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## Design and Access Statement

### 1 Intro

The Herefordshire GP Health Centre is a GP Led Health Centre for the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust. The centre is of key significance to the PCTs service strategy.

As part of a national initiative, the PCT has been required to procure a GP Led Health Centre that will provide access to GP services (including walk in services and pre-bookable appointments) 7 days a week from 8.00am to 8.00pm.

The 'Herefordshire Model' for the GP Led Health Centre is based on tackling inappropriate A&E attendances and providing walk-in services, it has always been recognised that the optimum location would be as near as possible to the Accident & Emergency department of Hereford County Hospital. The centre will also be the location of the GP out of hours service.

A number of alternative sites were investigated during the early stages of the project but were rejected on the grounds of location, size and tenure when the location shown on this application emerged as the preferred site.

The building is to be located, outside the medieval walls, on the A465, one of the main approaches to the city. Commercial Road has been developed and redeveloped over its history and as a result the surrounding buildings are of a disparate nature in terms of usage, age profile and architectural style and form.

### 2 Design

#### 2.1 Process

The design of the Hereford Herefordshire GP Health Centre has been carried out in conjunction and close co-operation with the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust. There has also been an active process of discussion with the intended users of the building.

A survey of the site have has been undertaken to assess the environmental impact both to native wildlife and flora and fauna. (wildlife and flora or flora and fauna) and is included with the submission.

A tree survey has been carried out and is included with the submission.

proj no:-  
125

project:-  
Llanfrechfa Grange A&T unit

Client:-  
Herefordshire Primary Care Trust

date of application  
Tuesday 14th May 2007

Author:-  
Gordon Knowles

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An archaeological desk top study has been undertaken (included with the submission) and a series of exploratory trenches are to be dug to assess this further.

Key principles set out for the design were:

- security;
- observation;
- privacy and dignity;
- welcoming environment;
- orientation and environment issues;
- plant access and future maintenance.

### 2.2 Use

The Herefordshire GP Health Centre is designed to cope with minor injuries and health enquires of a 'walk in' nature and its part of the PCTs strategy of reducing pressure on Hereford's A&E department. The unit is expected to deal with up to 15,600 walk in patients annually with up to 3000 registered patients.

The Centre provides facilities for GP led medical treatment and advice. The building is made up of four Consultation/Examination room, two Nurse Consulting rooms and a Minor Treatment facility as well as staff support facilities and patient waiting Facilities.

The type of accommodation to be provided was developed in line with Department of Health technical guidelines and knowledge of previous facilities of this nature.

### 2.3 Layout

The design creates a prominent public face to the street while forming a barrier between it and the neighbouring Stonebow Mental Health facility.

The building has been located on the site to limit the impact on the Stonebow gardens and to create a visible and understandable public face. The building's position close to the street edge characterises it as a public building.

The plan has been developed to create a simple and easily understood circulation progression from the street and internally ensuring that the building is easily understood by the general public as their visits may be infrequent.

The inter-relationship of the building's facilities are key and have been one of the main drivers in the development of the building. The building is arranged as a centre core and two wings. This three element design allows for an easy, effective and clear separation of public, private and treatment areas making for a safe and understandable building. The centre core provides a clearly defined entrance and public face while acting as access and line of security into the staff areas and treatment areas to either side.

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### *2.4 Amount.*

The amount and scale of accommodation to be provided for the site relates directly to the Herefordshire Primary Care Trust's projected patient numbers. The type and nature of the spaces to be provided have scheduled using Department of Health technical guidelines and knowledge of previous facilities of this nature.

There are no further requirements for accommodation of a related nature to the services provided and in order to create a balanced site with as little impact on the rear garden area as possible the building nature is determined by its current brief with no planned expansion.

The building size relates to the accommodation but it is also important because it allows the construction of a building of sufficient scale to hold its own with the surrounding buildings and make an impact on the promenade – an important public space.

### Scale

The building relates to the size and scale of the adjacent buildings

Although the building is primarily a single story building the functional content creates a scale that is greater and is 1½ times the size of a typical single storey development. The central section is larger still creating a central focus to the building. It is 7.3m above its floor level and a further 0.6m above the street level at its tallest section. This height is equal to a two storey building. The wings of the building are 6.01m above their floor level. Buildings adjacent are in the region of.

The impact on the Stonebow Unit garden, an important therapeutic area for the adjacent hospital, is also an important consideration. The unit must actively meet the street with the face of a public building while remain more passive on its rear elevations allowing for unimpeded views of the sky and not creating a 'slot' garden area.

Consideration was given to a second storey but this was rejected for a number of reasons:

- the type and quantity of accommodation required better suited a primarily single storey building. Due to the nature of the clientele small healthcare buildings generally function better as single storey;
- there was little accommodation which could be sited on the first floor and the cost of stair, lift and lobbies could not be economically justified.
- The use of a second storey in conjunction with a 3rd party developer was considered inappropriate due to its location on a Mental Health Hospital Site. There is an absolute clinical necessity to maintain the privacy of the patients using the garden to the rear. The precise nature of the impact of the Mental Health Acts on the management of the building is not yet fully understood but it can be managed by the careful detailed design of the building and management systems put into place once it is operating. This would not be possible in a mixed use development.

There are no immediate adjacent buildings as the site is ringed by a road and separated by a garden area from the Stonebow unit.

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### *2.5 Landscaping*

The building is raised above street level by approximately 600mm, the main entrance being access by a hard landscaped area.

The building has a sloped access to one wing while the other wing utilises a similar space as planting beds to add greenery to the street scene.

The positioning of the building will require removal of some trees as indicated on our drawings. Indigenous specimen trees will be included in the landscaping proposals for the project. Improvements to the facilities and the landscaping of the existing garden will be included in the project. Their precise nature will be determined in conjunction with the user group.

### *2.6 Appearance*

The building uses a simple palette of colours and materials drawing as much from natural tones and textures as applied colours. The use of natural materials allows for a favourable and aesthetic weathering of the building.

The building is broken into three separate components to mimic a traditional street facade rather than a long continuous building. Proportionally each section is of a similar scale and proportion to the surrounding area.

The simple nature of the building's wings is reflective of their private nature and use. The centre section of the building is of a more dominant nature as it forms the public entrance and common public areas. The differences in architectural language between the centre of the building and its wings helps to emphasis and highlight the main entrance.

The orientation of the building allows for the extensive use of glass in the main facade without the concern of overheating or excessive glare. The glazed facade is intended to provide an approachable and open appearance in line with the public nature of the building.

Large windows are used to get good natural light into the consulting rooms but will use obscured glass to provide privacy.

## **3 Access**

The Herefordshire GP Health Centre is designed with a close regard to access and movement of disabled visitors and staff. This is more important within a healthcare building and environment as a potentially greater than normal proportion of visitors may be disabled. Visitors are more likely to be temporarily disabled and as such have limited coping mechanisms. The consideration of the building's users was a key factor driving the design of a single storey facility.

The design strategy is one of inclusion rather than segregation with all areas (plant room excluded) accessible in a common manner regardless of ability.

The physical design of the works will be carried out in accordance with the current Approved Document Part M (2004 edition) which requires that provision is made for disabled people to gain access to and use the buildings and their facilities. It will endeavour to provide an inclusive environment in accordance with relevant DRC guidance referred to in the Disability



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Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA). It is noted that meeting the criterion to obtain an approval under Part M of the Building Regulations does not guarantee that the proposed development will have an appropriate level of accessibility to enable the owners and organisations operating from the building to address their duties under the Disability Discrimination Act. This is referred to in the DE Policy Instruction 14/2004. Item 8 states, 'even where buildings have been constructed to current building standards additional adjustments... may be required to accommodate individual members of staff with disabilities'. These matters, relating to management and operation, are covered by Herefordshire PCT in the running of their facility.

### *3.1 Management responsibilities*

Although the building is designed for equal access regardless of ability, where this is not possible due to specific disability an operational policy will be in place to offer assistance where the need arises in accordance with the DDA.

### *3.2 Management policies that support independent access are to be included.*

The management and operation of the building will incorporate additional measures such as large print brochures, portable hearing loops and other miscellaneous items to be identified under the client's Management Policy.

Whilst the physical design will be to an appropriate current standard for universal access, as identified in Part M of the building regulations, it is important to note that further special physical adjustment may be required during occupancy to suit any specific additional needs that arise.

The management and operation of the building will incorporate an Evacuation Procedure. For further detail see Emergency Evacuation section below. Appropriate signage and information will be provided throughout.

### *3.3 Site Constraints*

The Herefordshire GP Health Centre is located on a relatively flat site with a gently falling slope to the East side resulting in an approx 700mm drop at the North end of the site from ground level to pavement level. It is intended to provide a ramp and an ambulant staircase to front entrance.

### *3.4 Access and circulation*

There will no parking provision for this facility. It is anticipated that visitors would use car parking facilities in the surrounding area, which include the main hospital and the bus station, and provide good pedestrian access to the Herefordshire GP Health Centre entrance.

One consideration in the siting of the Herefordshire GP Health Centre was to take advantage of good public transport access with bus and train stations in close proximity to the unit.

Bicycle racks will be provided to the front of the main entrance with good observation from the waiting area for added security.

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Delivery vehicles can park on the hard standing at the rear of the Access Centre at the discretion of the Access Centre's operation manager, with deliveries being made via the staff wing access door.

**Maintenance and Refuse Vehicles:** both the Disposal Hold room and Plant room can be accessed via the rear of the building from the hard standing for both maintenance and disposal collection.

**Pedestrian:** access for those working within the building as well as visitors is provided via ambulant steps and a ramp designed to comply with DDA requirements.

The glazed main entrance sliding doors will have power opening for access by disabled building users. The entrance door will comply with Part M for clear opening width, flush threshold, vision panels, manifestation, mode of operation, ironmongery, etc.

### *3.5 Internal Access*

The Herefordshire GP Health Centre has a prominent North facing main entrance allowing for easy understanding of the correct approach and entry for visitors. Staff will be familiar with other building entrances. The building's internal layout is simple and logical allowing easy understanding and navigation. Public areas radiate from the main entrance and the central reception and waiting areas are clearly defined. Access to the treatment or consultation areas is under the supervision of staff. . Uncontrolled public access will not be permitted for reasons of both safety and security. There will be a corridor door with security access dividing the staff areas from the public areas.

To assist all users of the building, careful use of colour and or tonal contrast to maximise legibility and way-finding will be used throughout the development with special attention to measures to assist those who have impaired vision. This will be complemented by an integrated signage system with accessible detailing to assist way-finding where necessary. Statutory signage will also been used.

### *3.6 Sanitary Conveniences*

Ambulant toilets have been provided in both the staff and public areas with disabled toilet facilities accessed from the main reception area for use by all building occupants. Alarm and pull cord provision will be provided in all accessible WCs.

All WC cubicles have been sized and provided with handrails in accordance with Approved Document Part M.

A tea point/beverage bay has been provided within the staff room within the staff area wing. The height of worktops will comply with Approved Document Part M.

### *3.7 Means of escape:*

Fire doors have been provided at the end of each corridor wing in addition to the central entrance doors, giving a secondary means of escape wherever you are located in the building.

Means of level access with appropriately sized final exit doors are provided at all fire escape final exit doors.

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The emergency exits leads to a level place of immediate safety prior to the occupants moving to the assembly points.

### *3.8 Emergency Evacuation*

The Emergency Evacuation plan is a management system which will be provided by the Herefordshire GP Health Centre Operational Manager. The warning systems instigating building evacuation are fire alarms. For those who are hard of hearing it is suggested that portable vibrating alarms which are integrated into the fire alarm system, are issued if necessary so they will be alerted to any fire alarm signal in the building.

The design of the access centre is based on what we believe is both a good understanding of the local character of the site and the exacting requirements of a modern healthcare facility.