

**4/00086/13/FUL - NEW MEDICAL CENTRE WITH ASSOCIATED PARKING AND PUBLIC REALM WORKS AND NEW ACCESS.**

**ADJ HIGHFIELD HALL, CAMBRIAN WAY, HEMEL HEMPSTEAD, HP2**

**APPLICANT: PHCC Developments (Highfield) Ltd**

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[Case Officer - Joan Reid]

[Grid Ref - TL 06324 08524]

## **Summary**

The application is recommended for approval. The application site is located within the residential area of Hemel Hempstead wherein, the use of the site for a medical centre is considered to be appropriate in accordance with policies 2 and 9 of the Local Plan and emerging Core Strategy Policy CS4. The design of the building and the proposed landscaping on the site is considered to be acceptable and appropriate within the surrounding area and fit for purpose. The proposal will not significantly impact on the amenities of the neighbours and adequate parking is accommodated within the application site in accordance with policy 11 and appendix 5 of the Local Plan. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with policies 2, 9, 11 and 58 of the Local Plan, policies CS4 and CS23 of the Pre-submission Core Strategy and the national planning policy set out in the NPPF.

## **Site Description**

The application site is located to the south of Cambrian Way and comprises a shrub-land site adjacent to Highfield Community Centre. The site measures approximately 0.27 acres and remains undeveloped. The site is bounded to the northwest by residential properties (Mendip Way), some of which have been extended to the rear with single storey extensions. To the south of the site, there is a Council owned garage block. To the south west corner of the site, there is a sub-station and the cables from this run along the grass verge between the site and Highway Community Centre. The application site is heavily overgrown with bushes and some trees. It features a wide open frontage to Cambrian Way, directly opposite the junction with Westerdale. To the west of the site, there are some mature trees which separate the application site from a large area of hardstanding surrounding Highfield Community Centre. Bellgate Local centre is approximately 40m to the east of the site on the other side of the road.

## **Proposal**

The application seeks planning permission for a new medical centre on land adjacent to Highfield Community Centre. The application has been submitted by PHCC Developments on behalf of the doctors at Highfield surgery on Jupiter drive. The new medical centre would accommodate the much needed re-provision and relocation of the existing Highfield Surgery on Jupiter drive. The medical centre would accommodate 6 consulting rooms (made up of 4 GP consulting rooms, 1 nurse practitioner room and a treatment room). There is a patient waiting area along with an administration area and staff rooms also accommodated within the building.

The medical centre extends to a length of 12m and has a width of 9.5m. The building has a split roof which extends to a height of 7.2m at its highest point and the side part nearest the residential properties has a height of 5.5m with an eaves height of 2.2m. The building is to be constructed predominately in brickwork elevations with coloured render panels to the northern and western sides. The windows are to be coloured aluminium with coloured panels. The roof will be formed in grey standing seam aluminium and the lowest roof nearest Mendip Way is to have a sedum green roof. Areas of photovoltaic panels are to be positioned on the roof that will overlook the Community Centre car park.

A new crossover is proposed to allow vehicular access to the front of the building from Cambrian Way. There is parking for 8 cars to the front of the building and a further 8 car

parking spaces are accommodated within land on the hardstanding beside the community centre.

### **Referral to Committee**

The application is referred to the Development Control Committee as it is on Council owned land.

### **Planning History**

4/01258/02/FUL CONSTRUCTION OF YOUTH CLUB BUILDING  
Granted  
01/10/2002

4/00941/97/4 CONSTRUCTION OF A YOUNG PERSONS CENTRE (YOUTH CLUB)  
Granted  
14/08/1997

### **Policies**

#### National Policy Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

#### Dacorum Borough Local Plan

Policies 1, 2, 9, 10, 11,13, 58, 63,67,99,111,122,123,124 and 129.  
Appendices 1, 2, 3, 5, 8.

#### Core Strategy

CS1,CS4,CS8,CS10,CS11,CS12,CS23,CS28 and CS29.

#### Supplementary Planning Guidance

Environmental Guidelines

Residential Character Area [HCA 20 Highfield]

Accessibility Zones for the Application of Parking Standards

### **Representations**

#### Hertfordshire Highways

The above application is for the construction of a Health surgery on land adjacent to the Highfield Community Hall car park as part of this scheme, the applicant has submitted a travel plan with the aim of reducing journeys to and from the surgery by private motorcar whilst promoting more sustainable modes of transport. The travel plan officers will comment of this separately a total of 16 off street parking spaces of which two will be for DDA use. The parking allocation will be split between the existing community hall parking, which is served via a simple vehicle cross over off Cambrian way, and a new 8 space parking area also served off a new simple VXO as shown on the submitted plan number.

The position of this new vxo is not ideal. It is opposite the junction of Westerdale, which is a local access road with a high number of residential dwellings served off this road. However, looking at the rolling five year injury accident statistics for this section of Cambrian way , there has only been one slight injury accident in that period of which the circumstances were rather

unfortunate rather than highlighting a particular environment concern over the highway layout.

However, to minimise the risk of vehicular and or pedestrian conflict the highway authority would ask that the LPA make the 8 spaces shown off this new access staff only parking. This would in turn limit the amount of movements from this access during the day thus reducing the risk of conflict

### Trees and Woodlands

I recommend that this application to construct a new medical centre on Cambrian Way, Hemel Hempstead is approved.

There was little existing vegetation of good quality on site and so retention of this is not of importance. A small number of trees to the south east of the proposed building are shown to be retained, supplemented with new shrub planting to create a low maintenance landscape feature. This will be acceptable given this part of the site's mixed ownership, DBC having an existing maintenance role on this strip of land. Four new trees are proposed along the north-eastern boundary, three located towards the front of the site adjacent to car parking spaces and the fourth within a courtyard to the rear of the building. It is not clear from drawing (08) 003 what surfacing around these trees will be maintained and so further detail is required. Details of new species, plant size, planting specification and maintenance regime should be submitted for assessment.

### Hertfordshire Biological Records Centre

No comments received to date.

### Contaminated Land Officer

The Environmental Health Division is in receipt of the following reports submitted in respect of the above:

1. Preliminary Investigation Report; Contract: 52004; Ian Farmer Associates (1998) Limited; December 2012
2. Report on Phase 2 Ground Investigation; Contract: 52004A; Ian Farmer Associates (1998) Limited; January 2013

The above report (1) provides a thorough preliminary risk assessment of the site. Potential pollutant linkages were identified relating to possible Made Ground associated with the development of the surrounding area and PCBs associated with the electricity substation located off-site adjacent to the southern site corner. As such, it was recommended that a Phase II Ground Investigation be undertaken to assess the actual nature, presence and extent of any contamination in the ground in relation to the proposed redevelopment.

The ground investigation provided good general coverage of the site. The contamination assessment did not identify any contamination within the shallow soils that would represent a risk to the proposed commercial end use (medical centre); therefore no remediation is considered necessary. The Environment Agency should provide comments in respect of the elevated leachate results and the associated potential risk to controlled waters. It is expected that this risk will be assessed as negligible, due to the presence of superficial deposits (Clay-with-Flints Formation) overlying the principal aquifer.

On the basis of the above, I am in agreement that no remedial works are required in respect of human health, prior to construction of the new medical centre. I recommend that the developer be advised to keep a watching brief during ground works on the site for any potentially contaminated material. Should any such material be encountered, then the Council must be

informed without delay, advised of the situation and an appropriate course of action agreed.

The Environment Agency should be consulted in respect of risk to controlled waters.

### Secure by Design Officer

Thank you for your letter of 21 January 2013 in connection with the above planning application, and have as you aware met the Applicant and Architect to consider designing out crime. The DAS makes mention of our meeting and I am confident the items discussed will be included in the final build, in fact many of the items discussed have been included within the planning application. The only small comment I have on the DAS is on page 33 where the DDA is mentioned and this act was repealed by the Equalities Act 2010.

### Thames Water

#### Waste Comments

Thames Water would advise that with regard to sewerage infrastructure we would not have any objection to the above planning application.

#### Surface Water Drainage

With regard to surface water drainage it is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for drainage to ground, water courses or a suitable sewer. In respect of surface water it is recommended that the applicant should ensure that storm flows are attenuated or regulated into the receiving public network through on or off site storage. When it is proposed to connect to a combined public sewer, the site drainage should be separate and combined at the final manhole nearest the boundary. Connections are not permitted for the removal of Ground Water. Where the developer proposes to discharge to a public sewer, prior approval from Thames Water Developer Services will be required.

### Water Comments

With regard to water supply, this comes within the area covered by the Affinity Water Company.

### Response to Neighbour Notification / Site Notice / Newspaper Advertisement

#### In objection

#### *4 Mendip Way*

1. The Planning Application Do NOT take into account that number 4 and 8 have extensions built on to the rear of their properties. Therefore, the proposed new Medical Centre will cause serious loss of light and overshadowing to these properties, especially in the afternoons and evenings;
2. The planting of Sliver Birch trees, to the left of the entrance car park, will cause further overshadowing and loss of light to my property;
3. The sighting of the Water Disposal area adjacent to the rear gardens of the residential area.
4. Materials: Roof - description; standing seam dark metal panels, on the lower roof on the North side a sedum green roof is proposed. This is not in keeping with the surrounding houses and community centre all of which have tiled roofs.
5. Vehicle parking; Proposed 16 spaces, 8 of which already exist. This appears to be untrue as currently there are no parking spaces on the waste land at all. Also, the provision of 16 spaces appears to be in adequate. 4 Doctors, Practise manager, nurse practitioner, receptionist and at least one further office staff will take up, at the minimum 8 spaces. This will leave just 8 spaces

for the patients and visitors etc. The majority of patients/visitors will therefore park in the surrounding area, further congesting it.

6. The Phase I Habitat Survey', carried out in the winter, states that a colony of up to 15 House Sparrows were recorded. In the spring to autumn period this number is between 30 and 50. Magpies have nested on the site for at least the last 8 years. Further species, to those mentioned, who use the site are Gold Finch, Nut Hatch, Wren, Wagtails (Pied and Grey) and Sparrow Hawk. In addition a large number of Starling use this site to roost during the summer months. It will be a great loss to our avians to lose this precious habitat that they have used for a large number of years.

7. This development will prohibit access to the rear of my fence for repair and maintenance purposes. A right I have practised for over 40 years.

#### *Employee at the Heights Shopping Centre*

My main concerns are that I have read a lot about the "rejuvenation" of local shops/amenities etc proposed by our local council, and have seen this in progress in past years at Adeyfield/Warners end etc. what then is proposed for the heights in highfield?. We have already lost the post office so when the doctors surgery goes then the pharmacy will no longer be able to operate, no patients equals no business for the chemist. Without all three of these essential services the local community [many of which are elderly] will be left helpless!

I have worked at the heights shopping centre for nearly twenty two years and hear from locals regularly that they are very worried for the future of their community and its services.

I have been advised by my employer that we will most likely be out of business by march 2014. I am not at the age where, at best would find it difficult to find alternative work and at worse find myself as another statistic knocking heavily on the councils housing and benefit door.

As you can see I have good reasons to object to this proposed move and hope my concerns will be duly noted.

#### In Support

##### *Woods Pharmacy - 2 Bellgate*

Strongly support the application as it has several merits. The new Health Centre would utilise a strip of waste land, the new centre would be more accessible to all as it will be in the middle of the community it serves. The centre would be able to provide more services to the local community, which is officially classed as deprived. The new NHS health reform will pass public health duties to the local authorities and this application would support the Dacorum Council role. As I have been practising as a community pharmacist in the locality for over 30 years, the new centre is the best development in the neighbourhood to improve the health needs of the local community.

##### *3 letters of support from patients of Highfield Surgery*

##### *Highfield Surgery*

We, the doctors are writing in support of the building proposal for a new health centre on Cambrian Way in Highfield. Our Current GP surgery on Jupiter Drive was built in 1990 as a single handed teaching practice, but our list has grown steadily since then and we have long outgrown our current building. We currently have 4,600 patients registered on our practice list. The Dacorum estates plan, commissioned by the West Hertfordshire PCT in September 2009, showed that we were the most constrained GP practice in all of the Dacorum area, as we had 36 patients per square metre of floorspace, compared with Dacorum average of 19 patients/m<sup>2</sup> and the Hertfordshire average of 21 patients/m<sup>2</sup>.

Our current premises consists of two consulting rooms, one room for the practice nurse and a

small office which we have had to convert into a third consulting room. We have a small room for the practise manager and equally tiny room for the secretary (with fax machine, photocopier and tiny wash-up sink). There is no common room for coffee breaks or team meetings. The waiting room gets crowded easily and has to be used for in house meetings (which mean that the surgery has to be closed during these meetings). We have no more space in the receptionist area for storing patient's notes. Large deliveries have to be stacked in the reception area, as there is nowhere else to put them, which is a safety risk as they can be tripped over. There is no room for expansion, so we are unable to provide all the facilities that the big practices provide.

Our partnership has also grown from a single handed GP to four GP partners, three of whom work part time. The doctors cannot increase their hours due to lack of space. We were a training practice but now are no longer able to accommodate an extra clinician due to lack of space. We have been hot desking for years, with every room in constant use - the doctors have to do some paperwork and telephone calls to patients in the reception area, when consulting rooms are being used, which is less than ideal in terms of confidentiality. The doctors and practice nurses are sometimes queuing to use a consulting room, if a session is running late. The practice trained one of the nurses to manage minor illness and was hoping to employ her as a nurse practitioner and so increasing consulting capacity within the practice. Again lack of space has prevented us from using her skills.

It is very important to us as for several years of trying to progress with a new surgery development, we believe this to be the only opportunity in terms of available sites that are financially viable and within distance for our existing patients to continue on our registration list, also very importantly whilst there is PCT support for this development.

Highfield surgery is the only practice in Highfield, the most deprived ward not only in Hemel Hempstead and Dacorum but in Hertfordshire. It is in the top most deprived wards in the country. Dacorum on the other hand is in the top 50 affluent boroughs in the country. This exaggerates the disparity between Dacorum and Highfield. There is a high incidence of teenage pregnancy, unemployment, single parent families, low wage families and drug addiction. Despite all the short comings, the practice has always provided a high standard of care and we are highly motivated to continue to do so. We were in partnership with another practice during fund holidays, were the first PMS practice trying to improve care for the single parent families and mother from ethnic minorities (had to stop due to lack of space). Highfield surgery has always remained within its allocated budget for prescribing, referrals and acute hospital spend. The surgery is well respected in the local GP community and it has always scored well in patient satisfaction ratings, including the national GP satisfaction questionnaire.

We have poor disabled access and access for buggies. Our last PCT practice inspection rated the practice as only acceptable, with an inspection rating of 4. We are very concerned that with the increased requirements for GP practices to meet the required standards in terms of our premises. We are very keen to move into a new health centre which would comply with the latest NHS guidance, health and safety and access. We have funding approved by the PCT as they support our application for more suitable premises. We feel that the proposed premises are what are required to enable us to meet the needs of our patients. The community in Highfield need good medical care. At the moment we are limited by our premises to provide this although we try our hardest. They need a new medical centre in order to enable us to provide the high quality care they deserve.

#### *Highfield Community Centre*

Agree to support the application on condition that the car park drainage is sorted out and that across the whole car park white lines are painted to regularise the car parking across the site.

*Cllr Brenda Link (Highfield Ward)*

I have been a patient of Highway Surgery for many years, as have all of my children and their families. I fully support a change in premises for the surgery. I feel that a new surgery would have many benefits for patients and professionals. Mostly the additional space, which would allow for improved access to the surgery for the disabled and parents with pushchairs/prams. Currently there are no provisions for parents to bring their buggies into the surgery. Instead, they have to left outside. I have seen parents having to take their sleeping children from their prams and disturb them so that they can enter the surgery. The current surgery is very cramped, especially the waiting area. There are limited facilities to keep small children entertained whilst they wait. A new premises, with more space to cater for these needs is well overdue in my opinion. On the whole, the new premises would provide a better and broader range of services to its patients, as well as being a more spacious and comfortable environment in which to be in. I feel that the current surgery on Jupiter Drive will fail to meet the new standards and requirements which come into force in April. The move to a larger surgery site, in my honest opinion is a very positive way forward. I know it will benefit patients and staff alike.

### Signed Petition

Petition in support of medical centre - Partition entitled "Highfield Surgery to move locally to a larger premises to allow us to improve our services to you". This has been signed by 130 nearby residents.

### **Considerations**

#### Policy and Principle

The site lies within the urban area of Hemel Hempstead wherein, under Policies 2 and 9 of the Local Plan, compatible non-residential development for small-scale social, community, leisure and business purposes is acceptable. Policy 10 of the local plan encourages optimising urban land and indicates that vacant or underused land and buildings should be brought into appropriate uses as soon as practicable through new building, conversion, adaption or other alteration. In particular, building development will be permitted if it:

- i) makes optimum use of the land available, whether in terms of site coverage or height, or
- ii) contributes towards or provides for the reasonable sharing of facilities, such as off street car parking; or
- iii) does not prevent other land coming forward for development in the future; or
- iv) helps to achieve a comprehensively planned development framework.

Policy 67 of the local plan states that provision of sufficient land to accommodate a wide range of well-located social and community facilities to meet the needs of all sections of the community will be given high priority. Policy 67 of the local plan refers to the schedule of social and community facilities proposal sites where it allocates the application site (site reference C3) for a new youth centre.

Policy 11 of the local plan states that development will not be permitted unless it is appropriate in terms of layout, site coverage, design, bulk, materials and height on the site itself, in relation to adjoining property and in the context of longer views. It is also expected that the development should respect the townscape/general character in which it is set, avoid harm to the residential amenity (visual intrusion, privacy, general noise and disturbance), retains important vegetation and where relevant includes measures to improve the local landscape, also ensuring that there are no adverse ecological or pollution implications. There should be no adverse highway/parking/traffic implications and reasonable access for persons with disabilities.

The site is located within character area HCA 20 (Highfield) which is described as a larger, later new town neighbourhood comprised mainly of housing from the 1960s, but with examples of development from all ages onwards. The area is centred around two local neighbourhood centres, and is typified by its regular angular housing layouts with feature a high incidence of amenity greens and landscaping, inherent to its structure. The design varies throughout, although there are parts that have distinct design identity.

Policy CS23 (Social infrastructure) of the draft Core Strategy states that social infrastructure, providing services and facilities to the community will be encouraged. New infrastructure will (a) be located to aid accessibility; and (b) provide for the multifunctional use of space.

The principle of the proposal is considered to be acceptable as it provides a community facility within the residential area of Highfield. Although the site was originally allocated for a youth centre and permission was granted some time ago for this use, no progress was made on this scheme and the permission has since expired.

The Estates team have agreed to the long lease of the site for the medical centre and no objection has been raised to the loss of this site for youth facilities. In accordance with policy 10 of the local plan, the proposal will optimise the use of the vacant site for a community facility and would not prevent other land coming forward for future development. The centre would be well located to serve the local community of Highfield and is situated close to the local centre, allowing shared facilities and business.

### Design and Site Layout

The centre has been designed with regard to the residential amenities of it's neighbours, site constraints, requirements of the doctors, staff and patients and sustainability. The building has a split level roof which has been designed to reduce the impact on the neighbouring property and to accommodate the requirement for a plant room above the treatment and utility rooms as well as having some design interest. The roof height also allows for photovoltaic panels on the south western plane to utilise direct sunlight.

The design of the building is based on a contemporary interpretation of the surrounding buildings. The building blends traditional brick façade which is common to the area and a coloured façade primarily to the frontage, together with modern glazed elements to the frontage. In line with the conservation and design team leader's comments during pre-application discussions, the materials to the frontage allows some visual interest to the building, whilst still retaining elements of red brick which prevails throughout the immediate area. The roof is to be in aluminium grey with the exception of the roof nearest mendip way. This material is not uncommon for community and social buildings within residential areas.

The building retains a domestic scale which blends with the surrounding residential area but it is considered that the materials and roof form highlights the building as a community facility. Overall, in design terms, the building is considered to be acceptable for approval. Details of all materials would be required by condition.

The site proposes an area of car parking to the front of the building which is broken up with some new tree planting to the upper northern corner. The strip of land between the community centre and the medical centre will be retained as soft landscaping which softens the building within the site.

### Impact on Street Scene

The character area assessment for Highfield (HCA20) describes the area and indicates that design varies throughout, although there are parts that have distinct design identity. The area contains a mix of buildings which vary in design, materials and form. The site is immediately



adjacent to Highfield community centre and the Bellgate shops to the north west of the site. The building is set back from Cambrian way and as it is of a limited height, it is not considered to appear overly prominent within the streetscene. However the details and materials on the frontage would acknowledge the buildings use as a community building. The frontage is softened by some tree planting and overall from a streetscene perspective, no objection is raised and it is considered that the proposal will improve the appearance of the area.

#### Impact on Trees and Landscaping

The trees and woodlands officer has inspected the site and has indicated that there is little existing vegetation of good quality on site and so retention of this is not of importance. A small number of trees to the south east of the proposed building are shown to be retained, supplemented with new shrub planting to create a low maintenance landscape feature. A condition will be imposed requiring details of both hard and soft landscaping.

The strip of mature trees nearest Highfield community centre will be retained and will soften the overall built development on the site. A pathway through this strip will be introduced to allow access to the car parking area. Some soft planting will be introduced to this area to tidy up the landscape strip which will not interfere with the cables below and will be low maintenance. The existing substation will remain and will cordoned off from the building by a 2m fence.

#### Impact on Neighbours

The building has been designed to minimise the impact in terms of internal layout and external design to the neighbouring properties. The part of the building nearest the residential properties along Mendip Way has been designed to keep its height at a minimum in order to avoid visual intrusion. This part of the building nearest the residential properties measures an eaves height of 2.5m (approximately) on the boundary and extends out a distance of 5m rising to a height of 5.5m. The main roof has a sloping roof measuring 7.2m at the highest part sloping down to a height of 4.2m on the boundary nearest the community centre.

The building is sited approximately 14m from the rear elevation of the properties on Mendip Way and approximately 10m away from those properties that have extended (no.4 and 8) to the rear. At a distance of 14m (10m from those extended), the building has a height of 2.5m. The building extends up to a height of 5.5m approximately 16m away and up to 7.2m, approximately 17m away from the rear elevations.

The building when viewed from the rear elevations of properties along Mendip way is considered to mitigate the visual intrusion by the difference in heights nearest the boundary and the use of materials which include green materials to soften the impact of the building. A line drawn at 25 degrees from the windows of all the properties including those that have been extended would not be breached by the building and it is considered that the building would not result in a significant loss of day light to the rear windows along Mendip Way and there not be significant visual intrusion to the affected properties. It is noted that the youth club that was previously approved on the site has a similar height rising up to 7m. Due to the orientation of the site, there may be some loss of sunlight to the adjoining residents but due to the limited height of the proposed building and the distance between the building and the rear elevations of the dwellings, the loss of sunlight would not be significant to warrant a refusal.

In terms of privacy, the building has been designed to ensure that no consulting rooms are facing onto the rear gardens of Mendip Way and of the windows that are located on the side nearest the residential properties, these are ground floor windows which will face onto the boundary fence. A boundary fence 2m in height is to run along the boundary nearest the gardens of Mendip Way which will ensure privacy and security for the residents and it will hide the refuse area and cycling racks. A condition will be imposed ensuring that the no new

windows shall be inserted to the north eastern elevation without prior written approval from the LPA. This is to ensure that privacy could not eroded from the residential properties.

It is not considered that the building in itself would not result in any harm to the residents other than those discussed along Mendip Way, in terms of visual intrusion, loss of light or privacy or significant loss of light.

Concern has been raised by a local resident that the planting of sliver birch to the left of the car park will cause further overshadowing. It is not considered that the new trees would result in significant overshadowing over and above the existing situation and these would help mitigate the visual impact of the scheme. It has also been raised that the proposal would prohibit access to the rear gardens along Mendip Way. The site is owned by the council and there is no right of way for the neighbours at present to the rear of the properties. The proposal will not change the existing situation whereby, permission from the owner would need still need to be given to the residents to allow then access to their gardens.

#### Impact to local businesses due to the closure of the surgery on Jupiter drive.

It is noted that letters have been received which set out concerns in relation to the closure of the surgery at Jupiter drive and the implications that this would have on the local surgery nearby and to the local business. It is considered that whilst some economic loss may result to the heights shopping centre, there would be economic benefit to the local centre adjacent to the site. The larger and more modern surgery would bring significant benefit to the viability of Highfield local centre.

The surgery at Juniper drive is no longer viable to operate the large numbers of patients registered and does not have sufficient land on site to significantly enlarge the practice. Loss of some business to the nearby local centre as a result of the closure of the surgery at Jupiter drive could not be a reason for refusal in planning terms.

#### Sustainability

The medical centre has been designed to achieve a rating of 'Very Good' under BREEAM 2011 and the supported BREEAM report also identified potential ways of improving this rating to BREEAM 'Excellent'. BREEAM is voluntary scheme which aims to quantify and reduce the environmental burden of buildings by rewarding designs and operational procedure that take positive steps to minimise their environmental impact. This achievement of 'Very Good' goes beyond the standard planning requirements for new buildings and building regulation requirements and is welcomed. It is considered therefore that no objection is raised to the high levels of sustainable measures put forward.

#### Car parking

The site is located within a very sustainable location and the medical centre will serve a local catchment area. 16 car parking spaces have been provided to serve the medical centre. 8 of these car parking spaces are located to the front of the building and 8 are located within the carpark adjacent to Highway Community Centre. A short lease of 3 years has been agreed by the medical centre and the Council's estates team in respect of the 8 car parking spaces located on the hardstanding.

Appendix 5 of the local plan sets out the following maximum car parking standards for surgeries and clinics: 3 spaces per consulting room plus 1 space per employee other than consulting doctors.

The development proposes 4 GP consulting rooms, 1 nurse practitioner room and a treatment room. There are also administration and reception staff. Based on the maximum standard set

out above, the 6 consulting rooms would require a maximum of 18 spaces and there would be an additional space for a member of staff.

Based on the information submitted, the application form indicates that there would be 2 full time members of staff and 12 part time members of staff which equates to 7 full time staff. Within this location, it is considered that the 16 car parking spaces provided would be sufficient car parking for the medical centre. The application site is located within a sustainable location, directly across from the local centre. Parking for the medical centre could be shared with the parking at the shops. The site is immediately adjacent to public transport links. There are bus stops immediately outside the site which is served by bus routes 2 and 3. There are also bus stops located on Cattsdell which is 2-3 minute walk away. This stop is served by bus routes 4 and 5. Cycle stands will also be provided to the front of the centre, which can accommodate a total of 8 bicycles which will be available to use by both patients and staff. Overall, considering the location and the need for a medical centre of the proposed size, it is considered that the parking provided is sufficient and no objection is raised.

Hertfordshire Highways have requested that the parking to the front of the proposed building be marked only for use of staff and disabled spaces in order to cut down trips in and out of the new access. No objection is raised to this as there are also 8 car parking spaces adjacent to the community centre will be leased by the medical centre which may serve the patients visiting the surgery. The site is very sustainable in terms public transport and distance to local centre and no objection is raised to the numbers of car parking put forward. The spaces are on a short lease from the council however it is considered that after 3 years these could be renewed or indeed lost.

The applicants have submitted a green travel plan with their application which focuses on improving sustainable modes of travel used by the staff of the medical centre. The plan surveys the current staff which will be relocated to the new premises and sets out ways of improving more sustainable modes of transport for the staff other than private car. Incentives such as encouraging staff to car share and take public buses, as well as providing showers and changing facilities and drying facilities have been incorporated within the design of the building to encourage staff members to 'leave the car at home.'

#### Highway Impact

A new cross over is proposed along Cambrian Way which is opposite to the junction of Westerdale way. Hertfordshire County Council have been consulted on the application and have raised no objection subject to conditions. Hertfordshire Highways have indicated that the new crossover along Cambrian way is not ideal as it is opposite the junction with Westerdale, which is a local road with a high number of residential dwellings served off this road. However, the highway engineer has investigated the accident statistics for this section of Cambrian Way and noted that there has only been one slight injury which was unfortunate but this incident was considered to be a particular environmental concern instead of a highway layout concern. The highway engineer has therefore raised no objection to the new cross over but has asked for the 8 car parking spaces to the front of the building to be marked as staff only car parking. This would minimise the risk of vehicular and/or pedestrian conflict along this part of Cambrian Way as the number of trips in and out of the frontage would not be reduced. A condition will therefore be imposed requiring 7 of the parking spaces to the frontage to be used only for staff car parking and 1 for disabled parking. In terms of parking for the public visiting site, 8 additional spaces are located within the car park adjacent to Highfield Community Centre however these are leased only on a short term basis from the Council. It is noted that the site is located within a sustainable location and any redevelopment of the site adjacent to Highfield community centre would need to take into account traffic and parking implications of the medical centre next door.

### Ecological Impacts

A habitat study has been submitted as part of the application documents. The study indicates that the site comprises a species poor largely degraded habitat and the absence of mature trees makes it unsuited to bats, breeding birds (except magpie and collard doves), reptiles including newts and protected mammals. The study indicates that the site is a fairly isolated plot amidst residential and commercial buildings but it cannot be considered to represent a stepping stone to a more extensive wildlife corridor in this part of Hemel Hempstead. The survey in summary indicates that the plot is of low ecological or wildlife value and its proposed development is unlikely to have any adverse impact on the biodiversity of the wider area. It is noted however that birds may attempt to nest on the site, to avoid damage or destruction to active nests and infringement of the wildlife law, site clearance should be undertaken before the breeding season in March or after June when birds have finished breeding. The survey also indicates that a nestbox terraces which are suited to the house sparrow are provided along the southern wall of the new health centre. A condition has been imposed requesting details of new bird boxes.

### Contamination

The contamination assessment did not identify any contamination within the shallow soils that would represent a risk to the proposed commercial end use (medical centre); therefore no remediation is considered necessary. The contaminated land officer indicated however that the Environment Agency should provide comments in respect of the elevated leachate results and the associated potential risk to controlled waters. It is expected that this risk will be assessed as negligible, due to the presence of superficial deposits (Clay-with-Flints Formation) overlying the principal aquifer. The environment agency has been consulted but no comments have yet been received.

### Secure by design

The scheme has been designed with particular regards to secure by design measures and the crime prevention officer is largely happy with the scheme. There are garages to the rear of the site. An anti-climbing barrier (10-15mm) is located to the rear elevation of the building to ensure that there is no opportunity for individuals to climb from the garages onto the new building. There are barriers located to the front of the building to ensure cars are not able to drive close to the front elevation and the building is secured to the side nearest the residential properties by fencing. The refuse area to the side of the building will be guarded by locked wooden gates.

### Lighting

The details submitted in the Design and Access statement indicate that external lighting installation will be designed to meet the requirements of CIBSE Lighting Guide LG6 and will be chosen to comply with the guidance notes for the reduction of obtrusive light 2005 produced by the Institute of Lighting Engineers of obtrusive light 2005. No specific details of lighting have been submitted however and a condition requiring details and location of all lighting will be imposed. This is to ensure that the amenity of the adjoining neighbours will not be significantly harmed as a result of lighting to the side of the building.

### Waste Management

The surgery would have a particular regime of waste collection and there is a need for medical waste and usual commercial waste collection. Each will have a contract basis collection system. The design allows for a secure waste area for each type of waste to the north east of the building. The refuse area will be cordoned from the neighbouring properties by secure fencing.

RECOMMENDATION - That planning permission be **GRANTED** for the reasons referred to above and subject to the following conditions:

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

Reason: To comply with the requirements of Section 91 (1) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 (1) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- 2 **No development shall take place until details of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development.

- 3 **Pedestrian visibility splays of 2m x 2m shall be provided, and thereafter maintained, on both sides of the entrance to the site, within which there shall be no obstruction to visibility between 0.6m and 2m above the carriageway.**

Reason: In the interest of highway safety.

- 4 **The proposed car parking spaces shall have measurements of 2.4m x 4.8m respectively. The eight spaces located to the front of the surgery shall be maintained permanently for staff and disabled parking and shall be used for no other purpose.**

Reason: The above condition is required to ensure the adequate provision of off-street parking for staff in order to minimise the impact on the safe and efficient operation of the adjoining Highway.

- 5 **The development shall not begin until details of the disposal of surface water from the parking area have been submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.**

Reason: To minimise danger, obstruction and inconvenience to highway users.

- 6 **No development shall take place until full details of both hard and soft landscape works shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. These details shall include:**

- **hard surfacing materials;**
- **means of enclosure;**
- **soft landscape works which shall include planting plans; written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment); schedules of plants, noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate;**
- **trees to be retained and measures for their protection during construction works;**
- **proposed finished levels or contours;**

**The approved landscape works shall be carried out prior to the first**

**occupation of the development hereby permitted.**

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory appearance to the development and to safeguard the visual character of the immediate area.

- 7 **Prior to the commencement of development, details and siting of bird boxes shall be submitted and approved in writing by the local planning authority and implemented in accordance with the approved details.**

Reason: In the interests of biodiversity and in accordance with policy 120 of the local plan.

- 8 **No new windows shall be inserted in to the north eastern elevation of the building without the prior written approval of the local planning authority.**

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the residents along Mendip Way.

- 9 **Details of all exterior lighting to be installed at the application site shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The exterior lighting shall be installed and thereafter retained fully in accordance with the approved details.**

Reason: In the interests of safeguarding the amenities of the neighbouring properties.

- 10 **No development shall take place until details of the cycle racks to be used shall have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.**

Reason: To safeguard the amenities of the neighbouring properties and the visual amenities of the area.

- 11 **The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the following approved plans:**

**08/001, 08/002, 08/003, 08/004, 08/005, 08/006, 08/008, 08/010, Travel Plan, Phase 1 Habitat Survey, BREEAM 2011 Pre-Assessment Guidance Report, Report on Phase 2 Ground Investigation.**

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.

Informative

HIGHWAY INFORMATIVE: The highway authority require the construction of the vehicle cross-over to be undertaken by approved contractors so that the works are carried out to their specification and by a contractor who is authorised to work in the public highway. The applicant will need to contact [www.hertsdirect.org](http://www.hertsdirect.org) or telephone 0300 1234 047 for further instruction.

NOTE 1:

This decision to grant planning permission has been taken for the following reason and having regard to the policies and proposals in the development plan set out

below and to all other material planning considerations, including relevant supplementary planning guidance.

The site is located in an area where community buildings are acceptable in principle in accordance with Policy 2 and 9 of the Borough Plan. The proposals are considered acceptable with regard to Policy 67 in regards to accommodation for a community facility. There would be no adverse effects on the appearance of the appearance of the street scene. The amenity of adjoining neighbours would not be adversely affected. Car parking within the site is adequate. No significant trees would be affected by the development. No significant habitats or protected species would be harmed by the development. The proposals therefore accord with Policy 11 of the Borough Plan and CS11 and CS12 of the Core Strategy.

**NOTE 2:**

The following policies of the development plan are relevant to this decision:

**Dacorum Borough Local Plan 1991 - 2011**

Policies 2, 9, 10, 11, 13,58, 67, 101, 122, 123, and 124  
Appendices 1, 3 and 5

**Supplementary Planning Guidance**

Environmental Guidelines

Residential Character Area: HCA 20 - Highfield

Water Conservation & Sustainable Drainage

Energy Efficiency & Conservation

Accessibility Zones for the Application of Parking Standards

**Pre-Submission Draft of the DBC Core Strategy (incorporating the 'List of Proposed Amendments: June 2012')**

CS1, CS4, CS11, CS12, CS13, CS23 and CS29

**NOTE 3:** Article 31 Statement

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. The Council acted proactively through early engagement with the applicant at the pre-application stage which lead to improvements to the scheme. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No. 2) Order 2012.