

MEETING:	PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE:	12 MAY 2010
	<p>DMNW/100261/F - PROPOSED MEDICAL CENTRE TO INCLUDE DOCTORS SURGERY, DENTAL FACILITIES AND DISPENSARY, PROPOSED VEHICLE ACCESS, TREATMENT PLANT AND LANDSCAPING ON LAND OPPOSITE ARROW PLANT, EARDISLEY ROAD, KINGTON, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR5 3EA.</p> <p>For: Kington Medical Practice per Mr R Ricks, 49 North Hill, Colchester, Essex, C01 1PY.</p>

Date Received: 5 February 2010 Ward: Kington Town Grid Ref: 3302 5629
Expiry Date: 7 May 2010

Local Member: Councillor TM James

1. Site Description and Proposal

- 1.1 The 0.82 hectare application site is a parcel of agricultural land that is situated to the south east of the market town of Kington. The site is located on the Eastern side of the A4111 that forms part of the bypass around Kington on the approach from the South (Eardisley).
- 1.2 The site lies outside of the defined settlement of Kington in an area of open countryside. Its boundaries are the fence that borders the A4111 to the west and stream (a tributary of the River Arrow) to the east. A public Right of way crosses to the north of the site (but is not within the site). The site lies within a Flood Zone 1.
- 1.3 The proposal is for the erection of a new medical centre and dental practice to serve the population of Kington and its surrounding area. The medical centre currently has 8500 patients registered and covers an area of 600 square miles. The existing medical centre is located at The Meads, Victoria Road, Kington.
- 1.4 The site would be accessed via a new access point from the A4111 south of the turning to the west into Arrow Plant Hire. The building that will accommodate the medical facilities would be sited to the South of this access within a T-shaped two storey building. The front elevation of this building, which would be sited on a slight slant to the line of the road, would be approximately 64.5m in length and 16m wide (at widest point). The rear projection would be approximately 27m. The proposed building would incorporate a mix of materials of facing brick and cedar wood siding (wavy edge) and concrete plain roof tiles. The rooflines and fenestration types and sizes are varied to break up the bulk of the building. Windows and doors would be polyester powder coated aluminium. The front elevation has a centrally placed entrance with feature oak framing. The front section of the building is two storeys but uses the roof space (with roof lights). The eaves height of the front elevation of the proposed

building ranges from 4.4m to 3.2m. This part of the building is predominantly two storeys with a ridge height of 9.5m.

- 1.5 The two storey rear projection that forms the 'T' has a consistent ridge height of 11.4m forming a gable end to the east. When viewed from the south the building has a more traditional two storey appearance with a constant eaves height of 6.5m and regular fenestration at both levels. From the north, the proposal is again to use some of the roof space for around half of the rear projection but maintaining the overall height of 11.4m. A second entrance is proposed into the building in this north elevation that fronts the car park and drop off area.
- 1.6 The building would have an internal floor area of 1990 square metres, over two floors and would accommodate a doctor's surgery with associated uses and a dental surgery (not connected with the Doctors).
- 1.7 The doctor's surgery facilities would be mainly accommodated on the ground floor and would include the following facilities:
 - Two waiting areas and reception with patient toilets and baby change facilities;
 - 11 Consulting rooms
 - 3 treatment rooms
 - 3 nurse rooms
 - 4 'expansion' rooms and 1 additional room for returners / part timers
 - Triage room
 - Dispensary and associated waiting area
 - Associated dirty utility / clinical waste domestic waste / staff toilets and kitchens and reception manager's office.
- 1.8 The first floor would accommodate the following facilities:
 - Community nursing and store
 - Staff room
 - 2 admin offices
 - Library
 - Toilet facilities
 - Managers offices (x2)
 - Meeting / training room
 - 2 x store rooms
 - Minor operations room
 - Recovery
 - 2 x counselling rooms
 - Waiting area
 - Clean and dirty utilities and staff and patient toilet facilities
- 1.9 The Dental surgery would include:
 - 3 surgeries (including one for 'expansion')
 - 1 Consulting room
 - Reception and waiting area
 - Store area/ sterilisation room and toilet and staff facilities
- 1.10 The car parking facilities would be located to the north of the access point. This would provide 72 staff car parking places, 14 of which would be for staff in an area separated by a vehicle barrier. The application also indicated cycle parking adjacent to the two main entrances. The application includes alterations to the A4111 through the introduction of a ghost island right turn lane and suggests a pedestrian crossing.

- 1.11 The east of the site adjacent to the brook would accommodate a series of ponds and landscaped bunds forming the sustainable drainage system and wetland area, incorporating the ecological enhancement and mitigation. A landscaping scheme is also provided including significant maintenance and planting of trees, hedgerows and appropriate shrubs, wildflowers and grassland.

2. Policies

2.1 National Planning Guidance

PPS1	-	Delivering Sustainable Development
PPS4	-	Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth
PPS9	-	Biodiversity and Geological Conservation
PPS7	-	Sustainable Development in Rural Areas
PPG13	-	Transport

2.2 Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan:

S1	-	Sustainable Development
S2	-	Development Requirements
S5	-	Town Centre and retail
S6	-	Transport
S7	-	Natural and Historic Heritage
S11	-	Community Facilities and Services
DR1	-	Design
DR2	-	Land Use and Activity
DR3	-	Movement
DR4	-	Environment
DR7	-	Flood Risk
DR14	-	Lighting
T6	-	Walking
T7	-	Cycling
T16	-	Access for All
LA2	-	Landscape Character and areas least resilient to change
LA3	-	Setting of settlements
LA5	-	Protection of Trees, woodlands and hedgerows
LA6	-	Landscaping Schemes
NC1	-	Biodiversity and development
NC7	-	Compensation for loss of biodiversity
NC8	-	Habitat creation, restoration and enhancement
CF5	-	New Community Facilities

3. Planning History

None on site

DCNW2006/0259/O – Land south of Barton Lane, Kington – Site for proposed medical centre with associated access and car parking – Refused 15th March 2006.

4. Consultation Summary

Statutory Consultations

- 4.1 *The Environment Agency* has no objections to the proposed development and would recommend conditions be applied to any permission granted.

- 4.2 *Welsh Water* comments that as the applicant intends utilising private drainage facilities they have no comment to make.

Internal Council Advice

- 4.3 *The Transportation Manager* made the following comments:

The need for a new surgery is not in question. The additional services proposed are welcomed for the potential reduction in journeys to more distant centres. There are, however, fundamental transport-related reasons for refusal, reflecting sustainability and accessibility arising from the location of the proposal. The proposed location is not patient-focussed, relying principally on the private motor car for access to the site.

The "Analysis of Alternative Sites" included in the application does not consider patient's needs for accessible sites, beyond un-quantified statements suggesting "traffic conflict". (The sites suggesting "traffic conflict" were in areas with quiet residential streets with no serious congestion problems. The national speed limit applies at the proposed remote greenfield site, creating greater potential for serious injury resulting from road traffic collisions.) The elderly, the infirm, socially-disadvantaged residents, the disabled, and the chronically ill are examples of segments of society less likely to own or have access to private motor cars, but have potentially greater need for GP services. These segments require good access to services that do not rely on private motor vehicles. The analysis states that land values associated with potential residential or commercial uses of the possible sites preclude their use for the surgery, but they do not appear to have considered the costs of works required to make the application site acceptable in transport terms.

The distance from town (approximately 1.3km) of the proposed site is beyond the 400m recommended by the Institute of Highway Engineers for walking. The proposed site reduces accessibility via buses and walking in comparison to the existing site, and well below the required standard. The site is more than 400m from bus routes apart from a service operating only once a day in each direction. The walking distances quoted in the Travel Plan are straight-line distances and do not reflect the actual routes taken. Walking via the A4111, Old Eardisley Road and Headbrook - the 800m walk distance (as per PPG13: Guide to Better Practice) falls on the bridge over the River Arrow and, as such, only encapsulates the Headbrook area. Similarly, via the A4111 and A44 - the 800m walk distance falls south of the "KBS" roundabout and, as such, neither Hatton Gardens or the north-eastern areas of Kington fall within this walking distance, and in any case there is no footway along the route.

Whilst the journey to work can be walked for distances up to 2 kilometres, this is too far for elderly, infirm patients, or those escorting toddlers and babes-in-arms. The pedestrian route between the town centre and the proposed surgery does not comply with the DDA, and will have to be remedied before the proposed site could be considered. The footways are too narrow and lack dropped kerbs, making access for wheelchairs and people with impaired walking very difficult. None are to the DfT recommended width of 2.0m; lighting is missing on some parts south of Old Eardisley Road; dropped crossings are sub-standard (e.g. upstands greater than 6mm) or missing; controlled crossings are absent; surfaces are poor; some sections are without footways on both sides of the road; no opportunities for resting or sitting *en route* are present. The existing site at The Mead has an excellent pedestrian modal share of 25.6% (survey on 11/8/09), which will not be replicated at the proposed site.

The bus service frequency to the site is poor. Two services a day (one in each direction) are unlikely to reduce the need to travel by car, especially for patients. Currently, patients using other bus services into Kington can walk from the terminus to the existing surgery, a distance

of around 600m. This is further than the desirable maximum of 400m, but possible, and some services pass the existing site or run nearby. The new site will require patients living on routes other than the 462 to transfer to the very infrequent Service 462 to reach the new site, but the return service runs the next day, making two-way journeys impossible. Very few will manage the 1.3+ kilometre walk to the bus terminus. Attempts to increase the frequency of services to provide an acceptable level of service are unlikely to prove viable commercially, and would require subsidising by the developer.

The future of the existing satellite surgeries in Pembridge and Eardisley is unclear. There are inferences (page 12, Para 5.2.3 in the TA) within the application that staff may be centralised to the proposed new surgery. This would be detrimental to meeting patient's needs for accessible services, and would also be detrimental because of generating increased traffic on the highway network. Closure of the satellite surgeries should not be supported.

It should be noted that there are strict requirements concerning the installation of controlled pedestrian crossings on national speed limit roads. No analysis is made of likely increased highway risk to pedestrians and resulting accident rates resulting from controlled pedestrian crossings on high-speed roads. The controlled crossing is made necessary by the poor location of the proposed surgery.

In addition, details submitted in the application are incomplete or incorrect. These include:

- a) No details of the access and related highway works have been submitted (visibility splays, road layout, lighting, pedestrian crossing arrangements, carriageway surface treatments, necessary related upgrades to pedestrian routes to town etc). This precludes assessment of the proposed access arrangements to determine if they meet required standards. The landscape proposal appears to interfere with the required visibility splay.
- b) No provision is shown for bus passengers. The existing bus service is inadequate, but there needs to be provision of a stop with lay-by and shelter for passengers, and a pedestrian route from the bus stops to the site.
- c) Cycle parking. The facilities shown are not adequate. The stands are too close together, and too close to the adjacent wall. Either inadequate, or no cover is shown. Long-term secure facilities for staff are not shown either. More details of requirements are available in the Highways Design Guide, at www.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport/27304.asp.
- d) The increased staffing levels shown in the application do not appear to reflect the inclusion of the dental practice on the site. Only 3 full-time and 3 part-time are shown, but given the proposed expansion in complementary services detailed elsewhere in the application (Planning Statement, paragraphs 1.5, 1.6, 3.3.1, 3.4.2, 3.4.2, 3.6.1, 3.7.2 and others), are the employee figures robust? Given also the expansion areas shown, and the proposed training role envisaged, it would appear likely that the employee/staffing figures require clarification and, probably, revision.
- e) The measures to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes, as set out in the Travel Plan, are very unlikely to be successful in reducing travel by private motor vehicle because of the fundamental poor position of the proposed site in relation to the town centre and 'centre of gravity' of Kington's population.
- f) The trip generation forecast in the TA Section 6.2 is based on existing employee numbers and does not reflect the proposed increase in staff, nor the proposed dental surgery. There appears to be a mis-match between the number of doctors and the proposed number of consulting rooms. In addition, several surgeries selected for the TRICS analysis appear to be near larger centres of population than the Kington site. The Kington site is likely to have different patterns of transport use, given its rural location and hinterland. The TRICS data provided in the TA relates to doctor's surgeries, not medical centres which provide a broader range of services.
- g) The Stage 1 Road Safety Audit stated that lighting was necessary at the pedestrian crossing point. See Point "a" above.
- h) The draft Travel Plan is aspirational rather than robust. The poor location of the proposal is disregarded. Some amendments and strengthening is required including:

- 1) Appointment of Travel Plan Co-ordinator needs to be defined, and at a sufficiently senior level to ensure implementation of measures.
- 2) A survey will be required within 6 months of occupation to establish base levels.
- 3) Information on the “www.twoshare.co.uk” car-sharing web site to be included in employee Travel Plan information. A firm proposal for staff car-sharing internally is required.
- 4) There is a mis-match in modal splits between the survey in Appendix G of the TA on 11/08/09, and that in Table 2 of the Draft Travel Plan.
- 5) Why have the targets in Table 4 of the Travel Plan been chosen?
- 6) How will the Travel Plan be funded?
- 7) What sanctions/remedies will apply if Travel Plan targets are not met? (4.3.3)
- 8) Why would rail services be provided? (5.3.4)

The proposal is contrary to PPG13, and UDP Policies S1 (4, 13); S2 (3, 8); S6 (1, 2, 4); DR2 (1); DR3 (2, 4, 6).

Car parking provision is nearly adequate as proposed, only assuming the employee figures are robust. Fifty-eight patient spaces and 14 staff places, totalling 72 spaces, are shown. Herefordshire’s Highways Design Guide requires 4 spaces per consulting room. There are ten rooms labelled as consulting, two surgeries (+ one expansion), one minor ops, three treatment rooms, and three expansion areas (assume at least one will become a consulting room) giving 18 rooms. This requires 72 spaces.

There is doubt about the robustness of the employee figures, given the proposed expansion and information in the Planning Statement, paragraphs 1.5 and 1.6, and 3.3.1. Fourteen employee car spaces seem a mis-match given the proposed 13 full-time employees and 20 part-timers. Assuming that there are 10 part-timers on site at any time, there will be 23 employees in total at work, of which 76.5% currently drive – this implies a need for 18 car spaces, but only 14 are proposed.

4.4 *The Conservation Manager* has made the following comments:

Landscape

Having viewed the plans for the proposed surgery, I can confirm that I consider this proposal to be unacceptable for the following reasons:

Location: The site is on the eastern side of the A4111, in what is at present a wholly rural environment. I assessed this area as part of the 'Urban Fringe Sensitivity Analysis', a technical paper produced to inform the Local Development Framework. The application site falls within a wider zone that I describe as the 'Penhros' zone. I classified this zone as having the *highest* level of sensitivity (level 5). The sensitivity classification is as follows:

1. Low: key characteristics of landscape are robust and/or of relatively low intrinsic value as a landscape resource.
2. Medium–low: key characteristics of landscape are resilient to change and/or are of limited intrinsic value as a landscape resource
3. Medium: key characteristics of landscape are susceptible to change and /or have value as a landscape resource
4. High–medium: key characteristics of landscape are vulnerable to change and/or have high value as a landscape resource
- 5. High: key characteristics of landscape are very vulnerable to change and/or have significant value as a landscape resource.**

My analysis of the Penhros area in the study is as follows:

'Penrhos area

Photographic viewpoints: 9, 12, 13, 14

Landscape character: Timbered plateau farmlands

This zone comprises the land to the south-east of Kington, which rises from the River Arrow up to a rolling plateau. The rising land is very visible from the A4111 and at present, is wholly rural in character, comprising a mix of pastoral and arable land with only sparse settlement. Visually, this zone of land is very isolated from Kington, being separated from the town by the River Arrow and the A4111 corridor.

Reasons

- *Elevated, visually prominent area*
- *Lack of visual relationship with Kington*
- *Contributes to the rural setting of Kington'*

Scale: the proposed building is very large in scale, both in plan and height and correspondingly, the car park area is also very large in scale. This development appears to be of the scale of a hospital rather than a 'doctor's surgery'. A development of this scale would be highly visually intrusive and in my view, impossible to assimilate into this rural, unsettled landscape context in any satisfactory way. I do not agree with the findings of the submitted Visual Impact Assessment that screening planting could overcome the harm that would be caused.

I consider that the proposal conflicts with LA2, Landscape character, LA3, Setting of settlements and DR1, Design.

Ecology

Note that the site is predominantly an improved pasture, although the stream along the eastern boundary is a valuable wildlife corridor - the presence of otter has been identified along the stream. The stream corridor is to be retained and enhanced; however, otter are a European Protected Species and in the event that planning permission was to be granted, an EPS licence from Natural England could be required for the development works to proceed. I also note that there was evidence of use of the site by badgers. The landscape proposals will provide ecological enhancement of the site.

If European Protected Species are present on a development site, the Local Planning Authority must also establish whether the three tests have been met prior to determining this application. If the Wildlife Licensing Unit at Natural England is also happy that these Tests have been satisfied, then an EPS development licence can be granted.

The three tests that must be satisfied are:

1. That the development is "in the interests of public health and public safety, or for other imperative reasons of overriding public interest, including those of a social or economic nature and beneficial consequences of primary importance for the environment".
2. That there is "no satisfactory alternative"
3. That the derogation is "not detrimental to the maintenance of the populations of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range"

4.5 *The Public Rights of Way Manager* raised no objection.

4.6 *The Primary Care Trust* makes the following comments:

"NHS's view is that the existing surgery is cramped and non conducive to the delivery of high quality primary care services. A new surgery is, and remains, a strategic priority for NHS and

indeed the approval by the Board, along with funding, has confirmed this. We accept that in an area like Kington that finding a suitable site is difficult and indeed there is likely to be issues with most sites that the practice has/may finds, BUT a Primary Care Service in such a rural area in premises that can ensure high quality services is absolutely key and that is why it is seen as a strategic development priority of the Board of NHH. It is important to advise that the urgency around a site is due to:- A) current practice built in 1977 occupies 310 square metres which is significantly below the recommended space for a practice of this size. B) District Nurses and Health Visitors are no longer based at the practice due to space issues. C) there is no lift in the current building so it is not DDA compliant. D) Limited parking which means that most patients have to be dropped off or park some distance away which is not helpful to those with a number of conditions. It is not in the interests of Kington residents to be without a GP practice”.

5. Representations

5.1 The applicants have submitted information supporting this application that can be summarised as follows:

5.1.1 The Design and Access Statement details the design concept, principles and constraints from conception and indicates how the proposal intends to address landscape and visual impact with the orientation of the building rotated away from the parallel of the highway, the use of topography, site levels and appropriate planting. The proposed building and drainage systems incorporate sustainable design principles to reduce resources use.

5.1.2 The Transport Assessment undertaken by David Tucker Associates (transport planning consultants) identifies traffic data in relation to speed surveys, accidents, required mitigation, assesses car parking problems and requirements and provides a draft travel plan. The report is summarised/concluded as follows:

- The development has good connections to the local highway network;
- The proposed medical centre site is in a sustainable location in terms of accessibility by public transport, cycling and walking;
- There is no evidence of a road safety problem in the vicinity of the site
- The relocation of the site will reduce the current impact arising from car parking in the vicinity of the existing site;
- The measures to encourage the use of sustainable transport modes, as set out in the attached travel plans, will seek to reduce travel by car.

5.1.3 The Flood Risk Assessment undertaken by Couch Consulting Engineers that concludes:

- There is a minimal risk of fluvial flooding to the proposed development site and providing that mitigation measures contained within this report are implemented, there will be minimum risk of pluvial flooding caused by additional run-off.

5.1.4 The Landscape and Visual Impact Appraisal undertaken by DSA Environment and Design concludes and can be summarised as follows:

- The landscape impact of the proposed development is assessed as ‘moderate adverse’ in the short term. With mitigation measures, including, importantly, the introduction of new woodland the negative impact can be reduced and landscape effects are assessed as slight beneficial. The effects are, in the context of the character area, very local.
- The Landscape proposals result from the analysis of the landscape and visual impacts and include the orientation of the building to reduce visual impact from the A4111 and retention of hedgerows, together with new hedgerow and native planting blocks to provide additional screening.

5.1.5 The Planning Statement prepared by Boyer Planning concludes the following:

- The existing medical centre is too small to meet the expanding healthcare needs whilst a dental surgery does not currently exist in Kington.
- The proposed building has been subject to public exhibition and also follows an extensive search of alternative locations within and around Kington. This is the only site that is both suitable and available.(An analysis of the 16 sites is included in the document)
- The application site lies on the edge of town but is remains within walking distance of the town centre. In addition, the existing surgery caused parking issues within the residential streets and the relocation to the new site will not impact on residential amenity.
- The landscape appraisal indicates that he site is open to localised views but retains an affinity with the built up area and commercial premises opposite. The site is not in a remote rural location.
- The need for a medical centre is clear and the application represents a positive form of development hat will provide improved healthcare facilities for the town.

5.1.6 The Statement of Community Involvements concludes that Kington Medical Practice has sought to extensively inform the local community. The application has sought to address comments received prior to submission.

5.1.7 An Ecological Appraisal undertaken by Marches Ecology fully assesses the potential for protected species and makes recommendations in relation to mitigation and enhancement measures.

5.1.8 Following receipt of the consultation responses the applicants' agent submitted some further information in support of the application. The key points are as follows:

Potential to use/relocate to Kington Court

- The Doctors decided against relocating here in 2001 because the site had own shortcomings including lack of room to expand, insufficient car parking. A move would not have solved the problems they were already experiencing at their own premises.
- The new medical centre would offer new and complementary services such a dental practice and minor operation. Currently there is only an emergency Dental Access Centre and a part time non-injuries service at Kington Court
- The policy framework (policies S11 and CF5) do not require community facilities to be provided within a defined settlement but that they are located close to the community they serve. This
- The planning judgement seems to be a case of balancing the need against the issues of accessibility and landscape impact.

Accessibility

- The Doctors are currently working with local groups to make provision for a community bus service that would circulate within Kington area to assist those without access to a car.
- The practice would be willing to provide improved lighting and footpath connections into the town.
- In terms of walking distance the site will remain within walking distance for a reasonably sizeable part of the town.
- The medical practice would be willing to appoint a travel plan Co-ordinator and discuss the detail of this if planning permission is granted.

- Some patients will have to travel further but for some the site will be closer and more accessible both in terms of walking and being able to park

Landscape Impact

- The landscape officer's comments are acknowledged and landscape appraisal proposes mitigation. The proposed building seeks to adopt traditional building characteristics essentially a farm building type. The landscape locally is characterised by very large buildings, many of which are farms and the proposal is therefore, in certain respects, not untypical.
- Acknowledge impact of the development on the local landscape but also that Kington is entirely surrounded by landscape regarded as being of high sensitivity. Having regard to all considerations, including the search for alternative sites, the only site that is suitable and available is the application site. Therefore such is the need for the healthcare improvements this should outweigh the localised landscape impact, but subject always to appropriate mitigation.
- The existing premises are currently deficient in many respects and are unlikely to pass re-examination in 2012. The implication therefore for no medical centre at all serving the area would be significant.

NHS Design Requirements

- New design guidance was implemented 6 years ago which based primary care buildings on service need. The guidance stipulations result in much larger primary care buildings with relatively large footprints due to trying to accommodate as much clinical activity on the ground floor.
- The new primary care buildings are intended to accommodate the shift of services from secondary (hospital) settings to primary care settings closer to the patients' home. This is a central core of Government Policy (including NHS Plan 2000 and reiterated in the White Paper "Our Health, Our Say" DoH 2006) and the shift in services will continue. This will include out patient appointments.
- The proposed Kington Primary Care Centre will provide more modern facilities which will enable the delivery of more specialist services to the community. This will particularly benefit those who have limited access to transport that have difficulty travelling to hospital settings outside Kington.
- The Primary Care Trust is supportive of this proposal and this is evidenced by its inclusion on the new Estates Strategy that went before the board on the 25.3.2010.

Funding Mechanism

- The Doctors fund the development via long term borrowing that they are responsible for. The repayment of this borrowing is made via rent paid by the NHS. The level of rent is decided by a Central Government surveying department (District Valuer Office) who ensures that the public purse is spent responsibly and achieves best value.
- This 3 way rental agreement system means that sites that are too expensive (e.g. those that could be developed for residential) are not viable for medical centre development as they would force the rental value to high and would therefore not be considered value for money.
- Generally speaking a minimum site area of 1 acre is required to accommodate these new primary care premises. This discounts many sites as they are too small.

5.2 *Kington Town Council* supports the provision of a Medical Centre in Kington. However, it makes the following observations:

- Potential traffic hazard for pedestrians needs full consideration as to the provision of a footpath to the Medical Centre
- Consideration for a pedestrian crossing at point of access.

- The development is in line with the UDP policy on health provision where it states it supports development proposals for new healthcare facilities
 - Promotes multiple community users of new facilities
 - Access to services
 - Another a positive note is that Kington Town Council welcomed the environmental and ecological provisions for the site
 - Another issue is the duplication of services at the Medical Centre and the Minor Injuries Unit at Kington Court until 2018
- 5.3 *Titley and District Group Parish Council* are a concerned party as our residents generally use the services of the GP's either in Kington or their surgery at Pembridge. At a recent Council meeting it was agreed that they should respond giving this Parish Councils favourable recommendation to the application.
- 5.4 *Lyonshall Parish Council* is very supportive of this well researched application. The facility is much needed.
- 5.5 *Brilley Parish Council* supports this application on the basis that a renewed doctors surgery and dental practice in Kington will serve the needs of Brilley residents who need a surgery within a reasonable distance. The application is well designed and in an appropriate location.
- 5.6 *The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England* objects to this proposal and raises the following issues:
- Location of the site is unacceptable for issues of landscape impact, access and highway issues.
 - Scale of the proposed building
 - Highways safety for pedestrians and vehicles
 - Parking Provision – under provision
 - Insufficient justification for this site above other alternative sites.
- 5.7 Letters of objection have been received from:
- Mr S Dudhill, Mount Pleasant, Kingswood
 - Susan Buckingham, The Cottage, Prospect Lane, Kington
 - Mrs Ros Bradbury, Rose Cottage, Bradnor Green, Kington
 - Judith Gardner and Mark Bradbury, The Old School House, Hergest Road, Kington
 - Esther Rolls, 9 Duke Street, Kington

These letters raise the following issues:

- The site is a green field site in open countryside, is poorly related to the built up area and is car based and unsustainable contrary to national, regional and local policies.
- There is no justification for the increase in floor area. Kington is not identified for significant growth in existing or emerging plans.
- Parking provision is inadequate for the number of consulting, treatment or related rooms and does not meet the standard of 4 per consulting room. Insufficient parking risks overspill car parking that would be detrimental to highway safety and could adversely affect the amenity of nearby properties (such as Old Eardisley Road)
- The Transport assessment overstates the accessibility of the site. Except for Headbrook, the site is not within realistic walking distance and will encourage people to drive. It is poorly related to public transport routes and services. There is no detail on the surgeries at Eardisley and Pembridge – if they close then people in those areas will also have to travel further.
- The site is not in a sustainable location. The Traffic assessment significantly underestimates the traffic impact. No consideration has been given to the potential

conflict with traffic entering and leaving the recently approved waste site to the west of the A4111.

- Highway movements would be a new hazard on the A4111 and could lead to accidents (pedestrian or vehicular)
- Pedestrian routes are limited and have significant constraints with limited width, lack of lighting, limited provision for the blind, partially sighted or mobility impaired or for people with pushchairs and toddlers.
- The FRA findings rely on existing ground levels being maintained but the Design and Access Statement indicates that the car parking would be at a reduced ground level.
- The lighting on the site would impact on residential amenity, wider environment and local landscape character.
- The scheme will adversely affect the landscape character of the area and the setting of the approach to Kington. It does not give regard to the impact of the access proposal including lighting, visibility splays, traffic signals, signage, road surfacing and use of the care park. There is no mitigation to views into the site for the A4111. The scheme is over intensive.
- Herefordshire Strategic Housing Land Appraisal and Assessment finds this site unsuitable and not achievable because it would give rise to significant landscape impact, is remote from built up part of the town and is on the wrong side of the A4111. It notes the constraints of the site and finds the site to be of high landscape sensitivity and finds that the site is in an area that has high historic environment values and where large scale new development is likely to have a significant impact on the integrity of the inherited landscape and be a visual intrusion.
- Can suitable sites not be identified through the LDF process?
- Why does the proposal have to include a Dental Surgery? Could this not be located in other premises within the town?
- Raises concern about the robustness of the analysis of the alternative sites and lack of proven research and justification for dismissing these sites. Reasons for dismissal are also constraints on this site. Sites have been too readily rejected as being not viable without actually properly establishing the cost and viability of the alternatives. No details have been provided on discussions with land owners or viability calculations.
- Discrepancies are suggested between the number of sites that are dismissed due to not being viable because they would be suitable for residential and that the target number of houses over the planned LDF period being 42. The SHLAA identifies a capacity of 96 houses therefore some of these sites could not be developed for housing and could possibly accommodate this medical centre. This has not been explored.
- Alternative site analysis is illogical as sites are rejected for reasons that also apply to this site.
- Proposed facilities seem to duplicate those at Kington Court. Query why this cannot be expanded and used. Why was this excluded from the alternative sites analysis?
- The applicants state that typically sites need to be one acre, where this site is nearly 2 acres indicating that this proposal is too large. Some of the alternative sites of about 1 acre were rejected for being too small.
- Employment figures given do not show an increase but the building would increase four fold.
- Impact on the independent local pharmacy in town and failure to protect this service.
- The design of the building is undistinguished and has scant regard to vernacular architecture of the district or to the principles of high quality modern design.

5.8 To date there have been in excess of 400 letters of support and a petition with 307 signatures that raise the following issues:

Inadequacy of the existing premises/alternative sites

- Small waiting room that is overcrowded, cramped and unpleasant.
- Unsuitable and cramped rooms and working conditions for doctors and staff (consulting/administrative and pharmacist)
- Long waiting times
- Restricted dispensary times. It is small in size and not fit for purpose.
- Inadequate car parking facilities leading to no or on road parking which causes difficulty for less mobile patients and highway safety concerns for road users and pedestrians.
- No availability or ability to expand surgery. Portacabin has made parking problems worse.
- The situation is now urgent, incredible that 16 other sites have been explored and no other sites. Ideally sites would be found within the town centre but there are no sites available and any sites they do find would come with their own problems and impacts.

Proposed New Surgery

- Range and increase in services would reduce need to travel to other places for treatments, including dental services. Less travel and less parking fees for patients. Reduction in Carbon emissions.
- Improved parking provision which improves situation for those with poor mobility
- Would mean the continuation of a GP service in this area. Without this patients without access to transport would be severely disadvantaged.
- Plans have taken into account the ecological and environmental impact using sustainable building methods and drainage solutions.
- Well positioned for easy access and parking for all of its patients
- Suggests that a bus route includes the surgery
- Suggests that footpaths are extended into Kington.
- Suggest that a 40 mph limit is imposed on this section of the road.
- The new shuttle bus seems a viable option.
- Could only offer support if they agree they will not close the surgeries at Pembridge and Eardisley
- It will benefit the retail core of the town by increasing the catchment using the new surgery facilities.

5.9 There are also several letters that express a mixed view, noting the need for a new surgery (as per the support above) whilst also noting the landscape impact and accessibility issues raised by the objections.

6. Officer's Appraisal

Introduction

6.1 The construction of a medical centre in this green field location that would serve not only Kington but the surrounding community raises some significant issues relating to the physical impact that the development would have on the landscape, highway safety but also its necessity in terms of provision, within this community of a facility to meet its health, welfare and social needs. These key considerations and their relevant policies are in some respects conflicting and will need to be carefully considered in reaching a decision.

6.2 Policies S11 and CF5 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan are applicable to this development. Policy CF5 requires that new community facilities be permitted where they:

1. Are appropriate in scale to the needs to the local community and reflect the character of the location;
2. Are located within or around the settlement or the area they serve;
3. Would not significantly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents;

4. Incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian access together with appropriate provision of car and cycle parking and operational space.
- 6.3 The application site is adjacent to town. Its siting is to the south east of the town and is quite physically removed and distinctly separate from the built form of the town. The town has a well defined edge to the east, formed by the by-pass (A4111). This site breaches this distinct boundary in a particularly sensitive location and would be more associated with the open countryside than the town of Kington.
- 6.4 The surgery does however serve a wide catchment area of 600 square miles, taking in not only parishes within Herefordshire but also those in east Wales, including New Radnor. Kington Medical Centre does not exclusively serve many of these parishes as these overlap with Weobley/Staunton-on-Wye Practice catchment areas and Presteigne Health Centre catchment area. The siting of this facility is geographically centrally placed to serve its catchment community.

Sustainability:

- 6.5 National Government guidance contained within PPS1 – *Delivering Sustainable Development*, PPS4 – *Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth* and PPG13 – *Transport* along with Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan policies S1, S2, S6, DR2, DR3 and T6 all promote and require that developments provide a safe, convenient and attractive pattern of movements, particularly for pedestrians, people with disabilities and cyclists and include good links to public transport. Developments should also be sited so that they are reasonably accessible by means other than the motor vehicle and promote modal choice. Your officers conclude that this site fails to achieve these requirements. The Transportation Manager's detailed comments at section 4 of this report clearly identify these concerns.
- 6.6 There may be opportunity to improve pedestrian and cycle links to the town through a series of planning obligations. However, despite the application going to some lengths to demonstrate that a large amount of the town is within the 2km walking distance, it is realistic to assume that the majority of the visitors to this surgery will be making the journey by motor vehicle. The Transportation Manager has clearly identified the lack of choice patients will have when visiting this surgery and the constraints that they would face should they choose to walk or get public transport to the site. The applicants have indicated that they would contribute to the improvements to footpaths and cycle routes (including lighting upgrades). Nevertheless there will continue to be constraints such as crossing the busy road and crossing the Bridge over the River Arrow which is unsuitable for wheel chair users and potentially hazardous for those with pushchairs or small children. The applicants have suggested that by partnering with charitable organisations in the town a bus service may be available but no details are provided. Likewise no approach has been made to the bus companies that serve the area about revised routes or additional services that take in the Medical Centre.
- 6.7 At present Kington Medical centre also operates two satellite surgeries at Pembridge and Eardisley. No written assurances have been given that these surgeries, which have their own inadequacies, would remain. As such patients that may walk or travel to these surgeries may need to travel to Kington for appointments.
- 6.8 In summary your officers consider that the location of the site is flawed in that it is so physically removed from the town cannot realistically encourage, provide or promote a safe, convenient and attractive pattern of movements, particularly for pedestrians, people with disabilities and cyclists and include good links to public transport. As such your officers consider it fails to comply with policies DR2, DR3 and S6 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

Highway Safety and Parking Provision:

- 6.9 The safety of highway users including cyclists and pedestrian visiting the Medical Centre (crossing the busy A4111) are of paramount importance, especially with the additional traffic movements that will be attributed to the proposed household waste site that was approved in July 2009 (not yet built) on land immediately to the south of Arrow Plant Hire opposite the application site.
- 6.10 No details of the access and related highway works have been submitted (visibility splays, road layout, lighting, pedestrian crossing arrangements, carriageway surface treatments, necessary related upgrades to pedestrian routes to town etc). This precludes assessment of the proposed access arrangements to determine if they meet required standards. The landscape proposal also appears to interfere with the required visibility splay. The application also fails to make reference to the potential impact or conflict of projected traffic movements using the household waste site opposite. This is accessed using the existing Arrow Plant Hire access. The application for the household waste site included projected movements for both the medical centre and household waste site (prior to this application even being submitted) but this application fails to make reference to the approved scheme. On this basis your officers consider that the proposal fails to demonstrate that safe vehicular access to and from the site onto this national speed limit road can be achieved, and it is therefore contrary to policies S6 and DR3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.
- 6.11 The application shows the position of a proposed 'crossing' for pedestrians to the north end of the site. Details of this are not given, but reference is made to the potential need for lighting this pedestrian crossing. The application makes no analysis of likely increased highway risk to pedestrian and resulting accident rates resulting from controlled pedestrian crossings on high speed roads. Pedestrians, the majority of whom would be leaving the site and walking along Old Eardisley Road, would also need to cross the access road that would serve Arrow Plant Hire and the proposed Household waste plant. The additional traffic movements to both the sites could also give rise to potential accidents involving pedestrians. The application has not demonstrated that the proposal could make provision for safe pedestrian access to and from the site. As such your officers consider that the proposal fails to comply with policies S6, DR3 and T6 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.
- 6.12 One of the key themes that has come from both objectors and supporters of this application is the need for and lack of sufficient car parking on site to accommodate the staff, patients' and clients of the doctors and dental surgeries. The staff and visitor numbers have been based on figures relating to the doctors only and have failed to give any real weight to the potential demand from the doctor's surgery or for the extra staff and patients that may be visiting the site. The figures are not robust. Given the lack of choice in relation to transport type, car parking provision will be crucial. If parking provision is lacking this could easily lead to vehicles parking on the busy A4111 or on Old Eardisley Road. This would impact significantly on highway and pedestrian safety as well as on the amenities of the residents in Old Eardisley Road.
- 6.13 There are some concerns in relation to parking provision as detailed in the Transportation Manager's comments above. The Highways Design Guide for new Developments sets the standards for doctors' surgeries, dentists and health centres as being 4 spaces per consulting or treatment room and 1 ambulance space per consulting or treatment room. This figure assumes one member of staff, one person being treated or seen, one waiting and one leaving. As detailed in section 1 above there are 12 rooms labelled as consulting rooms, plus 3 dental surgeries and 3 rooms labelled as 'expansion rooms' (which could be used as consulting rooms in the future). This totals 18 that would require a minimum of 72 spaces. 72 spaces have been provided, 54 of which are for patient parking. However the application has failed to make provision for or acknowledge the 3 treatment rooms, 3 nurses rooms, 1 returners / part timers room, triage room, 2 counselling minor operations room or recovery. If these rooms were included then the minimum provision would be 124 spaces. If the additional clinical services are provided in line with the application detail then there may also be more of a requirement for ambulances providing transport for patients.

- 6.14 The application has also been based on existing staffing levels housed within the 310 sq metres of the existing surgery building. A projected increase in staff has not been addressed in this application and no acknowledgement has been given to the staff that would be required for the dental surgery. Given the numbers of rooms listed above only include clinical rooms and not any administrative facility it can safely be assumed that the 14 staff car parking spaces would be unrealistic. Given the unsustainable location of the facility and its lack of realistic 'choice' of transport mode assurances that staff would use alternative methods of transport, especially during inclement weather, would not suffice or alleviate the pressures for parking on this site.
- 6.15 Because of the remote location of the application site and its lack of links to public transport the private motor vehicle will be the predominant method of transport. However, having regard to the requirements of the Highways Design Guide for new Developments, car parking facilities are inadequate and this has the clear potential to lead to indiscriminate parking on the A4111 or Old Eardisley Road to the detriment of highway and pedestrian safety contrary to policies S6, DR3 and T6 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

Landscape Impact

- 6.16 The application site is beyond the edge of the town. The site is much more assimilated to the agricultural land within a sensitive landscape that surrounds it than the built form of the dwellings and commercial premises to the south east. The application describes the impact as being localised, and although there are long distance views of the site it is agreed that the impact is likely to be localised. In particular the proposal would be most prominent when approaching Kington along the A4111 in either direction or from the adjacent public right of way.
- 6.17 The site is remote and rural in character and the introduction of this building and associated works will be intrusive. Its introduction would permanently alter the character of the area and the approach to the town along this primary route. The building is significant in size, scale and bulk and would be impossible to 'hide' with planting. In addition to this the proposal would require the associated car parking, access and visibility splays, pedestrian crossing with its associated lighting and additional footways to the east side of the A4111. The result would be an urbanising effect on the landscape and the regrettable break across the bypass into the open countryside. The application suggests that a robust planting scheme could soften and enhance the scheme over time. Nevertheless your officers consider that the proposal is too significant in size and scale to mitigate the harm that this would cause.
- 6.18 The application has made efforts to address the impact that the building may have including with it a comprehensive landscaping scheme, suggesting that a cut and fill principle to be applied to reduce the site level where the car parking would be sited (although it is uncertain if this would raise the height of the building) and orientating the building on a slight angle to reduce the visual bulk of the building when approaching from the South. Whilst the design concepts have been progressed to try and address some of these issues, the proposed building would be highly visually intrusive and impossible to assimilate into the rural, unsettled landscape context in any satisfactory way.
- 6.19 In summary your officers consider that the proposal is contrary to Policy LA2 of the Unitary Development Plan that seeks to protect the landscape from development that would adversely affect the overall character of the landscape and Policy LA3 of the Unitary Development Plan that also seeks to protect important visual approaches into settlements and surrounding valued open countryside.
- 6.20 It is also worth noting that the Councils Strategic Housing Land Appraisal and Assessment (SHLAA) has also made an assessment of this site for residential development but finds that this is unsuitable and not achievable because it would give rise to significant landscape

impact, it is remote from the built up parts of the town and is on the wrong side of the A4111 amongst other constraints. It finds that the site is located in an areas where high historic environment values have been identified and where new large scale development is likely to have a significant impact on the integrity of the inherited landscape.

Justification and Need

- 6.21 The existing doctor's surgery is sited at The Meads, Victoria Road, within the town of Kington. The surgery occupies 310 sq metres and is inadequate in its facilities, size and parking provision to serve its community. The existing site is too physically constrained to be redeveloped to improve these facilities in the long term and it is acknowledged that a new facility would be the only way to address these concerns. In order to secure funding for new facilities the proposed new building must provide a certain amount and type of accommodation to meet the new design guidance for primary care buildings on service needs. The size of the building and subsequent site has therefore been heavily influenced and restricted by these requirements.
- 6.22 The application not only would provide medical facilities but also a dental surgery that would use approximately 200 sq metres of first floor space. Information on this is very limited within the application in relation to how this would operate/staffing levels/patient numbers etc. It is accepted that there is no dental practice within the town and only emergency treatment is available at the Dental Access Clinic at Kington Court. Objectors query the necessity to provide this service this location. It is not a service that is linked to the Medical Centre and would not be operated by the Medical Practice.
- 6.23 The application includes information relating to the sixteen sites that have previously been investigated for this facility. The information supplied briefly dismisses each site. Whilst officers are satisfied that some of these sites have been fully explored or are not viable because they have already been developed for other purposes, the planning statement does not give sufficient information or evidence to suggest that all of these alternative sites have been given full consideration before concluding that the application site is the only 'viable' and 'available' site for development. Officers have not been involved in the assessment of the majority of these applications and would challenge some of the assertions that have been made on some of the sites. It is however acknowledged that there is no 'obvious' or perfect site in the town.
- 6.24 Your officers would not query that there is a need, in principle, for improved health care provision to serve this community. There are however, doubts, that the alternative sites have been fully explored that may well address the significant concerns relating to the sustainability of its location and the impact of the proposal on this sensitive landscape.

Flood Risk

- 6.25 The site lies partially within flood Zone 1. The Environment Agency has not raised an objection to the development but has suggested a number of conditions relating to surface water run-off and the protection of the water course. Details of drainage have not been fully supplied as part of this application but given the nature of the site it is likely that by using either sustainable drainage methods or storage facilities the 'green field run off rates can be maintained and flooding mitigated against. Safe, dry access to the A4111 can be maintained. As such this proposal would comply with policy DR7 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 6.26 Following discussion with the Council's Ecologist, an ecology survey was submitted as part of this application. That European protected species area present on the development site. In response to this the Local Planning Authority must be satisfied that the proposal meets the three tests identified in paragraph 4.5 of this report. It is considered that the provision of a medical facility to serve the wider population is in the public health and public interest and as

such the proposal meets the first test. The second test requires that there is “no satisfactory alternative”. The application has identified 15 other sites and has dismissed these. The concerns relating to the robustness of this submission have been explored above and concludes that the local planning authority is not satisfied that there is no satisfactory alternative. In relation to the third test, the mitigation suggested within the application proposal would ensure that the development would not be detrimental to the maintenance of the population of the species concerned at a favourable conservation status in their natural range.

- 6.27 Having regard to the above, you officers conclude the proposal fails to comply with the requirements of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), the Conservation (Natural Habitats, & c) Regulations 1994 (as amended) and policy NC1 and guidance contained within Planning Policy Statement 9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.

Conclusion

- 6.28 The application has created a significant level of interest in both Kington and the wider locality. This is not surprising given the restricted nature of the existing premises, and the desire of the applicants to provide a modern facility to meet both central government policy and NHS Herefordshire requirements.
- 6.29 A new surgery would do much to consolidate the role of Kington as a key market town and service centre in the County and the wider rural locality. In a general sense the proposal relates well to the wider principles of Policy CF5 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan. In particular the application proposed is appropriate in scale to the needs of the local community, and is located adjacent to the settlement the facility serves. In addition there would not be any impact on the amenity of neighbouring residents.
- 6.30 As the report has, however, identified there are several other policy issues and technical matters where, in your officer's opinion, the application fails to meet adopted policies or normal development control considerations.
- 6.31 The application site is poorly related to the town. There are no obvious pedestrian links to the town centre, and the site is poorly served by public transport. On this basis the site will be principally served by the private car contrary to policies S1, S6 DR2 and DR3 of the Unitary Development Plan. The applicants have set out their work in identifying sixteen alternative sites that have been explored. Nonetheless your officers conclude that the lack of detail supplied to justify their dismissal is minimal and often questionable.
- 6.32 The situation is complicated given the lack of substantive detail supplied with the application on access and related highway work. They include a lack of any details on visibility splays, road layouts, lighting and any up-grade to pedestrian routes to the town centre. This has not allowed the usual assessment of these matters. It also appears that the level of parking proposed is significantly less than the Council's adopted standards. In this context the only sensible alternative for car parking to the extent that the car park was full would be to park on the A4111 of the Old Eardisley Road. Both options would generate obvious highway and safety issues.
- 6.33 The proposed location of the surgery is considered to have a significant impact on the setting of Kington. The site is remote and rural in character, and your officers consider that the proposal is contrary both to Policies LA2 and LA3 of the Unitary Development Plan that, respectively, seek to protect the landscape from development that would adversely affect the overall character of the landscape, and which seeks to protect important visual approaches into settlements.
- 6.34 The application proposes the creation of a modern doctor's surgery and has generated a significant amount of local support. Nevertheless your officers consider that, as currently submitted, the application fails to conform with key elements of the adopted Unitary

Development Plan, and as set out in this conclusion and elsewhere in the report. The relationship of the proposal to more general policies in the Unitary Development Plan that support the establishment of new community facilities is not considered by your officers to outweigh the locational and detailed issues that pull in the direction of a refusal of the application. On this basis the application is recommended for refusal.

RECOMMENDATION

That the application be refused for the following reasons:

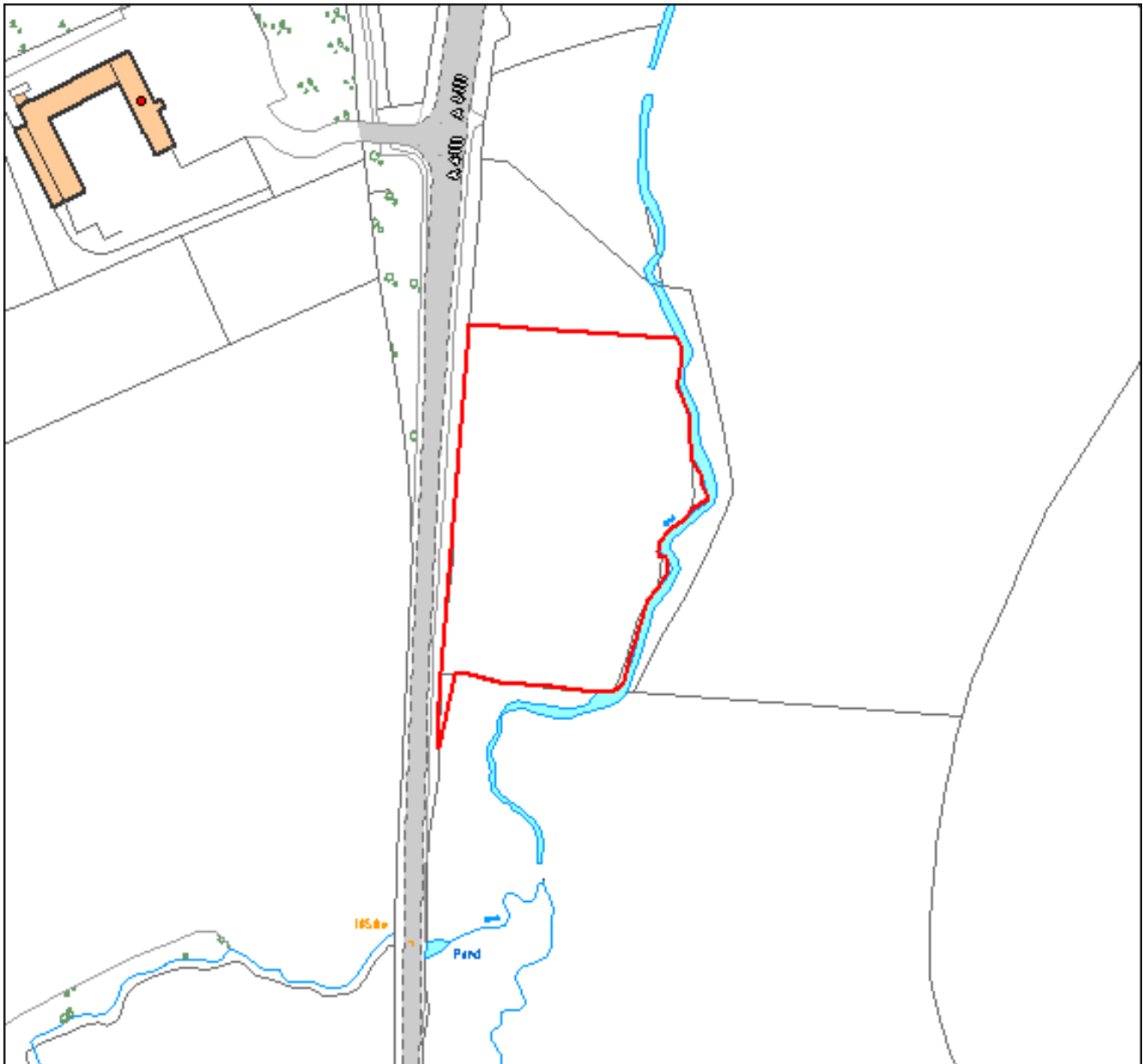
- 1. The application site, by reason of its location, remote from the town, fails to be reasonably accessible by means other than the private car, therefore failing to promote modal choice and encourage sustainable travel. The application fails to sufficiently demonstrate that a more sustainable location could not be found. As such the proposal fails to comply with policies S1, S6, DR2 and DR3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.**
- 2. The proposal will rely heavily on the use of the private motor car, but fails to demonstrate that adequate provision is made from the highway network without detriment to highway safety or to pedestrians, cyclists or public transport contrary to policy DR3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan. In any event on the basis of the information provided, the application fails to make provision for sufficient on-site parking in accordance with the requirements of the Highways Design Guide for New Developments and policy DR3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.**
- 3. The proposal, by reason of its size, scale, design and siting would be highly visually intrusive and difficult to assimilate into the rural, unsettled landscape context in any satisfactory way. As such the proposal is contrary to policies LA2 and LA3 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan.**
- 4. The application site is a habitat for a European protected species and makes a contribution to the biodiversity of the area. The application fails to demonstrate that there is no satisfactory alternative to developing this site contrary to policy NC1 of the Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan and to the guidance contained in Planning Policy Statement 9 – Biodiversity and Geological Conservation.**

Decision:

Notes:

Background Papers

Internal departmental consultation replies.



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APPLICATION NO: DMNW/100261/F

SITE ADDRESS : LAND OPPOSITE ARROW PLANT, EARDISLEY ROAD, KINGTON, HEREFORDSHIRE, HR5

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