

APPLICATION REPORT – 17/00041/FUL

Validation Date: 16 January 2017

Ward: Clayton-le-Woods And Whittle-le-Woods

Type of Application: Full Planning

Proposal: Siting of portable building to be used as consultation rooms for a period of 3 years

Location: Whittle Surgery 199 Preston Road Whittle-Le-Woods Chorley PR6 7PS

Case Officer: Mr Iain Crossland

Applicant: Miss Keely Ollerton

Agent: Mr Nick Glendinning

Consultation expiry: 10 February 2017

Decision due by: 7 April 2017

RECOMMENDATION

1. It is recommended that this application is refused.

SITE DESCRIPTION

2. The application site is a doctors surgery located on Preston Road (A6) in the settlement area of Whittle le Woods. The site comprises the surgery building and an adjacent car park. The site bounded by dwellings on all sides other than to the east, which is bound by Preston Road. Although the character of the area is mixed there are a number of community facilities and commercial and professional services in the vicinity.

DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

3. The proposed development is for the siting of a portable building to be used as two consultation rooms for the doctors surgery for a temporary period of three years. The building would measure approximately 10m by 3.1m and would have a flat roof with a height of approximately 2.6m. It would be located on part of the existing car park.

APPLICANT'S CASE

4. Whittle Surgery is a small established practice serving the population of Whittle-Le-Woods and the surrounding areas. The surgery has experienced an upsurge in patient numbers over the last 16 years from approximately 6000 patients in the year 2000 to approximately 9500 patients at the end of 2016. This is despite having to closing the list for months at a time during this period as the surgery was unable to cope with demand. The increase in patient numbers mirrors an increase in the overall population of Whittle-Le-Woods as its location close to Chorley and Preston and between the M6 and M61 motorways makes it a

popular commuter location. The increase in population numbers is mainly due to increased residential development in the area over the last 20 years.

5. The existing surgery building no longer has sufficient space to cater for the numbers of patients requiring appointments. Currently, Whittle Surgery has 4.33 FTE GPs, 2 FTE nurses and 0.75 HCA's but really need a minimum of 5.63 GPs and 3.67 nurses to cope with the current list size and 8.45 FTE GPs and 5.05 FTE nurses to just to continue to provide Level 1 GP services to cover the expected growth in list size. In real terms, Whittle Surgery would aspire to become a Level 3 GP Practice and so would require additional GPs and nurses to provide these services.
6. This predicament has led the surgery to apply for funding for a new surgery building in the area, which will be purpose built to suit the needs of the surgery. It is anticipated the new surgery building will be ready to occupy within the next three years. The surgery have therefore decided to hire a Portakabin Building to be used as two additional consultation rooms for a temporary period of three years until the new surgery building is ready to occupy.
7. The additional consultation rooms are proposed as a temporary measure to bridge the gap until the new surgery building has been procured. Without the additional temporary consultation rooms the Surgery will be unable to continue to provide the required level of service and care to its patients.

REPRESENTATIONS

8. 3 letters of objection have been received from 2 addresses in relation to the following issues:
 - Impact on highway safety
 - Impact on the character of area
 - Impact on outlook
 - Impact on privacy and light
9. A letter of support has been received from Lindsay Hoyle MP

CONSULTATIONS

10. Whittle le Woods Parish Council have stated that they have no comments to make on the application
11. Regulatory Services - Environmental Health: The application has been considered in respect of any potential nuisance arising from the proposal and this department have no comment or objections to make.
12. Lancashire Highway Services: it appears without an appropriate alternative or mitigation measures, the cumulative impacts of the proposal would be severe and would affect the efficient functioning and operation of the highway network. I would therefore not recommend approval of the application.

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Principle of the Development

13. The National Planning Policy Framework (The Framework) sets out the three dimensions of sustainable development having an economic, social and environmental role. Paragraph 14 further identifies the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan making, that means that the needs of the population are taken into account and for decision taking, where the Local Plan is absent or out of date that any adverse impacts should significantly outweigh the benefits for permission to be refused.
14. Paragraph 17 of the Framework sets out 12 'Core Planning Principles' that should underpin plan-making and decision-taking. One of these principles establishes that planning should:

“take account of and support local strategies to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all, and deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs.”

15. Policy 23 of the Central Lancashire Core Strategy is supportive of schemes that help to reduce health inequalities, and in particular to support health care infrastructure.
16. The application site is located in the core settlement area of Chorley. The Chorley Local Plan 2012 - 2026 states that within the settlement areas excluded from the Green Belt, and identified on the Policies Map, there is a presumption in favour of appropriate sustainable development.
17. Policy BNE1 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026 established the design criteria for new development. In relation to this particular proposal, the scheme must demonstrate how the proposed development would not prejudice highway safety, and that the highway impacts of the proposal would not be severe. New development must also comply with policy ST4 in relation to the Council’s adopted parking standards policy.

Impact on neighbour amenity

18. The proposed portable building would be positioned approximately 1m from the western boundary to the site and 2m from the northern boundary to the site.
19. The building would be located approximately 2m from the boundary with the garden to 8 St Johns Close to the north, and 5.5m from the front corner of the property itself. It is noted that there is a 1.8m high fence along the boundary and the levels between the site and adjacent dwelling are similar. Although the building would be located to the south of 8 St Johns Close the impact on light would be limited due to the degree of separation, low level building height and screen fencing along the boundary. The impact on outlook would also be limited as a result of these factors. The impact on privacy and disturbance would be no greater than the existing situation as the car park is already busy with patients visiting the surgery.
20. The proposed building would be located to the north east of the dwellings at 2 and 4 St Johns Close. It is noted that there is a steep change in levels between the application site down to the rear gardens of these properties. The building would be positioned approximately 11m from the rear elevation of the dwelling at 2 St Johns Close, which is positioned at an angle relative to the application site. There would be a distance of approximately 2.5m between the building and break in levels. The positioning of the building to the north east and degree of separation would be such that there would be no loss of direct light from the proposed building and little impact on outlook, given the existing steep levels and low level building height. It is also noted that the applicant could erect a 2m high fence on the boundary in this position without planning permission that would have a greater impact than the proposed building. There would be no impact on privacy as there would be no facing windows and no direct views over the most intimate private amenity areas of the garden. On this basis it is considered that there would be no unacceptable impact on the amenity of the occupiers of 2 St Johns Close in relation to light, outlook or privacy.
21. The building would be positioned approximately 11m from the rear corner of the dwelling at 4 St Johns Close, which is positioned at an angle relative to the application site. There would be a distance of approximately 1m between the building and boundary. The positioning to the north east and degree of separation would be such that there would be no loss of direct light from the proposed building and little impact on outlook, given the existing steep levels and low level building height. It is also noted that the applicant could erect a 2m high fence on the boundary in this position planning permission that would have a greater impact than the proposed building. There would be no impact on privacy as there would be no facing windows and no direct views over the most intimate private amenity areas of the garden. On this basis it is considered that there would be no unacceptable impact on the amenity of the occupiers of 4 St Johns Close in relation to light, outlook or privacy.

Impact on character and appearance of the locality

22. The proposed development would result in the siting of a portable building being positioned to the rear of the car park at the side of the surgery building. This would be a low level structure of functional appearance that would only be in situ for three years. It would not be prominent in the street scene by virtue of its positioning and scale, and given its temporary nature the rather functional appearance would be appropriate and acceptable. A condition would be attached to the grant of any planning permission requiring the removal of the building after a period of three years. On this basis no undue harm would be caused to the appearance of the site or character of the area.

Impact on highways/access

23. The site currently has an established vehicular access to the car park from Preston Road. This would be retained within the proposed development and is unaffected. The applicant has indicated that there are currently 12no. car parking spaces on site. The proposed development would, however, result in the loss of at least three parking spaces and would increase the capacity of the surgery by adding a further two consulting rooms. It is also likely that the creation of the additional consulting rooms would result in at least an additional two staff members being based on site.
24. The adopted parking requirements relating to a doctors surgery, as set out by Policy ST4 through appendix A of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 to 2026, is for 1no. parking space to be provided in respect of 2no. staff, in addition to 4no. spaces per consulting room, therefore based on the proposed 2no. consulting rooms and likely 2no. additional employees, 9no. additional parking spaces would be required.
25. This therefore approximately works out as follows.
- 3no. (minimum) spaces to be lost
 - 8no. spaces required in respect of proposed consulting rooms
 - 1no. space required in respect of new staff
26. Assuming that the existing car park is already at capacity in relation to the number of consultation rooms and staff already in existence on the site an additional 9no. more parking spaces would be required in association with the siting of the portable building to comply with adopted parking standards, plus a further 3no. spaces in relation to those that would be lost. As no additional parking would be provided there would be a deficit of 12no. parking spaces as a result of the proposed development.
27. The existing surgery does not have compliant parking in relation to the local plan standards with only approximately 12 spaces and some of those spaces mean parking in front of the building and overhanging the pavement. The pub opposite would be a natural short term option to secure some additional parking however the agreement on this option is not guaranteed.
28. Policy ST4 of the Chorley Local Plan 2012 – 2026 does allow for lower levels of parking provision to be considered in locations that are more sustainable and well served by public transport. The application site is located within the settlement area of Whittle le Woods close to other amenities and residential development. There is also a high frequency bus service that operates along Preston Road. However, although the Lancashire County Council (LCC) Highway officer acknowledges that the location is sustainable for travel by non-car modes, and that the portable building would only be in use for a temporary period of three years, without an appropriate alternative or mitigation measures, the cumulative impacts of the proposal would be severe and would affect the efficient functioning and operation of the highway network. LCC highways do not therefore recommend approval of the application.
29. The delivery of the community needs in terms of Health is a corporate priority and ensuring adequate facilities to manage the scale of health needs is key to ensuring the Health Outcomes of the community are met. Allowing three years for any proposals to come forward would be a significant impact on the local area over a prolonged period which cannot be supported.

30. The opportunity for a much shorter consent to focus on the delivery of any development proposals for a new surgery is possible and would limit the harm in the short term of placing the portacabin on the car park. This is not what has been applied for and not what the surgery wishes, however it is important to balance the harm in highway safety terms against the benefits of providing improved health care outcomes and capacity for the community to be able to register at the practice.

CONCLUSION

31. The siting of a portable building to be used as two consultation rooms for the doctors surgery for a temporary period of three years, would enable Whittle Surgery to meet the current demand for healthcare services in the area and provide improved healthcare outcomes for the community. Whilst more permanent alternative facilities are proposed to be developed in the longer term, there is limited certainty over the timescale for delivery. The surgery provides a valuable resource to the community and it is acknowledged that expansion is required to meet demand, which is supported by both the Framework and Central Lancashire Core Strategy. In addition to the siting of the cabin itself, there would be no unacceptable impact on the amenity of neighbouring occupiers or the character of the area.
32. The proposed development would, however, result in a loss of existing car parking spaces from a car park that is already operating over design capacity and would in itself generate a requirement for at least 9 car parking spaces, where no additional spaces are proposed. This is a situation that LCC Highways consider would result in a severe cumulative impact that would affect the efficient functioning and operation of the highway network. Although this situation would only be temporary for a period of up to three years, the severe cumulative impact would not be mitigated against within this time period.
33. The limiting of the length of time that the consent would last for to 12 months would limit the harm however agreement to limit the consent has not been secured with the applicant and therefore the application is considered on the basis of 3 years. The application is a balanced one however on the basis of 3 years it is recommended on balance that planning permission is refused.

RELEVANT POLICIES: In accordance with s.38 (6) Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004), the application is to be determined in accordance with the development plan (the Central Lancashire Core Strategy, the Adopted Chorley Local Plan 2012-2026 and adopted Supplementary Planning Guidance), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Consideration of the proposal has had regard to guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) and the development plan. The specific policies/guidance considerations are contained within the body of the report.

RELEVANT HISTORY OF THE SITE

Ref: 03/00935/FUL **Decision:** REFFPP **Decision Date:** 23 October 2003
Description: Proposed two storey extension to the rear of the property

Ref: 04/00666/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 12 August 2004
Description: Proposed two storey extension to the rear of the property

Ref: 90/01013/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 5 February 1991
Description: Corridor link and use of basement as offices

Ref: 86/00817/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 13 January 1987
Description: Change of use of premises from insurance brokers to dental surgery

Ref: 80/00715/FUL **Decision:** PERFPP **Decision Date:** 4 August 1980
Description: Shop front alterations

Reason for refusal

The level of car parking available at Whittle Surgery as a result of the proposed development would be below the figure required in relation to the addition of two consulting rooms as set out within Policy ST4 of the Adopted Chorley Local Plan 2012-2016. There are no public car parks in the area, no on-street parking on the A6 Preston Road in this location and limited on street parking availability in the vicinity of the application site. As such any overspill of parking from the surgery car park would result in a cumulative impact on the highway that would be severe and would affect the efficient functioning and operation of the highway network. It is not therefore considered that an additional two consulting rooms can be accommodated on this site, whilst providing a suitable level of parking for the surgery in accordance with Policy ST4 of the Adopted Local Plan.