
Cowplain Medical Centre, 30 London Road, Cowplain, Waterlooville

Planning Statement

Prepared for:

Assura Plc

Prepared by:

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1.0 Introduction and Background

- 1.1. This planning statement has been produced by Savills on behalf of Assura Plc. It accompanies a planning application at Cowplain Family Practice, located at 30 London Road, Cowplain, Waterloooville, for a scheme that is described as follows:

“Partial Change of Use - from surgery (Class E) to 1 x one bedroom residential unit (Class C3) on the second floor of Cowplain Medical Centre.”

About the Applicant

- 1.2. Assura Plc is a specialist real estate investment trust working only on healthcare premises. Assura Plc manages over 570 surgery, primary care, diagnostic and treatment centre buildings around the country with the main purpose to create outstanding spaces for health services in communities.

2.0 The Site and Surrounding Context

- 2.1. This application relates to the existing two-storey building at Cowplain Family Practice, located at 30 London Road, Cowplain. It is situated approximately 7.3 miles north east of Portsmouth City Centre. The Medical Centre is located within the administrative area of Havant Borough Council (HBC) and sits adjacent to Cowplain District Centre.
- 2.2. The application site comprises the second floor of Cowplain Medical Centre (as seen in Figure 1) which represents a Gross Internal Area (GIA) of 65.4 m² of vacant floor space. The ground floor of the medical centre currently comprises a pharmacy, a public medical centre with further medical facilities located at first and second floor level. The second floor extends to the east side of the building by one storey and consists of the circulation core, the dentist and vacant space, which has been empty for three years, in which the residential unit is proposed.



Figure 1: Site Location Plan

- 2.3. There is an existing stair circulation core with lift located in the south-east of the building.
- 2.4. The site is well-situated in relation to local services and facilities. Within walking distance is The Queen's Inclosure Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) along with supermarkets, cafés, shops, sports facilities, public houses and a primary school, secondary school and nursery.
- 2.5. The existing building is served by a parking area. In terms of connection to the wider area, several bus stops are located directly on either sides of the site on Padnell Road (north east of the site) and London Road itself.

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These bus services provide regular access throughout the local and wider area, including Portsmouth, Havant, Waterlooville, Petersfield and Clanfield.

- 2.6. Vehicle and pedestrian access to the site is from Padnell Avenue to the east of the building, which runs off Padnell Road and London Road to the west. There is also an emergency vehicle access to the South West of the site, onto London Road.
- 2.7. The site does not fall within the impact zones of an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), Environmental Sensitivity or Special Protection. The site is within Flood Zone 1 as per the Government flood maps for planning. There are no designated heritage assets in the immediate locality or on the site itself.

Relevant Planning Applications/ History in Area

Application No.	Description of Development	Decision
03/68275/000	Outline Application for demolition of two dwellings, two GP Surgery's and redevelopment for a primary care centre. 26 to 30 London Road and 2, Padnell Road, Waterlooville	Granted in March 2004.
08/68275/002	Demolition of existing houses and GP surgery and construction of new GP/Pharmacy/Health premises including new access, car park, servicing and landscape. 26 to 30 London Road and 2, Padnell Road, Waterlooville.	Granted in December 2008.
APP/21/00324	Rear two storey extension to provide 2No. additional one bedroom flats. 85a London Road, Cowplain, Waterlooville.	Granted in December 2021.
APP/21/00433	Erection of a pair of semi-detached 1 bed dwellings, following demolition of existing wall with associated parking and access. 57 London Road, Cowplain, Waterlooville.	Refused in November 2021 due to size, siting and design. Appeal lodged.
APP/21/01041	Scheme comprises construction of 2 three bedroom and 2 two bedroom houses associated parking and bin/cycle storage. Land Between, 26 - 32 Padnell Road, Waterlooville.	Refused in February 2022 due to size, siting, layout, residential amenity, lack of mitigation for impact on Solent European Sites

3.0 The Proposed Development

- 3.1. The Applicant is seeking to make the most efficient use of the unused space in the existing building by converting the currently vacant area of the second floor in to a one bedroom, two person apartment.
- 3.2. The apartment would be accessible via the existing stair core which includes a lift, and thus will also provide step-free access.
- 3.3. A new window is proposed to the West elevation to serve the bedroom in order to ensure adequate daylighting. Aside from this, all existing windows are to remain. The apartment size is generous surpassing the nationally described space standards with a floor area of 65.4 m².
- 3.4. The operation of the existing facilities will not be altered by the proposed change of use with all existing services to remain as currently provided once the proposed unit is occupied.

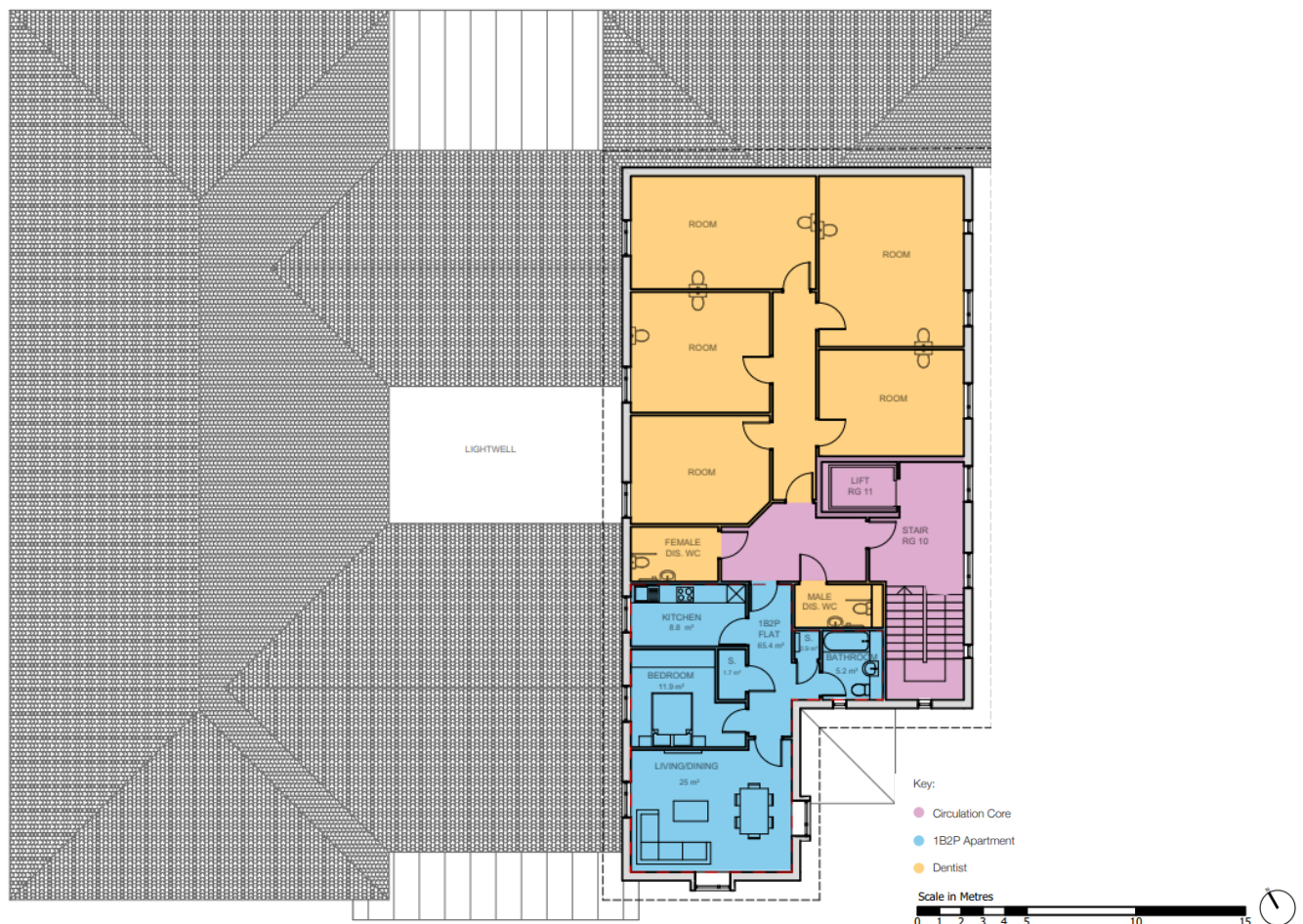


Figure 2: Proposed Second Floor Plan

Layout

- 3.5. The proposed dwelling is situated in the eastern wing of the existing building, where the second floor extends to the east side by one additional storey. It utilises existing vacant space and will not change the existing layout or the operation of the medical services provided within the remainder of the building.

Appearance

- 3.6. The proposed exterior changes only comprise one additional window to serve the bedroom of the apartment. This window is proposed to have a black metal frame in order to match the existing building. Further information can be seen on page 18 of the submitted Design and Access Statement (DAS). The existing external appearance will otherwise be retained and no other changes to the outward appearance of the building are proposed.

Access and Parking

- 3.7. There is an existing stair circulation core, which includes a lift, located in the south-eastern corner of the building. This core will remain unchanged and provide access to the proposed development, with the lift facilitating step-free access.
- 3.8. As outlined within the DAS and seen within the Proposed Site Plan, there is an existing car park serving the building. One of these parking spaces is to be allocated for use by occupiers of the apartment at all times. A timber-clad bike store is proposed adjacent to the exterior entrance to the proposed flat.

Refuse

- 3.9. Refuse collection will be made from the parking area with a dedicated bin store provided, adjacent to the existing medical centre bin store.

4.0 Planning Policy Context

- 4.1. Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires all development proposals to be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The following section provides an overview of the planning policy context affecting the site in light of this requirement.

National Policy

- 4.2. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2021) provides policy and guidance that is a material consideration in planning decisions and includes a presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision making, applications are to be determined in accordance with an up to date Development Plan without delay, unless the Development Plan is absent, silent, or relevant policies are out of date, in which case, paragraph 11 of the NPPF advises that planning permission should be granted unless the proposal is not in accordance with the NPPF or where the benefits of the proposal are outweighed by any adverse impacts caused by the development. The NPPF is supported by the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) which provides further guidance on the application of policy and Government's objectives to achieving sustainable development.

Adopted Local Policy

- 4.3. The existing Local Development Plan comprises the Core Strategy (adopted 2011) and Local Plan Allocations (adopted 2014). Made Neighbourhood Plans also form part of the development plan. There is, however, no made Neighbourhood Plan covering the application site. Relevant policies applicable to the proposal are examined in Section 5 of this report.
- 4.4. In accordance with NPPF, paragraph 11, where the most important policies for determining applications are out of date, permission should be granted unless it would conflict with the NPPF or have any significant impacts.
- 4.5. Consideration has also been given to relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and other relevant planning guidance.

Housing requirements

- 4.6. HBC states that, as of June 2021, it currently only has 4.4 years housing land supply which includes a buffer of 20% as set out in the Housing Supply Technical Paper (2021). The Housing Delivery Test Results show delivery over the last five years of 72% and HBC has prepared a Housing Delivery Action Plan (EB37).
- 4.7. The Standard Methodology housing needs figure is 504 dwellings per annum (dpa) (June 2021).
- 4.8. These figures are all relevant material considerations given that the Core Strategy is now over 10 years old and can be regarded as out of date in respect of housing need.

5.0 Planning Assessment

- 5.1. This section provides an assessment of the proposed development in light of the relevant planning policies and other material planning considerations.

Principle of Development

- 5.2. Paragraph 7 of the NPPF identifies that the purpose of the planning system is to achieve sustainable development which, in essence, means to meet the needs of the present without compromising the future. Three overarching objectives for sustainable development are set out at paragraph 8; these are an economic, social and environmental role, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.
- 5.3. The application site is within an identified settlement boundary and is thus in a location where the general principle of development is generally supported, subject to other considerations.
- 5.4. Paragraph 10 of the NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development which seeks to ensure that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way. This means for decision making that applications are to be determined in accordance with an up to date Development Plan without delay, unless the Development Plan is absent, silent, or relevant policies are out of date, in which case, paragraph 11 of the NPPF advises that planning permission should be granted unless the proposal is not in accordance with the NPPF or where the benefits of the proposal are outweighed by any adverse impacts caused by the development.
- 5.5. In this instance, the HBC Core Strategy was adopted before the first NPPF was published in 2012 and, as a result, some of the policies within the Core Strategy are not in accordance with the NPPF. Accordingly, it can be argued that the Plan is out of date and the presumption in favour of sustainable development applies. Subject to other considerations, the development would therefore be acceptable in principle.

Efficient use of Land

- 5.6. NPPF Paragraph 119 sets out that planning decisions should promote effective use of land and paragraph 120 details that the development of under-utilised buildings should be supported. In this case, the application site comprises vacant floor space that was originally intended for use as part of the Medical Centre but that has not been used and is not required. Therefore, the proposal would make an effective use of currently vacant floorspace whilst contributing to the provision of homes.

Community Facilities

- 5.7. At paragraph 93, the NPPF sets out that planning policies and decisions should guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services. Policy DM2 (Protection of Existing Community Facilities and Shops) of the Core Strategy notes that the change of use or loss of premises currently or last used as community services will only be permitted where it has been demonstrated that the premises or land are no longer viable for their authorised use, or any other use which would be a beneficial facility to the local community and if the facility is no longer required for a community use.
- 5.8. The proposal would not result in the loss of the Medical Centre or any of the operational surgery space as the area of building subject to the proposed planning application is not currently in use and has not been

used for the past three years. There is also existing surplus floorspace of 888 m² on the first floor of the building which remains vacant and would be able to facilitate any future medical expansion. As such, the proposed change of use to a dwelling seeks to re-use existing floor space in an efficient way and for the aforementioned reasons is in accordance with Policy DM2 of the Local Plan and paragraph 93 of the NPPF.

Housing Position

- 5.9. As set out within Havant Borough Council's Five Year Housing Land Supply update (2021) the Council is only able to demonstrate a 4.4 years supply of housing with the document identifying that the current housing requirement for Havant is set at 504 dpa. In terms of housing delivery, Havant Borough Council has under-delivered on housing in the last two years with a need to account for this short fall in future plan making.
- 5.10. NPPF paragraph 69 explains that small and medium-sized sites make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area. These types of sites should be supported as windfall sites. Accordingly, the proposed change of use contributes towards the housing need within the borough making a positive contribution to the housing delivery in the area within the short term.
- 5.11. The proposal utilises vacant building which is surplus to the practical use of the medical centre. The site is sustainably located within an accessible location offering several amenities for residents. The proposal will contribute towards the housing need in Havant, which is currently 504 dpa. Given the scale of development, this dwelling can be delivered quickly, and help towards the short-term housing delivery in the area. This is a material consideration which supports the view that the principle of development is acceptable.

Design

- 5.12. A key aspect of sustainable development is the good design of buildings and places, as set out in paragraph 126 of the NPPF. Core Strategy Policy CS16 sets out the Council's requirements in terms of housing quality, mix, density and design which is applicable to all residential developments.
- 5.13. Whilst the adopted Development Plan does not require Nationally Described Space Standards to be met, it is clear from Policy CS9 Housing that it is the Council's ambition for development to be of a good size. The proposed apartment will be 65.4 m² in size. This exceeds the Nationally Described Space Standards for a one bedroom, two person apartment, with a minimum of 50 m².
- 5.14. Policy CS16 also outlines that new development should respond positively to the local character, integrate into the wider area and is inclusive by considering the needs of those with disabilities. The proposed development comprises no exterior alterations beyond the addition of a black metal frame window which matches the existing windows on the building. As a result, and due to the nature of the proposal, there will be no external visual amenity impact arising, and that the proposed use of the space integrates well within its surroundings (a mixed-use area). The existing lift also provides access for those with disabilities ensuring that the apartment is accessible.

Sustainability

- 5.15. With regards to the three sustainability objectives, the provision of homes is a benefit from a social sustainability perspective. In this regard, NPPF paragraph 60 highlights the importance of boosting housing supply. Economically, the proposal will bring new residents into the area to utilise local services and facilities. Additionally, it will provide employment opportunities during the construction stage. In respect of the final sustainability objective – the environmental objective – the proposal utilises the existing built form and vacant floor space to deliver a new source of residential accommodation. This makes the most efficient use of previously developed land and floor space, in an accessible and sustainable location.

Parking

- 5.16. Policy DM13 sets out that parking for development proposals should follow the standards set out in the Residential Car Parking and Cycle Provision Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). Based upon the characteristics of the site, the locality and the nature of the proposed development, the SPD would require a minimum of one car parking space for the proposal. A car parking space will be allocated for future occupiers of the apartment, as seen within the Proposed Site Plan submitted alongside this application.
- 5.17. Secure and waterproof cycle storage is suggested within the HBC Parking SPD as part of the development, in accordance with Core Strategy Policy DM13. Secure cycle parking will be provided for the future occupier of the apartment as seen in the proposed drawings.

Nitrates

- 5.18. In accordance with Natural England's updated guidance issued in March 2022, a nitrate budget calculation has been submitted alongside the application. The Applicant is willing to enter into a Unilateral Undertaking with HBC in order to secure the necessary nitrate mitigation at Warblington Farm for the proposal and welcomes further communication from the Council on agreeing this position as part of the application process.

Solent and Dorset Coast SPA

- 5.19. The Solent Recreation Mitigation Strategy outlines the mitigation required for recreational disturbance arising from development. The site is located within the 5.6 km buffer of the Solent and Dorset Coast SPA, and as such, the application is willing to enter in to an agreement to pay the relevant contributions required for the scheme.

6.0 Summary

6.1. This planning statement has been produced by Savills on behalf of Assura Plc. It accompanies a planning application at Cowplain Medical Centre for:

“Partial Change of Use – from surgery (Class E) to 1 x one bedroom residential unit (Class C3) on the second floor of Cowplain Medical Centre.”

6.2. Key planning considerations addressed in this statement are summarised as follows:

- Notwithstanding the fact that the development plan, particularly the relevant policies for the supply of housing, is out of date, the site is in an accessible and sustainable location, within the settlement boundary where the general principle of development is acceptable subject to other considerations.
- The proposal seeks to convert vacant, unused floorspace in the existing medical centre building into a one bedroom residential unit apartment. This meets the objectives for sustainable development and helps to boost housing supply, in accordance with the NPPF.
- The floorspace is vacant for three years and is surplus to the medical centre's requirements and is not required in their forecast future. In accordance with NPPF paragraphs 119 and 120, the proposal makes effective use of this vacant, under-utilised building floor space, on a previously developed (brownfield) site in a sustainable, accessible location.
- There would be no loss of valued facilities nor community service arising from the proposal. There is also existing surplus floorspace of 888 sqm on the first floor of the building which remains vacant and would be able to facilitate any future medical expansion.
- There are minimal external alterations to the building, meaning its visual appearance and relationship to the surroundings will remain unchanged. The apartment will also be of a high specification, exceeding the Nationally Described Space Standards.
- One private parking space and secured cycle parking will be provided for future residents.

6.3. Overall the proposed development is acceptable in planning terms and in accordance with relevant planning policies of the Development Plan and NPPF.

6.4. HBC is respectfully requested to grant planning permission subject to appropriate conditions.