

SECTION '2' – Applications meriting special consideration

**Application No :** 11/01174/VAR

**Ward:**  
**Plaistow And Sundridge**

**Address :** 84 London Lane Bromley BR1 4HE

**OS Grid Ref:** E: 540355 N: 170325

**Applicant :** Sundridge Medical Practice (Dr A Arora) **Objections :** YES

**Description of Development:**

Continued use as a doctors surgery with variation of condition 8 of appeal decision 98/01709 (restricting use to a single handed doctors practice of no more than one doctors and for no other purpose) to allow 3 doctors to practice from Sundridge Medical Centre.

Key designations:

Biggin Hill Safeguarding Birds  
Biggin Hill Safeguarding Area  
London City Airport Safeguarding  
London City Airport Safeguarding Birds

**Proposal**

Planning permission was granted on appeal in December 1998 for the doctor's surgery and pharmacy. A condition attached at this time set out that the surgery should be used as a single handed doctor's practice of no more than one doctor and for no other purpose.

The current application seeks to vary this condition to allow up to three doctor's to practice from the surgery.

**Location**

The application building is a modern 2 storey detached structure with a single storey side element. It is sited in a corner location at the eastern end of London Lane at the junction with College Road. The area is mainly residential in character. Its close proximity to Bromley town centre means that many of the surrounding streets are subject to controlled parking zone (CPZ) between 12 noon and 2pm Monday to Saturday or single yellow lines. There is a small car park [accessed via College Road] within the application site to the south of the main building for 5 cars. To the north there is a pharmacy.

Internally, the building is spacious and appears to provide a generously proportioned functional use of the available floorspace. There are 5 consultation rooms over 2 floors in total including 3 for medical consultation and 2 for therapy/ treatment and interventions. In addition there is also a reception, waiting room, office, records storage room, managers room / meeting room / kitchenette.

### **Comments from Local Residents**

Nearby owners/occupiers were notified of the application and 13 representations were received including a petition signed by 19 local residents a letter on behalf of partners of the nearby London Lane Clinic and one letter in support of the proposal. The representations can be summarised as follows:

- the nearby London lane Clinic has the capacity to register a further 3,500 patients, whilst still remaining within the Department of Health list size guidelines. In addition there is a large dedicated car park attached to the clinic for patient use.
- the chances of being able to take a photograph of London lane and Burnt Ash Lane during a weekday showing no traffic and plenty of parking spaces is extremely unlikely. The photographs submitted are extremely misleading.
- the surgery already employs staff for a host of other services including nurse practitioner, community psychiatric nurse, health visitor , dietician, chiropodist, yet there are only 5 off street parking spaces available
- any increase in parking demand in this location will give rise to illegal parking and would be harmful to traffic and pedestrian safety
- households already experience daily difficulties of access to and from their own properties as a result of individual parking a cross their driveways
- the continued expansion of the Sundridge Medical Practice has led to serious traffic and parking problems which causes delays for doctors and nurses when going out on urgent house calls
- if the practice is increased to 3 doctors it is imperative that the practice patient numbers are kept to a reasonable manageable level
- any new doctors appointed could bring patients with them and greatly increase existing patient numbers
- two surgeries running simultaneously would mean twice as many appointments per hour and twice as many patients coming to the surgery
- the applicant gave written assurances when he originally applied for planning consent in 1998 that he had no intentions of recruiting another doctor, that his patient list would be around 2,500, that the pharmacy would dispense medicine only, the outcome has been very different which has resulted in an overintensive use of the site and traffic and parking problems

### **Comments from Consultees**

From a highways point of view the following comments are made:

The practice is located in an area with a medium Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 3. The submitted parking surveys were carried out on three occasions, Tuesday 15 February 2011 between 10:45am to 11:15am, Friday 18 February 2011 between 9:15am-9:45am and Monday 7 March 2011 between 12:10pm to 12:25pm.

The results show that there are a good number of car parking spaces available within the locality. Also as the area has a good public transport links it is considered that the increase in number of doctors to 3 wouldn't have a significant impact on the parking demand and highway safety and no objection to the proposal are therefore raised.

Following input from local residents regarding the existing parking difficulty within the vicinity of the proposed development the site was visited on a number of occasions to determine the validity of the evidence produced by the applicant's agent.

Four separate car parking surveys were carried out between 8th-13th September 2011 within 5 minutes of the development over this period between 27 and 37 available parking spaces were observed.

During the surveys it was noted that the pharmacy has a number of visitors stopping to pick up prescriptions, it is considered that a lot of the short term parking may be as a result of patients picking up their prescriptions and causing inconvenience to local residents.

On balance no objections are raised from a highways point of view.

Bromley Primary Care Trust (PCT) have expressed their strong support for the application for three key reasons:

- significant additional demand will be placed on general practices as a result of the Adopted Bromley Town Centre Area Action Plan. Sundridge Medical Practice (SMP) is well placed to offer high quality, accessible services to Bromley residents, giving them a genuine choice of quality primary medical providers
- there is a significant drive towards delivering services within the community to avoid patients having to go to hospital SMP is well placed to support the PCT in delivering more services locally
- unlike many of the GP premises in Bromley SMP is a modern building and is more than adequate to accommodate additional clinical support staff with minimal investment in infrastructure.

## **Planning History**

Planning permission was originally refused under planning ref. 98/1709 for a detached one/ two storey building for doctors surgery and pharmacy with new vehicular access. A subsequent appeal was allowed the Inspector did not consider that the proposal would give rise to a significant parking

demand which would be unduly prejudicial to highway safety. In reaching a decision the Inspector reasoned as follows:

“You have estimated based on the appellants current list and allowing for those coming to the surgery on foot or by public transport, the practice would give rise to demand of 3 on street parking spaces per hour during the main opening hours...However, your figure seems to me a conservative estimate given that the current patient list could expand without sanction and the other health services provided at such a commodious building could also generate additional traffic. But even an underestimate of 30-40% would only account for an additional car and this is a reflection of a demand which even if doubled cannot in my opinion be regarded as, to use the Council’s term, ‘substantial’”.

In 2001 under planning ref. 01/00522 a very similar application to that currently being considered was refused to vary condition 8 to allow more than one doctor. A subsequent appeal was dismissed. In this instance the Inspector concluded the following:

“I have seen no evidence that either parking or traffic conditions are better now than they were in 1998...The surgery is situated at fairly sharp corner within what appears to be a busy road system, and cars stopping at this location to deposit patients would be a source of traffic conflict and a lower safety level. Furthermore an increase in parking demand in an area where very few spaces are available would generate considerable pressure to find spaces with a significant risk of illegal or unsuitable parking and on-street manoeuvring. Both would cause inconvenience and, in some locations, risk to traffic and pedestrian safety. I conclude that all of these factors would, in combination, be unacceptably prejudicial to traffic safety and as such, would be contrary to local policies whose aim is to avoid such problems.

## **Planning Considerations**

The current application must be determined in the context of present circumstances. Since permission was originally allowed on appeal in 1998 Planning Policy Guidance Note 13-Transport PPG13 has been significantly amended placing emphasis on the importance of accessibility by means of transport other than the car. Additionally the nature of healthcare has radically altered with a drive to deliver services that were formerly provided in hospitals, in GP surgeries. Additionally the Bromley Town Centre Action Plan (AAP) proposes significant increases in the population of Bromley an additional 1,820 residential units. Whilst additional health provision is proposed within the AAP it is likely that some of the additional residential development will occur in advance of the intended health care provision.

Policy C1 of the Unitary Development Plan (UDP) concerns ‘Community Facilities’ it states that the Council will normally permit developments which meet an identified health need. The proposal has the strong support of the

PCT which indicates that the proposal will help to improve the health and well being of patient in the area.

Policy C4 of the UDP concerns 'Health Facilities' it states that the Council will support improved facilities where they are accessible by public transport. The site has a PTAL rating of 3, being within walking distance of Sundridge Park train station and 4 bus routes.

The applicants agent has provided justification for the requirement for a further 2 doctors at the practice. The detailed comments can be summarised as follows:

The number of patients currently registered at the SMP is currently 4,778 which is twice the recommended 1,500- 2,400 patients per doctor ratio set out in the Department of Health (DoH) guidelines. The practice also has the highest patient to doctor ratio in Bromley. The additional two doctors are therefore needed to alleviate the workload of the current doctor who is currently struggling to meet the demands for consultations at the surgery. The advice from DoH is that the patient list should remain open and can only be closed in exceptional circumstances.

It is stated that analysis carried out clearly demonstrates that SMP is accessible by a number of modes of transport including train, 4 local buses, cycle routes and walking. Furthermore, the results of the submitted parking survey show that during periods when the CPZ was / was not in operation there were ample parking spaces available. It is recognised that circumstances arise where patients need to be dropped off outside the surgery and in this instance it is proposed that one of the five car parking spaces within the existing car park be designated as an emergency drop off point and this arrangement could be secured by way of an appropriate planning condition.

Examples are also given of other surgeries within the Borough that have more staff than the SMP but less off street parking.

It is also stated that the proposal would in line with Government advice enable the business to develop and provide much needed employment opportunities for doctors and other staff thereby promoting sustainable economic growth.

It is not anticipated that list sizes will increase significantly as this is largely dependent upon increases in the size of the local population also increasing. Although the application seeks to allow a total of 3 doctors it is anticipated that for the majority of the time only 2 surgeries will run simultaneously which would (based upon each doctor seeing 6 patients and hour) result in approx. 12 patient visiting the surgery per hour. With 3 simultaneous surgeries occurring only in exceptional circumstances.

Confirmation is also given that it is the applicant's intention to employ 2 doctor's to deal with the current patient list and not for a doctor/s to transfer an existing patient list to the SMP.

## **Conclusions**

UDP policies, the London Plan, the Draft London Plan and Central Government guidance give clear support for the principle of proposals which meet health and community needs.

The main issue in this case is therefore whether the proposal would give rise to a significant parking demand which would be unduly prejudicial to highways safety.

The initial Planning Statement stated that the surgery received on average 10-15 applications per week from local families and individuals wanting to join the practice. This is at odds with later statements which set out "that the list size will not increase significantly in the future". The Bromley AAP proposes an additional 1,820 residential units which could see a significant population increase. Notwithstanding this the staggered appointments system proposed by the applicant with only 2 surgeries running simultaneously would lower by one-third the number of patients visiting the surgery to 12 per hour from a possible 18.

There are a number of areas where it appears that unsanctioned changes could occur which could change the overall impact that SMP has upon parking demand and ultimately highways safety. This includes the ability for a new doctor to transfer patients, for patient lists to expand further, for 3 surgeries to run simultaneously on a regular basis. The intentions of the applicant are clearly set out but as is evident from the applicants original no doubt earnest intentions for the practice [in 1998] regarding number of doctors and patient lists, circumstances can change over time.

It is however considered that the current application must be determined in the context of the present circumstances and from a highways point of view no objections are raised and indeed highways surveys carried out by the Council's own highways engineer would support the contention set out in the applicants statement that their would be sufficient on street parking capacity to cope with the additional patients visiting the practice.

Background papers referred to during production of this report comprise all correspondence on file ref. 11/01174, excluding exempt information.

## **RECOMMENDATION: APPROVAL**

subject to the following conditions:

- 1      ACA01      Commencement of development within 3 yrs  
ACA01R      A01 Reason 3 years
- 2      The use of the surgery shall not operate on any Sunday or Bank Holiday , Christmas day or Good Friday or before 08.30 hours and after 18.30 hours on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesday s and Fridays; before 0.830 and after 19.30 hours on Thursdays; or before 0.900 hours and after 12.00 noon on Saturdays.

**Reason:** To accord with the terms of the appeal decision (application 98/1709) permitting the redevelopment of the site and in the interest of the residential amenities of the area.

3 The use of the pharmacy shall not operate on any Sunday or Bank Holiday, Christmas Day or Good Friday or before 09.00 hours and after 18.00 hours on Mondays and Fridays; or before 09.00 hours and after 12.00 on Saturdays.

**Reason:** To accord with the terms of the appeal decision (application 98/1709) permitting the redevelopment of the site and in the interest of the residential amenities of the area.

4 The surgery shall be used for up to 3 doctor's and for no other purpose.

**Reason:** In order to comply with Policy C1 of the Unitary Development Plan and accord with the terms of the appeal decision (application 98/1709) permitting the redevelopment of the site.

5 The pharmacy hereby permitted shall be for no more than one pharmacist and shall be used for no other purpose.

**Reason:** In order to comply with Policy C1 of the Unitary Development Plan and accord with the terms of the appeal decision (application 98/1709) permitting the redevelopment of the site.

6 The car park signage clearly indicating the car park is for staff use shall be permanently maintained.

**Reason:** In order to comply with Policy T3 of the Unitary Development Plan and accord with the terms of the appeal decision (application 98/1709) permitting the redevelopment of the site.

7 The car park barrier which shall be permanently maintained shall be kept in locked and closed position at all times when not being used for the purposes of vehicular ingress and egress.

**Reason:** In order to comply with Policy T3 of the Unitary Development Plan and accord with the terms of the appeal decision (application 98/1709) permitting the redevelopment of the site.

8 The 3.3mx2.4mx3.3m visibility splays shall be maintained and there shall be no obstruction to visibility in excess of 1m in height within these splays.

**Reason:** In order to comply with Policy T18 of the unitary Development Plan and in the interests of pedestrian and vehicular safety.

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