

7 NOVEMBER 2023 PLANNING COMMITTEE

6b PLAN/2023/0505

WARD: Mount Hermon

LOCATION: Woking Community Hospital, 5 Heathside Road, Woking, Surrey, GU22 7HS

PROPOSAL: Extension to Woking Community Hospital to create a new diagnostic centre and associated alterations to car park (amended plans).

APPLICANT: Ashford and St Peters Hospitals NHS

OFFICER: Josey Short

REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE

The application was called to Committee by Cllr Ian Johnson, Cllr Liam Lyons and Cllr Ellen Nicholson in order to consider the loss of privacy to the residents of St Andrews Gate that may be caused by the loss of trees.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The application seeks Planning Permission for the extension of Woking Community Hospital to create a new diagnostic centre and associated alterations to car park.

The proposed extension would be to the west elevation of the main hospital building. The extension would be single storey in nature with a gable end roof and would extend the hospital's existing upper ground floor level. The works would also encompass the positioning of 3 x mobile units for mammography, CT and MRI scanning. Two of the mobile units would be located to the south of the main extension (CT and MRI) with access directly into the hospital and 1 to the west of the extension (Mammography). This would be detached. The mobile units would be within proximity of the extension and would be enclosed by steel screens with a maximum height of 5 metres, however, it is noted that the height varies due to the varying land levels at the site. The extension would be finished in brick to mirror the existing hospital building with a red zinc roof with elements of cream coloured zinc cladding to the entrance.

The proposed landscaping works would encompass the removal of the existing area of green space to the southwest corner of the site to provide parking provision. As such, the works would include the replacement of the grassed area with permeable tarmac, the insertion of a retaining wall adjacent to the south (and part of the west) boundary of the site, the removal of trees identified to be of no arboricultural merit and the planting of new trees elsewhere on the site. The proposed retaining wall would have a maximum height of 1 metre (measured at the centre of the south boundary) and a minimum height of 0.3 metres (as measured from the element adjacent to the west boundary) and would be inset from the boundaries by a minimum of 2.5 metres from the south boundary and a minimum distance of 2 metres from the west boundary. The existing land at the boundaries of the site is at a lower level than the car park and this would be maintained as a result of the proposed works. The proposed tarmac would be at a similar level to the existing tarmacked areas of the car park.

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The works would include the creation of enlarged green areas within the site including the planting of new trees. The landscaping works also include several single and twin headed lighting columns throughout the car park, substations to the northwest corner and the southern side, as well as a bike shed to the north of the extension, adjacent to the proposed new access point.

PLANNING STATUS

- Urban Area
- High Density Residential Area
- Surface Water Flooding – Medium (1 in 1000 years)
- Surface Water Flooding – Adj. Very High (1 in 30 years) and High (1 in 100 years)
- Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area (400m – 5km)
- TPOs

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT planning permission.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is located on the south side of Heathside Road and comprises a 2-storey hospital building with associated parking and landscaping. The existing building is finished in red brick with a tiled roof. The site has an existing area of green space to the southwest corner which has varying land levels and a number of trees and shrubs of varying maturity. The site is located within the developed area and is characterised primarily (but not exclusively) by high-density residential properties.

PLANNING HISTORY

Ref.	Proposal	Decision	Date
PLAN/2020/0866	Installation of storage container	Permitted	26.11.20
PLAN/2012/2026	Installation of two air conditioning condensing units to the wall adjacent to Willows Ward, Woking Community Hospital	Permitted	13.03.13
PLAN/2005/0859	Conservatories to main building on south elevation	Permitted	09.09.05
PLAN/1996/0771	Details pursuant to condition 4 (landscaping) of planning permission 94/0797 for phase 2 of the Woking community Hospital.	Permitted	25.09.97
PLAN/1996/0729	Landscaping details pursuant to condition 4 of planning permission 95/0901 for the demolition of an existing hospital building and a erection of a two storey general practitioners building	Permitted	03.10.96
PLAN/1995/1063	Erection of a single storey extension to accommodate gas manifold room.	Permitted	14.03.96
PLAN/1995/0901	Demolition of existing hospital building and erection of two storey general practitioners surgery building with associated parking	Permitted	29.02.96
PLAN/1995/0244	Details of materials pursuant to condition 3 of planning permission 94/0051 for the erection of a 10 bed hospice with ancillary day and home care facilities	Permitted	21.04.95

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PLAN/1994/0797	Erection of Phase 2 of Woking Community Hospital as an extension of phase 1.	No Objection	15.11.94
PLAN/1994/0051	Erection of a 10 bed hospice with ancillary day and home care-facilities	Permitted	29.04.94
PLAN/1992/0511	Residential development of land to west of Beechcroft Hospital including construction of roundabout and access road to Heathside Road and erection of Hospice between Ravenswood Court and No. 7 Hill View	Permitted Subj to Legal Agree	04.03.93
PLAN/1991/0159	Erection of a new hospital (Amended Plans)	No Objection	19.11.91
PLAN/1989/0435	Details pursuant to Planning Permission 88/0971, for the erection of a Health Centre together with associated car parking. Amended plans.	Permitted	30.10.89
PLAN/1988/0971	Erection of a building to use as a health centre, together with associated car parking	Permitted	10.03.89

Though not relevant to the proposed works directly, the planning permission for St Andrews Gate is relevant to the assessment;-

Ref.	Proposal	Decision	Date
PLAN/1999/0961	Full planning application for the redevelopment of the site for residential; development comprising of 8 No. x 3 storey houses and 16 No. x 2 bedroom apartments (in one four storey block) with ancillary car parking and garages with vehicular access off Heathside Road following the demolition of the existing buildings (Amended plans illustrating a reduction in the number of blocks for apartments and repositioning all blocks of apartments and town houses and car parking areas).	Permitted	07.12.99
PLAN/2000/0315	Details pursuant to condition 02 (Materials) and condition 16 (landscaping) of planning permission 99/0961.	Permitted	25.05.00
PLAN/2000/0596	Details pursuant to condition 16 (soft landscaping) for planning permission 1999/0961 for the erection of 8 No. 3 storey houses and 16 No. 2 bedroom apartments with ancillary car parking and garages with vehicular access off Heathside Road.	Permitted	03.08.00

CONSULTATIONS

SCC Critical Drainage Specialist (received by the LPA 12.07.2023)

We have reviewed the submitted documents as listed above, the Applicant has considered the surface water flood risk to and from the site and has suggested appropriate mitigation measures to inform the Planning Application.

Suggested Condition:

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The drainage system shall be installed in accordance with the Drainage Strategy by Urban Water dated May 2023. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the details so approved and maintained as such thereafter.

Reason: To ensure the development does not increase flood risk on or off site and is maintained for the lifetime of the development.

Arboricultural Officer (received by the LPA 23.08.2023)

The landscaping looks good but we would require details of the planting pits for trees especially the trees within the hard surface as they need to provide enough rooting environment to get these trees to maturity. This could be conditioned.

No objections raised for the loss of trees in arboricultural terms. This is obviously only acceptable if the loss of the existing vegetation is considered acceptable from a planning perspective.

SCC Highways (received by the LPA 03.08.2023)

The proposed development has been considered by THE COUNTY HIGHWAY AUTHORITY who having assessed the application on safety, capacity, and policy grounds, recommends the following conditions be imposed in any permission granted:

Suggested Conditions:

1. a) The development hereby approved shall not be first occupied for trading unless and until space has been laid out within the site in accordance with the approved plans by the Local Planning Authority for vehicles to be parking and for vehicles to turn so that they may enter and leave the site in forward gear. Thereafter the parking and turning areas shall be retained and maintained for their design purposes.
b) The existing vehicle parking and turning area at the premises (as shown on application drawing 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-A-01120 Proposed Site Plan – Rev D dated 15 June 2023) shall be permanently retained and maintained for their designated purposes.
2. The development hereby approved shall not be first opened for trading unless and until the following facilities have been provided in accordance with the approved plans by the Local Planning Authority for:
 - a. The secure parking of bicycles within the development site
 - b. Facilities within the development site for cyclist to change into and out of cyclist equipment/shower.
 - c. Facilities within the development site for cyclists to store cyclist equipment and therefore the said approved facilities shall be provided retained and maintained to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority
3. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied unless and until at least 50% of all available parking spaces are provided with a fast charge Electric Vehicle charging point (current minimum requirements – 7 kw Mode 3 with Type 2 connector – 230v AC 32 amp single phase dedicated supply) to be in accordance with a scheme to be submitted and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and thereafter retained and maintained to the satisfaction of the Local Planning Authority.

Environmental Health (received by the LPA 12.07.2023)

I am writing in reply to your consultation on the above, to confirm that there are no adverse comments from EH, provided the works to the car park complies with the outcome of the lighting report.

Surrey Wildlife Trust (received 30.08.2023)

Since our original consultation on the 3rd August 2023, we have updated this consultation about bat roosting suitability of trees. However, we have been informed by the LPA that no further submission will be made on other matters raised. Therefore, we cannot update our

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consultation advice with regard to biodiversity net gain, tree mitigation and compensation, and lighting.

Habitat - Trees

The Tree Survey Arboricultural Integration Report states that sixteen trees are to be removed., to include category C and U. There is currently no evidence of a suitable mitigation and compensation strategy for trees. We would advise that a biodiversity net gain assessment is submitted, to include a mitigation and compensation strategy for trees.

Protected Species – Bats

The Tree Survey Arboricultural Integration Report states that sixteen trees are to be removed., to include category C and U. In addition, sheet piling requires consideration for T6, G3, G4 and T12. The Applicant has not submitted a bat preliminary ground level tree roost assessment therefore there is insufficient information on the planning portal for the LPA to assess the potential impact of the tree removal on roosting bats.

In the consultation of the 3 August 2023, we advised that the LPA is provided with further information on the potential roosting suitability of trees on-site. On the 14 August 2023, through email correspondence, we were provided with evidence of a decision-making process on why all trees were assessed to have negligible suitability to support a bat roost.

The submitted Bat Survey Report of the main building appears to be suitable to allow the LPA to conclude the likely absence of a bat roost from this structure.

Habitat Regulation Assessment

The submitted Report to Inform Habitat Regulations Assessment appears to be suitable to allow the LPA to conclude that a likely significant effect upon Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area and Thursley, Ash, Pirbright, and Chobham SAC is unlikely. We note the submission of the Construction Environmental Management Plan, and this should be followed to further reduce the likelihood of a likely significant effect.

Lighting

The Lighting Plan (WCH/P9309/ETA/XX/XX/DR/E/20001, P2) shows that two EX -1 Lights will be installed immediately adjacent to the boundary tree line on the south of the proposed application site. There is no information on lux levels provided, therefore we cannot assess whether this proposal could have an adverse impact upon the habitat, or whether further mitigation and design consideration is required.

Tetra Tech has provided general guidance on bats and lighting in the Bat Survey Report. However, there is no evidence in the report that an ecologist has been involved with the specific design of the lighting strategy.

Given that a lighting strategy has been created we would have expected recommendations for lighting to be provided, but then also, a demonstration of how the strategy has been designed to comply with guidelines and the known ecology associated with the application site. Therefore, we would advise that the LPA requests further information on the design of the lighting strategy and how it is suitable, with regard to ecology and nature conservation, prior to determination.

Environment Agency (received by the LPA 04.09.2023)

This planning application is for development we do not wish to be consulted on.

REPRESENTATIONS

Fifty (50) representations have been received from thirty-three (33) addresses objecting to the proposal. They raise the following issues:

1. **Biodiversity** - The proposal would result in destruction of existing biodiversity and would in turn impact the environment in this location contrary to policy CS7 of the Core Strategy. There are inconsistencies between what is proposed in the Bat Report and the actual plans.

Please see Ecology and Biodiversity section of report.

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- 2. Impact on neighbouring amenity** - The wellbeing, quality of life and privacy of the residents immediately next to the hospital would be compromised as a result of the proposed works. The land levels at the application site are higher than those of the amenity space serving St Andrews Gate. The proposed works would need to raise thus by a further 1 metre to reflect the rest of the car park and would be supported by sheet piling. The height of the proposed car park would allow users to see directly into the gardens of neighbouring residents and through the windows.
Concern raised regarding prolonged generation of noise and disturbance from tree removal, destruction and development work. Air, noise and light pollution resulting from the construction vehicles and the creation of dust and fumes.
The replacement trees would be located on a different part of the site and therefore will not serve the existing screening purpose.

Please see Impact on Neighbour Amenity section of report.

- 3. Impact on character** – the works would result in an overall urban aesthetic and the loss of the existing green character. The works to remove the existing trees at the rear of the car park are unnecessary.

Please see Impact on Character section of report

- 4. Parking Provision** - There is existing parking provision within a few minutes' walk of the hospital and therefore the works to the car park are deemed unnecessary

Please see Highways and Parking section of report.

- 5. Trees** - The proposed works would result in a loss of mature trees and the loss of woodland which is irreplaceable and would displace many animals (some protected) which currently live there and cannot be mitigated by the planting of new trees. The works would remove the last bit of green space on the site and would change its character to generate 40 new spaces within this car park.
The works will have a detrimental impact on the trees within the gardens of the neighbouring properties due to the impact on their roots.

Please see Trees section of report.

- 6. Flooding** - Concerns raised regarding potential flood risks caused by the loss of drainage.

Please see flooding section of report.

- 7. Procedural** - The applicant failed to consult the neighbours of St Andrews Gate prior to submitting the planning application contrary to the good planning consultation practice.

The 21-day consultation period was not honoured as neighbours did not receive their notification letters until a few days before the consultation period ended (28 July). Key documents were not uploaded in time for review by neighbouring properties within the consultation period as they were uploaded later.

Officer note: Planning legislation does not require an application of this scale to engage in public consultation prior to the submission of a planning application. As such, this would not form a material consideration in the assessment of the application.

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The 21-day consultation period detailed on the neighbouring notification letters is from the date of the letter was printed and sent out. Unfortunately, the Council has no control over the letters once they leave the offices and thus are not responsible for the period it takes the letters to arrive. Irrespective of this, it is noted that the initial consultation periods have long since passed and all correspondence received prior to the determination of this application is being taken into account, regardless of the date it was received.

8. **Other** - A number of options suggested to alleviate concerns. The works conflict with the Ashford and St Peters Green Plan and other NHS recommendations. The works are a waste of public money that could be invested in patient care.

Officer note: Whilst amendments can be discussed between the applicant/agent and the local planning authority (LPA), this would be to alleviate planning concerns. It is not the responsibility of the LPA to negotiate amendments to the scheme to alleviate public concerns. As such, the options suggested would not be a planning matter in the assessment of the application subject of this report

The planning assessment is made against national and local planning policies and as such, the referenced NHS plans and recommendations would not form planning considerations in the assessment of this application.

Cost is not a planning consideration and thus will not form part of the assessment of this application.

Twenty-two (22) representations have been received from nineteen (19) addresses in support of the proposal. They raise the following comments:

1. Large overall benefit to Woking and surrounding areas with easier medical access
2. Environmental benefit from reduction of journeys to hospitals further away
3. The benefits of the scheme outweigh any parking concerns raised.

One (1) representation has been received neither supporting nor objecting to the proposal.

RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023):

- Section 2 - Achieving sustainable development
- Section 4 – Decision making
- Section 7 – Ensuring the vitality of town centres
- Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities
- Section 9 – Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 12 - Achieving well-designed places
- Section 14 – Meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change
- Section 15 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Woking Core Strategy (2012)

- CS2 – Woking Town Centre
- CS7 – Biodiversity and nature conservation
- CS8 – Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Areas
- CS9 – Flooding and water management
- CS18 – Transport and accessibility
- CS19 – Social and community infrastructure

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- CS21 – Design
- CS24 – Woking's landscape and townscape
- CS25 – Presumption in favour of sustainable development

Development Management Policies DPD (2015):

- DM2: Trees and Landscaping
- DM5: Environmental Pollution
- DM7 - Noise and Light Pollution
- DM17: Public Realm

Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs):

- Parking Standards (2018)
- Woking Design (2015)
- Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight (2022)

Other Material Considerations

- Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)
- Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) Charging Schedule (2015)

PLANNING ISSUES

1. The main considerations within the determination of this application comprise;-
 - Principle of Development
 - Impact on Character of the Area
 - Impact on Neighbouring Amenity
 - Impact on Car Parking Provision and the Highway
 - Impact on Flood risk and Drainage
 - Impact on Trees
 - Ecology and Biodiversity
 - Impact on the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area
 - Local Finance Contributions

Principle of Development

2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) and Policy CS25 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012) promote a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Policy CS1 and CS18 of the Core Strategy details that most new development will be directed to previously developed land in the town, district and local centres which offers the best access to a range of services and transport facilities.
3. The Cores Strategy notes that the provision of adequate community facilities (including health facilities) is critical as it has a direct bearing on the well-being of the community. Policy CS19 states that the “provision of new community facilities will be encouraged in locations well served by public transport, pedestrian and cycle infrastructure” and that “the Council will work with other public sector bodies to encourage efficient use of public sector assets such as co-location, to facilitate the delivery of community facilities.”
4. The proposal would extend the existing hospital building to provide a diagnostic centre, whilst also locating 3 x mobile units adjacent to it. Whilst the principle of new development in this location is acceptable as it would be of the same use as the existing and is closely-aligned with local and national policy, this is subject to the further material considerations set out in this report.

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Impact on the Character of the Area

5. Section 12 (Achieving well designed places) of the NPPF (2023) sets out that decisions should ensure that developments will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development; are visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping; and are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation or change (such as increased densities).
6. Policy CS21 of the Woking Borough Core Strategy seeks to ensure proposals for new development should make a positive contribution to the street scene and character of the area in which they are situated paying due regard to the scale, height, proportions, layout, materials and other characteristics of adjoining buildings and land. Woking Design SPD (2015) whilst not an exhaustive list, seeks to ensure the layout of an extension should enhance the existing property, the additional mass should respect the existing building proportions, symmetry, and balance.
7. The application site is within the designated High Density Residential Area. It is accessed from the south side of Heathside Road, between the junctions with Station Approach and White Rose Lane, which is located to the south of Woking Town Centre. This part of Heathside Road is characterised by a combination of flatted dwellings and commercial properties, whilst further to the east on Heathside Road is characterised primarily by residential dwellings.
8. The proposed works would be to the west of the main hospital building, which is juxtaposed with the main access on Heathside Road, and as such, would not be visually prominent when viewed from the public realm on Heathside Road. The extension would be single storey with an eaves height which would sit marginally above that of the existing hospital building with the roof adjoining the existing roof. By virtue of its subordinate scale, single storey nature and the brick finish, it is considered that the proposed extension would appear sympathetic to the host building. The mobile units would be of a smaller scale than the proposed extension and would be surrounded by a steel screen which would have a copper finish and thus would appear sympathetic to the existing and proposed red brick. The proposed design would provide a focal point and clear entrance for the Hospital on its west elevation.
9. The proposed landscaping works would be to the car park directly adjacent to the site's west elevation and would include the replacement of the grassed area with permeable tarmac, the insertion of a retaining wall adjacent to the south (and part of the west) boundary of the site, the removal of trees identified to be of no merit and the planting of new trees elsewhere on the site to facilitate the new layout of the car park. The retaining wall's height would vary between 0.3 metres and 1 metre due to the varying land levels on the site and would be inset from the boundaries by a minimum of 2.5 metres from the south boundary and a minimum distance of 2 metres from the west boundary. The existing vegetation on the boundaries would be maintained and, given the distances which would remain between the proposed parking and the boundaries of the site, would also provide a level of screening between the application site and nearest neighbouring sites.
10. The scale and design of the extension and works to the hospital building itself would appear sympathetic to the existing building and thus would remain in keeping with the site in this regard. The application site is located within the urban area. The grassed area proposed to be replaced by permeable hardstanding is of a small scale in relation to the rest of the site and the proposals would maintain the existing boundary treatment and a

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number of the existing mature trees on the west boundary, whilst also incorporating a number of new trees and hedgerow in this locality (as illustrated on the proposed Tree Protection Plan; Dwg no. AR-4289-TPP-230607 Rev A). In any case, it is considered that this corner of the application site and the proposed works to it do not influence the overall character of the site and locality in general. With this taken into account, in combination with the proposed maintenance of the existing trees on the south and west boundaries and the additional trees and greenspace included at different areas of the site, it is considered that the proposed works would not have an adverse impact on the character of the area or locality in general.

11. It is noted that concerns have been raised for the visual impact the proposed works would have on the location due to urbanisation caused by the loss of trees and green space. However, for the reasons detailed above, it is considered that the resultant dwelling would not be detrimental to the character of the area or locality in general. It is noted that it would be visible from the amenity space of some of the neighbouring properties, however this will be assessed in detail within the impact on neighbouring amenity section of this report. Similarly, the impact on trees is assessed separately within the relevant section of this report.
12. With this taken into account, it is considered that the proposed works would not appear out of character in the urban area or locality in general. Therefore, it is considered that the proposed works would comply with section 12 of the NPPF (2023) as well as policies CS21 and CS24 of the Core Strategy (2012), DM2 of the DM DPD (2015) and the Woking Design SPD (2015).

Impact on Neighbouring Amenity

13. By reason of the locality of the proposed works on the application site, the nearest neighbouring dwellings would be Nos 5-24 St Andrews Gate (located on the eastern side of St Andrews Gate) which are located adjacent to the site's west boundary and also, Nos 8-21 Ravenswood Court which are located adjacent to the south boundary of the site.
14. The dwellings at Ravenswood Court are set approximately 14 metres from the site's southern boundary at the closest point and as such, it is considered that the proposed works would not adversely impact these dwellings in terms of sunlight, daylight, loss of privacy or overlooking.
15. It is noted that Nos 9-24 St Andrews Gate comprise a 4-storey flatted development with a shared amenity space to the rear which is located adjacent to the existing grassed area to the southwest corner of the application site. Whilst Nos. 5 – 8 St Andrews Gate are a row of terraced dwellings each with private amenity space to the rear which are adjacent to the west boundary of the site. Though adjacent to the west boundary of the site, Nos. 5-8 are located further to the north than the flatted building on St Andrews Gate and as such these dwellings are not adjacent to the existing grassed area proposed for repurposing. The assessment of the impact on the dwellings on St Andrews Gate is split into sub sections as detailed below;-
16. Sunlight and Daylight - The proposed extension to the hospital and associated mobile buildings would be single storey and therefore of a low height. It is noted that the extension would maintain a significant distance from the nearest neighbouring dwellings on St Andrews Gate and thus would not breach the light angles when measured from the centre points of the nearest habitable windows. With this taken into account, it is considered that the extension to the hospital would not have an adverse impact on neighbouring amenity in these regards. Similarly, by virtue of the nature of the landscaping works to the site,

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these works would also not result in a loss of sunlight or daylight to the detriment of the neighbouring dwellings.

17. Privacy - Given the single storey nature of the hospital extension and the distance from nearest neighbouring dwellings, it is considered that the proposed built form would not result in overlooking or a loss of privacy to the nearest neighbouring dwellings.
18. Regard is also had for privacy implications in relation to the proposed landscaping works to the car parking area to the west of the main hospital building. The proposed extension to the hospital building would be in place of existing parking provision and as such, the proposed landscaping works would include the removal of the existing grassed area to the southwest corner of the site to relocate this existing parking provision, alongside improving the layout of the car park. This would also allow for the manoeuvring of the mobile units to be positioned alongside the extension (as seen in Dwg No – Crane Route, received by the LPA 17.10.2023). The landscaping works would include raising the land levels in the southwest corner of the site (as they currently decline away from the existing hardstanding), the laying of hardstanding and the insertion of a retaining wall (primarily to the south boundary but marginally also on the west boundary) to the border of the proposed permeable area. Due to the varying land levels at the site, the height of the retaining wall would also vary between 0.3 and 1 metre. The proposed retaining wall and hard surfacing would maintain a minimum distance of 2 metres from the site's western boundary and would also maintain the existing boundary treatment and a number of the existing mature trees on the west boundary, whilst also incorporating a number of new trees and hedgerow in this locality (as illustrated on the proposed Tree Protection Plan; Dwg no. AR-4289-TPP-230607 Rev A). However, it is noted that screening by trees and hedgerow cannot be relied upon to counteract overlooking and provide privacy as this cannot be guaranteed due to changing seasons.
19. The proposed section submitted in support of the application (Dwg No. 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-A-01200, received by the LPA 12.09.2023) illustrates that the existing ground level at the boundary of the site is approximately 0.4 metres lower than the existing tarmacked area at the application site and also approximately 0.4 metres lower than the land level at the neighbouring sites on St Andrews Gate. The land levels of the southwest corner would be increased to reflect that of the site's existing hardstanding.
20. At its closest point, the car parking area would be positioned 3.75 metres from the east elevation of Nos 9-24 St Andrews Gate, however it is noted that this element of the neighbouring building is a rear outrigger of the L shaped building, and the larger part of the rear elevation is positioned approximately 10 metres from the shared boundary. It is considered that the proposed works would not impact the privacy of the windows within the rear elevation of this building at first floor and above given their height above the proposed parking provision. In assessment of the element of the rear elevation of this neighbouring building which is set approximately 10 metres from the shared boundary, it is considered that, given the distance which would remain between the elevation and the proposed parking provision (approximately 12 metres) and the existing boundary treatment, the proposed parking provision would not result in a loss of privacy to the ground floor windows within this part of the rear elevation as well as the communal amenity space.
21. A planning history search of the flatted development on St Andrews Gate (Nos. 9-24) denotes that the ground floor windows within the east elevation of the outrigger are both secondary windows serving a living room and a kitchen with the primary windows serving these habitable rooms located on the north and south elevations. It is also worth noting that this part of the neighbouring site is open to access the communal amenity space to the rear of the flatted development and thus the privacy they currently receive,

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along side all other ground floor windows, is limited as a result of this. It is also noted that this area of the site is a lower land level than that of the neighbouring site to the west (the amenity space of St Andrews Gate's flatted dwellings). Additional regard is had for the proposed use of the hardstanding as parking provision for the hospital. Nevertheless, by virtue of the nature of this use, it is unlikely that people would spend large amounts of time at the west boundary and would instead spend most of their time within the hospital building(s). With this taken into account, though it is acknowledged that there is a variance in land levels between the application site and west neighbouring sites, given the distance which would be maintained between the parking provision and the shared boundary and the hedgerow and boundary treatment between the two, it is considered that this would not result in overlooking or a loss of privacy to the ground floor windows of the nearest neighbouring dwellings.

22. Whilst it is noted that the rear boundaries of Nos. 5-8 St Andrews Gate would also adjoin the west boundary of the application site, the parking provision immediately adjacent to this part of the boundary is existing and will be largely maintained, with the exception of the positioning of 2 x sub stations to the northwest corner. With this taken into account, it is considered that the resultant development would not be dissimilar to the existing and thus would not have an adverse impact on the privacy of the aforementioned neighbouring dwellings and their private amenity space.
23. Given the proximity of the neighbouring dwellings of St Andrews Gate to the west boundary of the site, some of the proposed works may be visible from the private amenity space of these neighbouring dwellings. Additionally, given the removal of some of the trees and hedges on the site, it is noted that the level of screening between these neighbouring dwellings and the site would be reduced. However, the proposed extension and associated works would be located approximately 50 metres from the west boundary of the site and as such, it is considered that this element of the proposed works would not have an overbearing impact on the nearest neighbouring dwellings and their private amenity space.
24. Lighting - The proposed landscaping includes a number of new single and double posted lights throughout the car park and as such regard is also had for the impact of lighting on neighbouring amenity. An external lighting statement was submitted in support of the application (Ref: WCH-P9309-ETA-XX-XX-RP-E-00001 Rev P1, received by the LPA 06.06.2023) and the comments received from Environmental Health confirm that they have no adverse comments, provided the works to the car park comply with the outcome of the lighting report. With this taken into account, it is considered that it would be reasonable and necessary to condition that the works are carried out in accordance with the lighting strategy. It is considered that a condition to this effect would pass the 5 part test for planning conditions as set out in paragraph 156 of the NPPF (2023) and thus should be included in the event of planning permission being granted in this instance.
25. Noise and Disturbance - Concern has been raised with respect to the generation of noise and disturbance from tree removal and development work and the air, noise and light pollution resulting from the construction vehicles and creation of dust and fumes. Though it is noted that there is likely to be some disturbance generated during the construction period of the proposed works, this would be temporary and would be subject to the considerate working hours set out within Environmental Health legislation (Control of Pollution Act 1974). It is noted that an informative to this effect will be included in the event of planning permission being granted in this instance as a reminder of this.
26. Other - Though particular concerns have been raised regarding an increase in land levels, the proposal would be as detailed above within paragraphs 18 and 19 of this report.

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27. In summary of the above, though it is noted that the proposed works may be visible from vantage points of the neighbouring sites, it is considered that the works would not have a detrimental impact on the living conditions of the occupiers of these dwellings and therefore is compliant with section 12 of the NPPF (2023), policy CS21 of the Core Strategy (2012), DM7 of the Development Management Policies DPD (2015) and the Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight SPD (2022).

Impact on Car Parking Provision & the Highway

28. Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy (2012) states “*The Council is committed to developing a well-integrated community connected by a sustainable transport system which connects people to jobs, services and community facilities, and minimises impacts on biodiversity...by... Implementing maximum car parking standards for all types of non-residential development, including consideration of zero parking in Woking Town Centre, providing it does not create new or exacerbate existing on-street car parking problems. Minimum standards will be set for residential development. However, in applying these standards, the Council will seek to ensure that this will not undermine the overall sustainability objectives of the Core Strategy, including the effects on highway safety. If necessary, the Council will consider managing the demand and supply of parking in order to control congestion and encourage use of sustainable transport. Ensuring that changes made to transport infrastructure or increase in road vehicle usage will not have an adverse effect on the integrity of an SPA, SAC or Ramsar site. The Proposals Map and the Site Allocations DPD will safeguard land to deliver schemes that are adopted by the County Council to support the Core strategy.*”
29. The Parking Standards SPD (2018) sets out the maximum parking standards for non-residential development based on the scale of the development and its use class. The SPD sets out that hospitals (Class C2 use) would require 1 car space per 4 staff plus 1 car space per 3 daily visitors with a 50% reduction in Woking town centre. The application site falls immediately to the south of the periphery of Woking Town Centre, and thus, whilst not within this area, given its proximity to the town centre and the transport nodes and links it provides, it is considered acceptable to apply the 50% reduction in this location too.
30. The Design and Access Statement (Rev C, dated July 2023) submitted in support of the planning application details that the existing car park provides 121 parking spaces. Whilst the existing parking provision includes a bike shed, it does not include parking specifically for motorcycles and as such, the existing 121 spaces would be for both cars and motorcycles. However, 3 of these spaces are inaccessible and 5 are occupied by the mammography trailer, which leaves a total of 113 useable spaces.
31. The proposed extension to the hospital building would be in the place of 42 existing parking spaces within the car park. The landscaping works proposed would alter the layout of the car park, including the provision of new access and egress routes, along with a drop off point, to remedy existing issues. The resultant car park would provide 105 x vehicle parking spaces (of a scale of 2.4 metres x 4.8 metres) and 6 x motorcycle parking spaces, totalling 111 spaces, as well as cycle parking provision. The proposed parking provision would be made up as follows:-

32.

Vehicle Parking		
	Standard Spaces	80
	Disabled Spaces	13
	Electric Vehicle Spaces	12

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	TOTAL	105
Motorcycle Parking		
	Standard Spaces	4
	Electric Motor Vehicle Space	2
	TOTAL	6
Cycle Parking		
	Cycle Provision	16
	TOTAL	16

33. The proposal would therefore result in a loss of 8 spaces from the existing functional provision. However, given that the proposal would include exclusive provision for motorcycles, the loss would be less than 8 spaces.

34. The site is within a short walking distance of Heathside Crescent public car park, located on Heathside Crescent and within close proximity to the town centre and the public transport links it provides, such as busses and the train station. With this taken into account, whilst the proposal would result in less parking than the existing car park provides, given the number of spaces less it would be in combination with the proximity of the site to alternative public parking and public transport, it is considered that this would not be detrimental to the highway safety in the locality.

35. The County Highway Authority were a consultee on the application and having assessed the application on safety, capacity, and policy grounds, recommended conditions be attached to any permission granted to require the vehicle parking to be laid out prior to the occupation of the proposed works in line with the submitted drawings, the provision of cycle parking and changing facilities for cyclists within the development prior to its occupation and the provision of at least 50% of the parking provision to be fast charging points for electric vehicles prior to occupation. It is considered that the recommended conditions relating to the laying out of vehicle and cycle parking prior to occupation would be reasonable and necessary and thus would pass the 5-part test for planning conditions as set out within paragraph 56 of the NPPF, and thus will be included in the event of planning permission being granted in this instance. Irrespective of this, it is noted that the conditions recommended by the Highway Authority makes reference to trading' as the trigger for the condition which would not be appropriate given that the use would be a hospital. With this taken into account, in the event of planning permission being granted in this instance, the word 'trading' within the recommended conditions would be replaced by 'first beneficial use by patients' to better reflect the use class the works relate to.

36. The recommended condition requiring 50% of the parking provision to be for electric vehicles, would be unreasonable given the level of parking proposed, and therefore this condition would not pass the 5-part test for planning conditions. It is also noted that the scheme does propose a number of vehicle and bike charging points. With this considered, this condition is not recommended to be included in the event of planning permission being granted in this instance and a suitably worded informative will be included in its place.

Impact on Flood Risk & Drainage

37. Parts of the application site fall within the medium risk area of surface water flooding. These are primarily located to the north of the hospital building and some are also located on the south boundary of the site, which is adjacent to the Care Facility Clinic, 5 Hill View Road.

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38. The Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) were a statutory consultee on the application due to this surface water flood risk and raised no objection to the proposed scheme as the applicant has considered surface water flood risk to and from the site and has suggested appropriate mitigation measures to inform the Planning Application. As such, the LLFA suggested a condition which would require the drainage system shall be installed in accordance with the Drainage Strategy submitted in support of the application (Urban Water, dated May 2023) and shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the details so approved and maintained as such thereafter. It is considered that a planning condition to this effect would be reasonable and necessary to ensure that the surface water drainage at the site is mitigated and thus would pass the 5-part test for planning conditions as set out within paragraph 56 of the NPPF (2023). With this considered, a condition to this effect will be included in the event of planning permission being granted in this instance.

Impact on Trees

39.

TPO on or adjacent to proposal? (Y/N)	Yes – TPO Group Trees on the south boundary of the site between the south elevation of the main hospital building and the rear elevation of Radstone Court, Hill View Road.
Trees on or adjacent to proposal? (Y/N)	Yes – Grassed area and trees to southwest corner of the site.

40. The proposed works would construct an extension to the west elevation of the main hospital building, which in turn would impact the existing car park to the west of the building. Consequently, the works also propose to make alterations to this car park which would amend its layout and landscaping. The landscaping works would include the removal of the existing area of green space to the southwest corner of the site and a number of trees/hedgerows currently on it and the construction of a sheet piled retaining wall adjacent to parts of the south and west boundaries of the site (at the southwest corner). The retaining wall would have a maximum height of 1 metre and a minimum height of 0.3 metres above ground by virtue of the varying land levels at the site. The retaining wall would be inset from the boundaries by a minimum of 2.5 metres from the south boundary and a minimum distance of 2 metres from the west boundary. The works would maintain a vegetational buffer on the south and west boundaries between the application site and the nearest neighbouring properties.
41. The Council's arboriculturist was a consultee for the application and though initial concerns were raised, following the receipt of the landscaping plan (received by the LPA 16.08.2023) it was considered that the landscaping scheme is acceptable, and no objections were raised in arboricultural terms to the loss of trees which would result from the proposed works. However, details of the planting pits for trees (particularly the trees within the hard surface as they need to provide enough rooting environment to get these trees to maturity) would be required prior to the commencement of works on site. It is considered that a pre-commencement condition to this effect would be reasonable and necessary to ensure these details can be submitted to and approved in writing by the LPA before the works start of site, and thus would pass the 5 part test for planning conditions as set out within paragraph 56 of the NPPF and therefore will be included in the event of planning permission being granted in this instance.

Ecology and Biodiversity

42. Policy CS7 (Biodiversity and nature Conservation) of the Core Strategy (2012) states "The Council will pay particular consideration to the following hierarchy of important sites and habitats in the Borough. 1. Special Protection Areas (SPA) and Special Areas of

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Conservation (SAC) (European). 2. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserves (National). 3. Sites of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), Local Nature Reserves (LNR), and other Ancient Woodland not identified in 1 and 2 above (Local).” Paragraph 5.25 of the Reasoned Justification goes on to detail that where development is proposed that would affect sites or features of nature conservation importance, appropriate mitigation and management measures will be taken to ensure that this is prevented or minimised.

43. It is noted that the initial comments received back from Surrey Wildlife Trust (SWT) (received 03.08.2023) requested an Ecology Appraisal, information on the scheme’s Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) assessment, Bat preliminary tree roost assessment and demonstration of a suitable light strategy prior to the determination of the application.
44. Following this, an Ecology Appraisal was submitted in support of the application (received by the LPA 04.08.2023) that also included information on the bat roost assessment. In light of this information, updated comments were provided by SWT on 04.09.2023 which concluded the acceptability of the information provided.
45. Though it is noted that the initial recommendations from SWT included a BNG assessment and a suitable lighting strategy, it is considered that this information is not fundamental to the determination of the application. The suitably worded condition requiring the lighting strategy information to be submitted to and approved in writing prior to the commencement of the proposed works would be considered reasonable and necessary to ensure that the lighting strategy would have an acceptable impact on the site in ecological terms, and thus would pass the 5-part test for planning conditions. With this taken into account, in the event of Planning Permission being granted in this instance, a condition to this effect should be included which would also encompass the comments made by Environmental Health relating to the lighting strategy. However, in relation to the BNG assessment, it is advised that BNG is set to be mandatory legislation which requires contribution to the recovery of nature of a site while developing land in a bid to ensure the habitat for wildlife is in a better state than it was before the development. Whilst legislation making BNG a mandatory requirement was expected to be in place from late November 2023, it has recently been announced that this has been pushed back until January 2024. With this taken into account, though recommended by Surrey Wildlife Trust, it was not mandatory to approve this prior to the determination of the application. Likewise, given that it is not a mandatory requirement in legislation, it would also not be reasonable to condition this in the event of planning permission being granted in this instance.

Thames Heath Basin Special Protection Area

46. The Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area (TBH SPA) has been identified as an internationally important site of nature conservation and has been given the highest degree of protection. Policy CS8 of the Core Strategy states that any proposal with potential significant impacts (alone or in combination with other relevant developments) on the TBH SPA will be subject to Habitats Regulations Assessment to determine the need for Appropriate Assessment. Following recent European Court of Justice rulings, a full and precise analysis of the measures capable of avoiding or reducing any significant effects on European sites must be carried out at an ‘Appropriate Assessment’ stage rather than taken into consideration at screening stage, for the purposes of the Habitats Directive (as interpreted into English law by the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the “Habitat Regulations 2017”). The scheme would not result in any increase in occupancy within the SPA Zone and therefore it has no significant effect on it.

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Local Finance Considerations

47. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a mechanism adopted by Woking Borough Council which came into force on 1st April 2015, as a primary means of securing developer contributions towards infrastructure provision in the Borough. In this case, the proposed development would not be residential or retail and as such, would not incur a CIL charge.

CONCLUSION

Overall, there are strong policy presumptions in favour of this type of development. Moreover, the proposal is considered to be appropriate in scale and character to the host building and surrounding area and is considered to have an acceptable impact on the amenities of neighbours. The proposal therefore accords with Policy CS21 of the Woking Core Strategy (2012), Supplementary Planning Documents 'Outlook, Amenity, Privacy and Daylight' (2022) and 'Woking Design' (2015) and the National Planning Policy Framework and is recommended for approval.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Site Photographs dated 17th October 2023.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that planning permission be GRANTED subject to the following conditions:

01. The development for which permission is hereby granted must be commenced not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

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

02. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved plans listed below:

- Location Plan – 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-A-01100 Rev C – dated May 2023 and received by the LPA 06.06.2023
- Proposed Site Plan – 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-01120 Rev E – dated October 2023 and received by the LPA 17.10.2023
- Proposed Ground Floor Plan in Context - 5551-FLO-WDC-00-DR-A-02100 Rev F – dated July 2023 and received by the LPA 14.07.2023
- Proposed First Floor Plan – 5551-FLO-WDC-01-DR-A-02101 Rev B – dated May 2023 and received by the LPA 06.06.2023
- Proposed Roof Plan in Context – 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-A-02102 Rev B - dated May 2023 and received by the LPA 06.06.2023
- Proposed Sections – 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-A-02116 Rev A - dated May 2023 and received by the LPA 06.06.2023
- Proposed West Side Elevation – 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-A-62301 Rev A - dated May 2023 and received by the LPA 06.06.2023
- Proposed Rear Elevation (South) - 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-A-62302 Rev A - dated May 2023 and received by the LPA 06.06.2023
- Proposed Front Elevation (North) - 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-A-62300 Rev B - dated May 2023 and received by the LPA 06.06.2023

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- Proposed Elevations - 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-A-02300 Rev B – dated July 2023 and received by the LPA 14.07.2023
- 3D Visuals - 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-A-62600 Rev C – dated July 2023 and received by the LPA 14.07.2023
- External Lighting Plan – WCH/P9309/ETA/XX/XX/DR/E/20001 P2 - dated May 2023 and received by the LPA 06.06.2023
- Proposed Sections – 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-A-01200 Rev A – dated September 2023 and received by the LPA 12.09.2023
- West Site Boundary Proposed Elevation - 5551- FLO- WDC- ZZ- DR- A- 01302 Rev A – dated October 2023 and received by the LPA 17.10.2023
- Route and Manoeuvre Plan for Portable Units – received by the LPA 17.10.2023

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

03. ++ (Notwithstanding the material details outlined on the approved plans), the development hereby permitted should not commence until details and/or samples and a written specification of the materials to be used in the external elevations have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out and thereafter retained in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority

Reason: To protect the visual amenities of the area

04. The development hereby approved shall not be first occupied for the first beneficial use by patients unless and until space has been laid out within the site in accordance with the approved plans by the Local Planning Authority for vehicles to be parking and for vehicles to turn so that they may enter and leave the site in forward gear. Thereafter the parking and turning areas shall be retained and maintained for their design purposes. The existing vehicle parking and turning area at the premises (as shown on application drawing 5551-FLO-WDC-ZZ-DR-A-01120 Proposed Site Plan – Rev D dated 15 June 2023) shall be permanently retained and maintained for their designated purposes.

Reason: In order to prevent the development prejudicing the highway safety or causing inconvenience to other highway users.

05. The development hereby approved shall not be first opened for the first beneficial use by patients unless and until the following facilities have been provided in accordance with the approved plans by the Local Planning Authority for:
- (a) The secure parking of bicycles within the development site
 - (b) Facilities within the development site for cyclist to change into and out of cyclist equipment/shower.
 - (c) Facilities within the development site for cyclists to store cyclist equipment and therefore the said approved facilities shall be provided retained and maintained unless otherwise agreed by the Local Planning Authority

Reason: To comply with Section 9, 'Promoting Sustainable Transport', of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

06. The development hereby approved shall not be occupied unless and until the proposed parking spaces to be provided with a fast charge socket (current minimum requirements - 7kw Mode 3 with Type 2 connector - 230v AC 32 Amp single phase dedicated supply) are laid out in accordance with the approved plans and thereafter retained and maintained unless otherwise agreed by the Local Planning Authority.

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Reason: In recognition of Section 9 'Promoting Sustainable Transport' in the National Planning Policy Framework 2023.

07. The drainage system shall be installed in accordance with the Drainage Strategy by Urban Water dated May 2023. The development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the details so approved and maintained as such thereafter.

Reason: To ensure the development does not increase flood risk on or off site and is maintained for the lifetime of the development.

08. ++ The development hereby permitted should not commence until details of the planting pits for the trees within the site have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall be carried out and thereafter retained in accordance with the approved details unless otherwise agreed in writing by the local planning authority.

Reason: To ensure reasonable measures are taken to safeguard trees in the interest of local amenity and the enhancement of the development itself and provide enough rooting environment for the trees to mature.

09. ++ No external lighting including floodlighting shall be installed until details (demonstrating compliance with the recommendations of the Institute of Lighting Engineers "Guidance Notes for Reduction of Light Pollution" and the provisions of BS 5489 Part 9) have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved lighting scheme shall be installed prior to the first use/occupation of the development hereby approved and maintained in accordance with the approved details thereafter.

Reason: To protect the appearance of the surrounding area and the residential amenities of the neighbouring properties.

10. The Construction Environmental Management Plan hereby approved shall be complied with in full and maintained thereafter.

Reason: to further reduce the likelihood of a likely significant effect if the works on the Thames Basin Heath Special Protection Area.

Informatives:

01. The Council confirms that in assessing this planning application it has worked with the applicant in a positive and proactive way, in line with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023).
02. The applicant is advised that Council officers may undertake inspections without prior warning to check compliance with approved plans and to establish that all planning conditions are being complied with in full. Inspections may be undertaken both during and after construction.
03. The applicant is advised that this planning permission does not convey the right to enter onto or build on land not within their ownership.
04. The applicant is advised that under the Control of Pollution Act 1974, works which are audible at the site boundary are restricted to the following hours: 8.00 a.m. - 6.00 p.m. Monday to Friday, 8.00 a.m. - 1.00 p.m. on Saturdays and not at all on Sundays and Bank Holidays.

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05. The applicant is expected to ensure the safe operation of all construction traffic in order to prevent unnecessary disturbance obstruction and inconvenience to other highway users. Care should be taken to ensure that the waiting, parking, loading and unloading of construction vehicles does not hinder the free flow of any carriageway, footway, bridleway, footpath, cycle route, right of way or private driveway or entrance. Where repeated problems occur the Highway Authority may use available powers under the terms of the Highways Act 1980 to ensure the safe operation of the highway.
06. Your attention is specifically drawn to the conditions above marked ++. These condition(s) require the submission of details, information, drawings, etc. to the Local Planning Authority PRIOR TO THE COMMENCEMENT OF ANY DEVELOPMENT ON THE SITE or prior to the relevant trigger point. Failure to observe these requirements will result in a contravention of the terms of the permission and the Local Planning Authority may serve Breach of Condition Notices to secure compliance. You are advised that sufficient time needs to be given when submitting details in response to conditions, to allow the Authority to consider the details and discharge the condition. A period of between five and eight weeks should be allowed for.
07. The applicant is advised that there is the potential to provide more Electric Vehicle charging point (current minimum requirements – 7 kw Mode 3 with Type 2 connector – 230v AC 32 amp single phase dedicated supply) than the scheme proposes.