungalow does not present windows directly to the site and the extension would not result in any construction closer to this property. The extension would also only be of single storey height in keeping with the existing building, reducing any overbearing impacts.

- 7.6 In terms of the use of the building and any effects the scheme may have, the existing building is mainly in use as a library with ancillary office space. The proposal would still result in the dominant use being the library (with associated children's area), but there would be additional provision for a meeting room, space for children's play and a training room. Some of the limited outside space to the rear of the building would be used for children's play/storage of prams etc, this area is currently not used and is located beyond the rear of the building, close to the school laboratory building. I consider that there would not be a significant material change in the character of the use of the building and it is unlikely there would be any significant intensification of activity at the site which could impact adversely on amenity.
- 7.7 Given the above, I consider that there would be no significant impacts resulting from the extension to surrounding buildings and therefore the proposal will maintain levels of residential amenity currently achieved. As such, the proposal complies with the relevant elements of policies S4 and DM15 of the Allerdale local plan, part 1.

Would the proposal result in any implications for highway safety?

- 7.8 The proposal would not result in any significant intensification of the use of the building. There would be additional floor space created, however, there is a large parking area to the front of the building which is available for use by users of the building and the location of the site close to the town centre may encourage other modes of transport other than the private car.
- 7.9 Given the existing use of the building, the limited additional extent of development proposed, and the abundance of parking provision very close to the site, I consider there is unlikely to be any material effect on the highway or any safety implications.

Other Material Considerations

Inclusive access to the building

- 7.10 In line with policy S4 of the Allerdale local plan, which requires, among other requirements, for provision to be made for users with limited mobility or other disabilities to be made, the proposed scheme includes suitable provision in the form of an access ramp to the new site entrance – this would effectively maintain the level of provision in this respect to that of the existing building. I consider therefore that the proposal complies with the relevant element of policy S4.

Drainage and flood risk

- 7.11 It is proposed to manage surface and foul water drainage to connect to the existing systems in place. The site is at a very low risk of flooding (1 in 1000 in any year) and given the modest scale of the extension and already established means of disposal of surface and foul water, I do not consider a condition is

required to control this aspect of the scheme or require details of the proposed drainage system and connections.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.1 It would appear that the building is under used at the moment and there is an opportunity to improve and extend the building to provide more effective use of the space and make provision for identified need for services in the location area.
- 8.2 I am not able to identify any significant negative impacts from the proposed scheme that would outweigh its public benefit and the building is to be extended sympathetically and sensitively. Overall, there is demonstratable compliance with the relevant policies of the Allerdale local plan, part 1 and with national planning policy set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).
- 8.3 In summary, I consider that the proposed development is in accordance with the development plan, there are no material considerations that indicate the decision should be made otherwise and with the planning conditions proposed, any potential harm would reasonably be mitigated. I therefore recommend that this application be granted subject to conditions.

Human Rights

- 8.4 Given the nature and purpose of the proposed development no Convention Rights as set out in the Human Rights Act 1998 would be affected.

Angela Jones
Executive Director for Economy and Infrastructure

Contact: Mr Richard Cryer

Electoral Division Identification: Aspatria – Mr. J. Lister

Appendix 1 - PROPOSED PLANNING CONDITIONS

Time Limit for Implementation of Permission

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

Approved Scheme

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out, except where modified by the conditions to this permission, in accordance with the following:
 - a. The submitted Application Form – dated 30 June 2022
 - b. Design and access statement dated June 2022
 - c. Plans numbered and named:
 - i) Location plan 5592, 12A, dated 30/6/2022
 - ii) Site plan and existing and proposed floor plans, 5592, 10B, dated 30/6/2022
 - iii) Existing and proposed elevations, 5592, 11, dated 19/5/2022
 - iv) Existing and proposed roof plan, 5592, 14, dated 26/7/2022

Reason: To ensure the development is carried out to an approved appropriate standard and to avoid confusion as to what comprises the approved scheme.

Appendix 2 - PLAN OF SITE LOCATION/EXTENT

