

2.4 REFERENCE NO - 17/504062/FULL			
APPLICATION PROPOSAL Change of use from A1 Retail to D1 Non-residential Institution, Clinic, Health Centre.			
ADDRESS 43 High Street, Newington, Sittingbourne, Kent, ME9 7JR			
RECOMMENDATION – Grant subject to conditions			
SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION/REASONS FOR REFUSAL The proposal would not be significantly harmful to residential amenity, visual amenity or highway safety & convenience, while providing a health care facility.			
REASON FOR REFERRAL TO COMMITTEE Recommendation contrary to the written view of the Parish Council.			
WARD Hartlip, Newington And Upchurch	PARISH/TOWN Newington	COUNCIL	APPLICANT Dr Amechi Adigwe AGENT N/A
DECISION DUE DATE 09/01/18	PUBLICITY EXPIRY DATE 10/11/17		
RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY (including appeals and relevant history on adjoining sites):			
App No	Proposal	Decision	Date
None relevant	N/A	N/A	N/A

MAIN REPORT

1.0 DESCRIPTION OF SITE

1.01 43 High Street is a two storey, semi-detached building fronting Newington High Street and within the Newington High Street Conservation Area. The site has been in use as a hairdressing and beauty treatment salon for a number of years, but this ceased in June of this year. The immediate street scene is mixed in use, with buildings of varying designs and sizes.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.01 The proposal seeks planning permission to change the use of the ground floor of this building to a doctor’s surgery, with opening hours between 10am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. Externally, this would result in some minor alterations to the frontage, including resiting the existing front door to the centre of the shopfront and insertion of new white aluminium window frames to replace the existing .

3.0 PLANNING CONSTRAINTS

3.01 Conservation Area Newington High Street

4.0 POLICY AND OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

4.01 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).

4.02 Development Plan: Policies CP 4, CP 5, DM 7, DM 14, DM 16 and DM 33 of “Bearing Fruits 2031: The Swale Borough Local Plan 2017”.

5.0 LOCAL REPRESENTATIONS

5.01 Newington Parish Council objects to the application for the following summarised reasons:

- Parking issues – no availability for patients to be dropped off directly outside, village car park some walk away, surrounding roads already heavily parked, informal agreement with the Public House means patients would have to cross the road
- A part-time provision would mean patients having to travel outside the village outside of the opening hours
- Existing surgeries elsewhere may take this as an opportunity to reduce their catchment area and remove Newington patients from their list

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

6.01 Environmental Health raises no objection

6.02 KCC Highways & Transportation have no comments to make

6.03 Design & Conservation raises no objection

7.0 APPRAISAL

7.01 The site is within the defined built up area boundary of Newington in which the principle of development is acceptable subject to the other material considerations outlined below.

Change of use

7.02 According to policy DM 2 of the Local Plan, Newington is defined as a ‘Local Centre’. Policy DM 1 of the Local Plan states that non-retail uses will be accepted in these locations provided that they maintain the area’s role, functioning, vitality and viability and do not result in the loss of an important community use.

7.03 This is a village location, in which one might expect to find a basic range of facilities, including a doctor’s surgery. In my view, the proposal would certainly maintain, and even strengthen, the area’s function as a village.

7.04 Although the existing A1 use could provide a community facility if brought back into use, there are other such uses within the High Street. However, there is currently no doctor’s surgery in Newington, and policy CP 5 of the Local Plan promotes the provision of health facilities. In my opinion, the benefit of the provision of a doctor’s surgery would far outweigh the loss of the A1 unit, and I consider the change of use acceptable in principle.

Residential amenity

7.05 There are no extensions or major alterations proposed, and I consider the proposed use would be unlikely to give rise to significant harm to residential amenity in terms of

overlooking or noise nuisance issues. For this reason, I do not consider it necessary to condition the opening hours.

Visual amenity

- 7.06 The site is within a Conservation Area in which the design of such frontages should be sensitive to the historic environment. The doorway would be centralised, which would give rise to a more symmetric appearance. The stall risers below the windows would be re-built and rendered to match the existing, and white aluminium framing would be used. I consider these elements of the proposal to be acceptable.
- 7.07 The original plans included the use of UPVC panels on the lower portion of the windows to give privacy to the users of the reception/waiting room. I had concern that this would be an intrusive feature, harmful to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. The plans have now been amended to include the use of internal frosting here rather than UPVC panels, which I consider to be an acceptable compromise. As such, the proposal would not cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area street scene, and would amount to a slight improvement over the existing situation.

Highway safety & convenience

- 7.08 There would be no additional provision for off-street parking and the Parish Council is concerned that due to a crossing being located here, patients would be unable to be dropped off outside the surgery. The Parish Council is also concerned that there would be a bit of a walk for people parking in the village hall car park, a walk which some patients may be unable to do. Reference is also made to an informal agreement with the Bull Public House, which would result in people having to cross the road.
- 7.09 The distance between the site and the entrance to the village car park is approximately 170m. In my opinion, this distance is not excessive such that it would discourage people from parking here. Of course, some people may not be able to manage the walk, but this could be an issue for any patient accessing any surgery. In my experience, many surgeries do not have dedicated parking and this is not something which would justify a refusal of planning permission, in my opinion.
- 7.10 It is possible that patients would attempt to use the surrounding residential roads, which are often parked to capacity; however I consider that the village car park, along with the fact that many people live within an acceptable walking distance of the site, would provide adequate provision for the short term visits that people would make.
- 7.11 Finally, the placement of the crossing and road layout is such that people are indeed unable to stop here, however I have already set out above why I consider the access/parking arrangements to be acceptable. If there were a private agreement between the surgery and the Public House, patients would be able to safely cross the road using this crossing.
- 7.12 Considering all of the above, and the fact that any use of the site would generate a footfall, I consider there would be no significant harm in terms of highway safety and convenience, despite the concern raised.

Other matters

- 7.13 The Parish Council is concerned that limited opening hours would result in patients having to travel outside the village and would result in an insufficient provision. There

is also concern that other surgeries would take it as an opportunity to remove Newington based patients and reduce their catchment area, forcing them to be left with an inadequate service.

- 7.14 Additional information has been submitted to clarify the level of service that would be provided. This confirms that the surgery would in fact be open between 10am and 5pm, Monday to Friday. The service would also provide GP pre-appointments and weekly access to a medical nurse and physiotherapy sessions. At all times, patients would be able to hand in/collect prescriptions, book appointments, pick up information leaflets etc. Outside of these hours, patients would be re-directed to the NHS 111 service. Furthermore, there is an existing pharmacy on the opposite side of the road which would provide a useful relationship for people being able to pick up medication following an appointment. In my opinion, this amounts to the provision of a full and adequate service for its village location, despite the concern raised.
- 7.15 With specific regard to the concern that surgeries elsewhere may remove patients from their lists, I believe there is a formal and comprehensive process which has to be carried out in such cases, with the implications for patients being fully considered. I do not consider this to amount to a serious concern here.

8.0 CONCLUSION

- 8.01 Taking into account all of the above, I consider the proposal would provide a beneficial health facility not currently available in Newington, without giving significant rise to harm to residential or visual amenity, or highway safety and convenience. I recommend that planning permission be granted.

9.0 RECOMMENDATION – Grant Subject to the following conditions:

CONDITIONS

- (1) The development to which this permission relates must be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date on which the permission is granted.

Reason: In pursuance of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

- (2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the approved drawing number KN\17\30\02 received on 12/12/2017.

Reason: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of visual amenity.

- (3) The premises shall be used for the purpose of a doctor's surgery, and for no other purpose whatsoever, including any other purposes in Class D1 of the Schedule to the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and any other use whether permitted by the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (or any order revoking or re-enacting that Order) or not.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of the area.

The Council's approach to this application:

In accordance with paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), the Council takes a positive and proactive approach to development proposals

focused on solutions. We work with applicants/agents in a positive and proactive manner by:

- Offering pre-application advice
- Where possible, suggesting solutions to secure a successful outcome.
- As appropriate, updating applicants/agents of any issues that may arise in the processing of their application.

In this instance:

The applicant/agent was advised of minor changes required to the application and these were agreed and submitted.

The application was considered by the Planning Committee where the applicant/agent had the opportunity to speak to the Committee and promote the application.

NB For full details of all papers submitted with this application please refer to the relevant Public Access pages on the council's website.
The conditions set out in the report may be subject to such reasonable change as is necessary to ensure accuracy and enforceability.

