

Planning application no.	21/01291/FUL	
Site	Open Space Bounded by Rushall Road, Northwood Park Road, Broadway, Bushbury	
Proposal	Construction of a two storey medical centre (Use Class E(e)) with new vehicular access from Broadway and associated vehicle parking and landscaping, to include stopping up of highway land.	
Ward	Bushbury North;	
Applicant	Medcentres PLC (Mr Arnold)	
Cabinet member with lead responsibility	Councillor Stephen Simpkins Deputy Leader: Inclusive City Economy	
Accountable Director	Richard Lawrence, Director of Regeneration	
Originating service	Planning	
Accountable employee	Vijay Kaul Tel Email	Senior Planning Officer 01902 553791 vijay.kaul@wolverhampton.gov.uk

1.0 Summary recommendation

1.1 Grant subject to conditions.

2.0 Application site

2.1 The approximately 0.31 hectare site is an area of open space laid to lawn bounded by Northwood Park Road, Broadway, Rushall Road and Hellier Road. The site is generally level west to east with a slight fall from the south east corner to the north west corner.

2.2 To the southeast of the site there is a three-storey building accommodating flats with a mix of commercial uses on the ground floor. To the southwest of the site there is a One Stop retail unit, hot food takeaway and hair salon. To the east there is the Woodbury School beyond which is the existing Bushbury Health Centre. These surrounding uses along with the application site are located within the Broadway Local Centre.

2.3 To the west of the site is an extra care residential facility Broadway Gardens, operated by Midland Heart.

2.4 Finally to the north, on the opposite side of the road is Northwood Park.

3.0 Application details

3.1 Erection of a new two storey medical centre, with new vehicular access from Broadway (from the east), 61 space car parking and landscaping. As the application site is also adopted highway, the application also includes stopping up of highway land.

3.2 Supporting information submitted with the application state:

- The maximum number of staff employed at any one time is expected to be 45.
- Opening times: Monday to Friday 08:30 to 18:30 hours, Saturday 08:30 to 12:30

4.0 Relevant policy documents

4.1 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

4.2 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

4.3 The Development Plan:
Wolverhampton Unitary Development Plan (UDP)
Black Country Core Strategy (BCCS)

4.4 The Open Space SPD
Open Space Strategy and Action Plan (OSSAP) 2018

5.0 Publicity

5.1 The application was advertised by direct neighbour notification, site notices and local newspaper advert. 10 objections have been received and can be summarised as follows:

- Renovate their existing surgery sites or other brownfield locations.
- Develop closer to Wednesfield for elderly and vulnerable
- Open greenspace should be enhanced. Loss detrimental to mental and physical health, and nature
- Increased cars into the area – causing parking and pedestrian safety concerns, car emissions, speeding, blocking existing entrance/exits at old folks home
- Bad idea being on a bus route. Bus service from Wednesfield is inadequate
- Eyesore and loss of outlook to park
- Increased noise and anti-social behaviour
- Previously 12 bungalows have been turned down on this site
- Vulnerable residents opposite – site being accessed for immoral reasons.

- Not reducing carbon footprint
- Work has already started

5.2 A Ward Councillor has also raised objection, summarised as follows:

- WCC should not be disposing of a community asset in this way – should be developed as village green
- Loss of views from neighbouring properties, green is the significant gateway to Northwood Park
- Out of scale and character, causing light obstruction
- Public consultation carried out by applicant was one sided affair – objections talked over
- Detrimental impact upon local amenities (shops, park, school), with significant congestion and safety concerns
- Benefits are outweighed by damage to Bushbury North residents.
- Adverse impact to residents' amenity of neighbours
- Considerable local opposition

5.3 There have been eight representations in support of the development, summarised as follows:

- A larger purpose-built surgery will offer improved will provide greatly enhanced medical treatment, clinical care to patients and services for the area.
- Drs all in one place improvement.
- Essential to meet the future expectations of NHS England
- Several buses cover the route. Consult with Transport Authority to further improve.
- Access and entry will take greater account of disabled, and elderly Patients
- Existing practices are no longer fit for purposes and struggle to meet demand
- Loss of open space can be offset by landscaping a 'richer' habitat for wildlife than present
- Benefit of building a new Health Centre overrides any objections
- Fully support new site, even though living ½ mile from Prestwood Road Surgery
- More treatments such as physiotherapy can be offered closer to home, where now travelling to Stafford
- The first-class clinical and administrative teams deserve to work in a modern, well-equipped, safe environment rather than outdated converted bungalow

- The communities of Bushbury, Fallings Park and Wednesfield will benefit greatly from this development.
- New housing developments in the locality will benefit from improved infrastructure
- Makes use of currently underused site in local area.

6.0 Consultees

Internal

- 6.1 Highways – No objection subject to conditions and funding of Traffic Regulation Order.
- 6.2 Environmental Protection (Land Contamination) – No objection subject Phase 2 Site Investigation

External

- 6.3 Severn Trent Water – No objections subject to conditions requiring drainage plans for the disposal of foul and surface water flows
- 6.4 NHS Black Country and West Birmingham CCG – Support proposal as it aligns with the Primary Care Estates Strategy and Black Country & West Birmingham STP Estates Strategy.

7.0 Legal implications

- 7.1 The legal implications arising from this report are set out below SE/05112021/C.

8.0 Appraisal

- 8.1 The main issues for consideration are:

- Principle of development
- Character and Appearance
- Highways and Parking
- Residential Amenity
- Ecology

Principle of development

- 8.2 The Prestbury Medical Practice have been working to secure fit-for-purpose medical facilities for the last 7 years. This proposed Medical Centre will house the Prestwood Road West Surgery and Bushbury Medical Centre. The existing buildings are both at capacity and unfit for purpose. Prestwood Road West is the only surgery in its locality identified as a red (highest) risk in the Clinical Commissioning Group's (CCG) Estate Strategy and is very much a priority. This proposal will see the consolidation of both sites

into one. The building will be an NHS GP surgery with associated services, such as consulting/examination rooms, treatment rooms, GP training rooms and health education.

- 8.3 As part of site selection process, a number of sites were identified and assessed by MedCentres, but these were discounted for a variety of reasons, including size of site unsuitable, not delivering value for money, land earmarked for development within a long-term lease agreement or designated greenbelt land.
- 8.4 There is clear demand for a new, purpose built Medical Centre, and this is shown by the fact that the project is a CCG Estate priority (Wolverhampton Clinical Commissioning Group Primary Care Estates Strategy 2019-2024). The proposal was approved in the Primary Care Commissioning Committee meeting on 24th August 2021. The district valuer has signed off on the project meaning the scheme represents value for money for the NHS.
- 8.5 While the application site is designated open space, given its size and location surrounded by highways, it has limited practical use for recreation and amenity, as reflected in the fact that it is adopted highway. Given the proximity of other open space, which principally includes Northwood Park immediately adjacent, and the good level of provision of open space in this part of the city, as demonstrated in the Open Space Strategy and Action Plan 2018, it is considered that the site can be developed without prejudice to open space provision in the city. It also satisfies the requirements of BCCS Policy ENV6 and Saved UDP Policy R3.
- 8.6 It should be noted, that in December 2020, Council approval was given in an Individual Executive Decision Notice to declare the application site (which is housing owned land) surplus to requirements and to dispose of the land for the development of a new medical facility, subject to the agreement of Heads of Terms and sale conditions.
- 8.7 The application site was identified as part of the councils Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment in 2020 as potentially being able to support the development of residential housing, however, no formal planning application was submitted.
- 8.8 The proposal would continue to be well located within the Broadway Local Centre, BCCS Policies CEN5 and HOU5 support this development, as it meets an identifiable need, is well related to public transport infrastructure and will positively contribute to the local services in the area.
- 8.9 The principle of development is therefore acceptable and would not be contrary to the policies of the Development Plan.

Character and Appearance

- 8.10 The proposed layout address all frontages in an acceptable manner, with the main entrance directly opposite the local centre. The off-set position of the building within the plot allows some visual openness to be maintained toward Northwood Park.

- 8.11 The proposed two-storey scale, massing and bespoke design incorporating multi-red brick, corten steel elements, pitched tile roof and modern fenestration on all elevations, responds to the site characteristics of this prominent site, which is all the more challenging due to being open on all four sides.
- 8.12 A detailed landscaping plan will be required to ensure the site planting balances well against the landscape setting of Northwood Park, and provide a more softened edge to the perimeter, which is to be enclosed by 1m high railings.
- 8.13 Although the amount of open space would be reduced, overall, the development will not harm the essential character and appearance of the surrounding area.

Highways and Parking

- 8.14 A number of objections have been received raising concern over potential highway safety impacts.
- 8.15 The Highway Authority have robustly assessed the proposals and the associated Transport Assessment, including requested additional information. They have concluded that the proposed access is acceptable in its position and design and that the traffic levels associated with the development can be accommodated on the existing network without resulting in a severe impact. It should be noted that a proportion of vehicular trips on the network will not be new trips on the network but re-distributed trips due to the re-location and merger of the two existing medical practices.
- 8.16 The parking provision is supported by a detailed analysis of similar medical facilities, as well as existing information on staff mode of travel to existing practices. This anticipates that around 10-15 staff will not be using the car park on any given day. Based on this data, combined with the study of other new built GP surgeries, 61 parking spaces along with designated cycle and motorcycle parking is adequate and enough to ensure that the development meets its own transportation needs with no detriment to highway safety. Even if visitor parking does occur outside the site, given the short duration of visits which is frequently changing, the roads should be able to accommodate the relatively small amount of on-street parking which can be controlled by Traffic Regulation Orders.
- 8.17 A new pedestrian crossing point will be installed, and an existing crossing point enhanced to the south of the site, to improve safe access. The site is accessible to other means of travel, including regular bus services and cycle links.
- 8.18 The proposed stopping up of the application site as highway land is necessary to enable the development to proceed subject to granting of this planning permission, and is acceptable in highway terms. Separate to the planning process, an application to the Department of Transport has been submitted to formally cease the land to be a public highway, but obligations relating to further consultation still remain.
- 8.19 The proposed development would not conflict with transport and parking development plan policies, nor with would there be conflict with NPPF paragraph 111 which says that

development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

Residential Amenity

- 8.20 The nearest residential use takes place at the over 55's accommodation, Broadway Gardens located to the west of the site. There is a separation distance of at least 29m between habitable rooms and the proposed building, this will ensure no adverse impact upon their immediate outlook, sunlight or privacy.
- 8.21 There is more significant separation distance of some 50m to the flats above existing commercial units in the Broadway Local Centre, and at least 39m to Woodbury School to the west.

Ecology

- 8.22 The Preliminary Ecological Appraisal concludes the loss of amenity grassland will have limited impact on local biodiversity. There is opportunity to introduce a native planting scheme, bat and bird boxes to ensure a net gain for biodiversity.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1 Whilst the proposal results in the loss of public open space, on balance, the substantial benefits that will come as part of this proposal will outweigh any limited harm. The proposal is acceptable and overall is in accordance with the development plan.

10.0 Detail recommendation

- 10.1 That planning application 21/01291/FUL is granted subject to following conditions

- Use of building restricted to Class E(e)
- Materials
- Levels
- Boundary treatment
- Drainage
- Detailed landscaping plan
- Land contamination
- Opening hours
- Details of the type and location of external equipment
- Construction Management Plan (including traffic control measures)
- Car Parking / access implementation
- Pedestrian crossing points - details to be submitted and agreed
- Travel Plan
- Cycle / motorcycle parking provision
- Electric charging points
- 10% renewable energy
- Barrier/gate to restrict car park access only outside operational hours
- Refuse management plan

- External lighting plan / light spillage
- Accord with recommendations of ecology report

