Application Number: F/17/80218
Case Officer: Gary Osmond
Received Date: Tuesday 21 March 2017
Site Address: Land to the rear of Blackthorn Health Centre, Satchell Lane, Hamble-Le-Rice, Southampton SO31 4NQ
Applicant: Healthcare Management Trust
Proposal: Construction of 64 bedroom dementia care centre with associated access, parking and landscaping.
Recommendation: Refuse

CONDITIONS AND REASONS

1 The proposed development by virtue of its resulting mass, height and scale would result in an unacceptable visual and physical intrusion into the designated Bursledon / Hamble / Hound Local Gap, to the detriment of the visual amenity and character of the gap and surrounding area. The application is therefore considered to be contrary to saved Policies 1.CO, 3.CO and 59.BE of the adopted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review (2001-2011), as well as Policies S9 and DM1 of the Submitted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011 - 2029, July 2014.

2 The application fails to secure provision for developer contributions for transport facilities and infrastructure and contributions towards the management and monitoring of the Hamble Lane Air Quality Management Area made necessary by the development or to mitigate against any increased need or pressure on existing facilities. As such the proposal is contrary to saved Policies 101.T and 191.IN of the adopted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan, Policies DM23 and DM37 of the Submitted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011-2029, July 2014.


Report:

This application has been referred to Committee because it is for a major development which is contrary to the development plan.
Description of Application

1. The application seeks consent for a 64 bedroom dementia care home, together with ancillary facilities, parking, landscaping and access from Satchell Lane. The home would fall within the C2 use class and be operated by an established not-for-profit charitable trust who provide 24 hour on-site specialist care for its residents.

2. The development would consist of a single two storey building split into two ‘L’ shaped wings joined together by a central core, which would provide the shared communal facilities, administration and plant facilities, as well as the main entrance. Each floor of each wing would provide 16 en-suite resident bedrooms split into two groups of eight, or a ‘household’ (64 in total). Each household would have its own kitchen, dining and main living areas, although other smaller seating and relaxation areas would also be available, together with the necessary staff and treatment facilities. Other communal facilities include a shop, tea room, hair salon and cinema, as well as gardens.

3. The building would sit fairly centrally within its site, although the orientation of its wings would make best use of the site’s southerly aspect and views to the east across the adjoining paddocks. While all of the site would be landscaped, the two main resident gardens would be to the south, one more sheltered and enclosed by the proposed development and the neighbouring health centre, and one more open and taking advantage of the views to the east.

4. Vehicular and pedestrian access would be via the existing access to the health centre from Satchell Lane, which would be extended, although priority would remain for the health centre as this would receive the higher number of vehicle movements. Parking for staff and visitors would be to the southern edge of the site, although substantial landscaping is proposed to mitigate any visual impact. Dedicated servicing and ambulance bays would also be provided.

5. In addition to the usual application form and drawings, the application is accompanied by the following reports and technical assessments:

- Planning Statement
- Design and Access Statement
- Planning Need Assessment
- Transport Assessment
- Travel Plan
- Statement of Community Involvement
- Site Search Statement
- Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA)
- Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Statement
- Ecological Appraisal
- Tree Survey, Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement
Application Site and Surroundings

6. The application site equates to 0.58 hectares in area and sits immediately behind the Blackthorn Health Centre and Pharmacy and is currently used for grazing.

7. The site is flat and level with no trees or features of significance within it other than a timber field shelter for the horses which graze the site. The site is bounded along its southern side with the health centre by a timber post and rail fence. To the western boundary is 2.0 metre planting/hedging where the site neighbours domestic properties which front Hamble Lane and a 2.5 metre high palisade fence where it adjoins an electrical substation. To the north is a thick 5 – 6 metre high evergreen conifer hedge which runs the full length of the northern boundary and beyond, whereas the eastern boundary is open onto the adjoining paddock land to the east.

8. The site sits outside the urban edge and within the local gap between Bursledon, Netley Abbey and Hamble-le-Rice, and is close to Hamble Lane, the main vehicular route from the north of the peninsula towards both Netley and Hamble. Immediately to the north is Hound Corner Fruit Farm, with horticultural fields and further grazing land beyond. To the east is more grazing land and a recreation ground, with Badnam Copse and the River Hamble beyond this. To the south is the Blackthorn Health Centre and pharmacy, with the Hamble School sports pitches and the school itself on the opposite side of Satchell Lane. To the west are residential dwellings which front Hamble Lane, together with an electrical substation compound.

9. The wider area is very flat with some areas of open ground which historically consisted of market gardens and farms, although horse grazing is now the predominant use for the non-developed areas. While some parts are open, many of the old field boundaries remain which interrupt longer views from publically accessible area and main routes such as Hamble Lane. Although outside the urban edge development is prevalent, particularly along Hamble Lane, Hound Road and the top end of Satchell Lane.

Relevant Planning History

10. There is no planning history directly relating to the application site. However, the consent for the neighbouring health centre is of relevance and is a material planning consideration. Consent was granted at appeal in 2004 following refusal by the Local Planning Authority on the grounds of being within the local gap, impact upon the character of the area, traffic numbers and highway safety, as well as being in an unsustainable location.
11. The application was an outline submission to provide a new single and better equipped facility to replace two separate surgeries – one in Netley and one in Hamble – which had outgrown the accommodation available. In his appeal decision the Planning Inspector concluded that:

12. “There are distinct advantages in the provision of health care at single site and in that case due to the layout of roads and settlements in the area, the appeal site would provide a near-central location in replacement for the present two separate surgeries. There are other sites in the area, but there are timing or acquisition shortcomings that indicate that the appeal site in the preferable choice. However, it is in a Local Gap and therefore is a site where development, and built form, would not normally be permitted. Being close to existing buildings, the visual effect of the proposed development would be limited and would not adversely affect highway safety or the sustainability aims of the Development Plan, in view of the particular circumstances of this case I consider that the development should be permitted, but on the basis that the design of the building and the landscaping of the site should be to the highest standards.”

13. Although this decision was in 2004 and predated the current adopted Local Plan, it nonetheless has many similarities to the application currently under consideration.

Representations Received

14. At the time of writing a total of 13 representations have been received (1 in support and 12 objecting) which raise the following issues, concerns and objections:

- Within Local Gap
- Greenfield site
- Loss of open space
- Traffic and congestion
- Further pressure on doctor’s surgery and local infrastructure
- Scale of building
- Insufficient parking
- Pollution
- Wildlife
- No need for such a development
- Remote site
- Overlooking and loss of privacy

Consultation Responses

15. Planning Policy Manager – The proposed development is outside the urban edge and does not fall within one of the permitted uses set out by saved Policy 1.CO. The site also lies within a local gap where saved Policy 3.CO is relevant. This clarifies that planning permission will only be permitted in a
local gap if the proposed development cannot be acceptably accommodated elsewhere and if it would not lead to a physical or visual diminution of the gap. The submitted site search statement concludes that there are no other suitable sites within the search radius. However, it dismisses a number of sites for being within the local gap. It is unclear therefore why this site is deemed suitable rather than extending the search area.

16. The presence of other development within the gap, including the existing medical centre is acknowledged but the submitted assessment does not take into account the cumulative impact further development within the gap would have. The similarities of the allowed appeal for the Blackthorn Medical Centre are noted. However, while the Inspector considered the impact upon the countryside and gap to be acceptable despite being contrary to policy, he did state that the site was only considered suitable for this one facility. It is unlikely that the nature and purpose of the gap can be retained if further development is approved.

17. The benefits of the proposed development are noted but this is not considered sufficient to override the harm which would result to the local gap which is under increasing pressure from other development proposals.

18. **Landscape & Design** – The building is considered to be too large for the site available. The resultant external spaces will appear cramped and dominated along the north side by the leylandii hedge which will only grow taller and wider, reducing these external terrace spaces further. Equally, the space left for landscaping once car parking and other required ancillary facilities are provided is minimal. A reduction in footprint would allow much better spaces and landscaping around the building.

19. The submitted LVIA sets out that visual impact upon the gap would be minor. However, that proposed together with other existing development along Hamble Lane will undoubtedly reduce the purpose of the gap and weaken it both visually and by establishing precedent.

20. **Head of Environmental Health** – No objection in principle. Some concerns with regards to noise impacts from adjacent electrical substation and plant required for the proposed development. Vehicle movements along Hamble Lane associated with the development will have an impact on the Air Quality Management Area and contributions towards work to manage air pollution are requested. No information with regards to land contamination has been provided. Conditions relating to the submission of an air quality assessment, the siting of plant and acoustic attenuation, land contamination, lighting, and amenity protection during construction requested should the application be approved.

21. **Head of Housing Services** – The application is for a C2 care use, as such there will not be a requirement for any affordable housing.

22. **Head of Direct Services** – No objections.
23. **Health Policy Co-ordinator** – No comments received.

24. **West Hampshire Clinical Commissioning Group** – Primary care services nationally are under pressure due to recruitment and retention of practice staff and an increasingly elderly population. Whilst this development will not add large numbers of patients to the local practices, the nature of the Centre will cause significantly increased workload to the local practices, especially the Blackthorn Health Centre.

25. **HCC Adult Services** – No comments received.

26. **Hampshire Highways** – No objection in principle, subject to the proposed footway/cycleway improvements along Satchell Lane being implemented by the developer, the provision of developer contributions towards transport improvements and receipt of an appropriate Construction Site Management Plan.

27. Use of the existing vehicle access junction which currently serves the Blackthorn Health Centre /Pharmacy (Mursell Way) is acceptable given the good level of visibility and geometry that the access currently affords and pedestrian movements can be accommodated with a footway extension from the existing cycleway to the access junction as proposed.

28. The existing site access has demonstrated the ability to accommodate large delivery and refuse vehicles, and tracking drawings submitted with the application demonstrate adequate turning heads to enable on-site turning that will allow for forward gear access and egress. These will also facilitate car movements, to the associated car parking spaces which have an adequate aisle width of 6.0m within which to access the parking spaces.

29. The submitted Transport Assessment demonstrates that vehicle trip generation from the site would be minimal, with an anticipated 6 arrivals and 7 vehicle departures anticipated in the peak care home hours of 1000-1100. In the AM peak, just 8 vehicle movements would be anticipated, with just 12 in the PM peak. This is minimal and would not be anticipated to have a noticeable impact on the local highway network.

30. With regards to Hamble Lane and Satchell Lane, the percentage increases are negligible and cannot be classed as severe, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in order to facilitate a highway reason for refusal.

31. Whilst it is not anticipated that the development will in itself have a noticeable impact on the local highway network, in accumulation with other permitted local development there will undoubtedly be a need to upgrade the local highway network accordingly. This will be to either mitigate impacts, or to improve facilities for new residents and users. As such developer contributions will be required.
32. **Council Archaeologist** – There are no archaeological sites recorded at this location, although the medieval village of Hound was in the vicinity. I can confirm that I would not raise any archaeological issues.

33. **HCC Rights of Way Officer** – No comments received.

34. **HCC Flood & Water Management** – The preliminary information provided does show that a drainage system based on infiltration can be achieved however there are concerns that if the infiltration levels are reduced, alternative methods may need to be considered. Further details are required in order to ensure the correct advice is provided. Therefore, we advise that the following condition be applied. No development shall take place until a full, site specific Flood Risk Assessment and surface water drainage strategy have been provided to the lead Local Flood Authority, to be secured via condition.

35. **HCC Planning & Development** – No comments received.

36. **Biodiversity Officer** – No objection to the development considering the site’s limited biodiversity potential. The recommendations within the ecological survey and for native landscaping are welcomed.

37. **Natural England** – No objection provided Natural England standing advice is followed in relation to protected species and habitat.

38. **Environment Agency** – No comments received.

39. **Southern Water Services** – Southern Water can provide foul sewerage and mains water to service the development but cannot provide drainage for surface water which cannot be discharged into the public sewer.

40. **Southampton Airport Safeguarding** – The proposed development has been examined from an aerodrome safeguarding perspective and does not conflict with safeguarding criteria. We therefore, have no objection to this proposal.

41. **Crime Prevention Design Advisor** – No comments received.

42. **Hamble-le-Rice Parish Council** – Object. The need for dementia care is acknowledged but the site lies within the Local Gap which is required to protect the individuality of the settlements of Hound, Hamble and Bursledon. Development within this gap would create harm and risk coalescence.

43. Concerns were also expressed with regards to traffic impact, particularly at peak times along Hamble Lane. It is acknowledged that staff would be encouraged to use public transport but this cannot be enforced. There was also concern that the level of parking provision on site would not be sufficient for staff, visitors and support services.
44. Local demand for the doctor’s surgery is already high and such a facility for residents with complex needs would only add to existing pressure upon the surgery and other local health providers.

45. **Hound Parish Council – Object.** Members raised grave concerns over the number of car parking spaces (30 in total) and what would happen at shift changes when there could be double the amount of cars within the car park. Also that is was not feasible to achieve ultimate status by expecting staff to mainly use public transport and not drive to work, concerns were also raised about the lack of pavement approaching the site. Also that the application is in the 'strategic gap' which could lead to the possibility of ribbon development along Hamble Lane.

**Policy Context:**

**Designation Applicable to Site**

- Outside Built-up Area Boundary
- Within Local Gap

**National Planning Policy Framework**

46. The NPPF is a significant material consideration in the decision making process. This states that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Paragraph 14 sets out a general presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that development proposals which accord with the development plan should be approved without delay. Where the development plan is absent, silent, or relevant policies are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless the adverse impacts of the development would outweigh the benefits; or specific policies in the Framework indicate that development should be restricted (Paragraph 14). Local plan policies that do not accord with the NPPF are now deemed to be “out-of-date”. The NPPF requires that due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (Paragraph 216). In other words the closer the policies in the plan accord to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given.

47. Three dimensions of sustainability are given in paragraph 7 with these being economic (supporting economy and ensuring land availability); social (providing housing, creating high quality environment with accessible local services); and environmental (contributing to, protecting and enhancing natural, built and historic environment). Paragraph 8 advises that these roles should not be undertaken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent.

48. In addition to those above, the following paragraphs of the NPPF are also considered to be of relevance to this application:
• Paragraph 17 which sets out the 12 core planning principles that should underpin decision taking.
• Paragraph 32 which encourages sustainable modes of transport and the provision of safe and suitable access for all.
• Paragraph 50 which requires local planning authorities to plan for the needs of different groups in the community which includes older people and people with disabilities.
• Paragraphs 56, 60 and 61 which emphasises the importance of good design and the need for decisions to address the connections between people and places and the integration of new development into the natural, built and historic environment.
• Paragraph 69 which requires that planning decision aim to achieve safe and accessible development, containing clear and legible pedestrian routes.
• Paragraphs 109 and 118 which seeks to minimise impacts on biodiversity and provide net gains where possible, as well as to prevent development from being adversely affected by unacceptable levels of pollution or land contamination.
• Paragraph 196 which highlights that planning law requires that applications be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is such a material consideration.
• Paragraph 197 which requires LPAs to apply the presumption in favour of sustainable development in determining applications.
• Paragraph 203 which states that LPAs should consider whether otherwise unacceptable development could be made acceptable through the use of conditions or through planning obligations, the tests for the use of which are set out within Paragraph 204.

National Planning Practice Guidance

49. Where material, this guidance should be afforded weight in the consideration of planning applications. The sections on: determining a planning application; travel plans, transport assessment and statements in decision taking; design; contamination; health and wellbeing; the natural environment; planning obligations; waste supply, wastewater and water quality; as well as Housing and economic land availability assessment, are of notable relevance to this application.

Development Plan Saved Policies and Emerging Local Plan Policies

50. Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review 2001-2011 saved Policies:

• 1.CO – Protection of the Countryside
• 3.CO – Local Gaps
• 18.CO – Landscape Character
• 25.NC – Nature Conservation
• 30.ES – Noise Sensitive Development
• 33.ES - Air Quality
51. Submitted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011-2029, July 2014 Policies:

- S1 – Sustainable development
- S2 – New development
- S4 – Employment provision
- S6 – Community facilities
- S9 – Countryside and countryside gaps
- DM1 – General criteria for new development
- DM2 – Environmentally sustainable development
- DM5 – Sustainable surface water management and watercourse management
- DM7 - Pollution
- DM9 – Nature conservation
- DM23 – General development criteria – transport
- DM24 – Parking
- DM35 – Community, leisure and cultural facilities
- DM37 Funding infrastructure


Hampshire Minerals and Waste Plan 2013

53. The application site does not lie within a Minerals Safeguarding Area.

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Supplementary Planning Document: Quality Places (November 2011)
- Supplementary Planning Document: Accommodation for Older People and Those in Need of Care (May 2011)
- Supplementary Planning Document: Environmentally Sustainable Development (March 2009)
Supplementary Planning Document: Biodiversity (December 2009)

Policy Commentary

54. The above policies and guidance combine to form the criteria against which this application will be assessed with particular regard to the relevant Local Plan policies and the principle of development, how the proposed development relates to the three strands of sustainable development as set out in the NPPF – social, economic and environmental, as well as other material planning considerations.

Assessment of Proposal: Development Plan and / or Legislative Background

55. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:-

“If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”

56. In this case policy issues for consideration include:

Policy & Principle:

57. The starting point for considering and determining planning applications is the development plan. This comprises the Saved Policies within the Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review 2001-2011 (adopted May 2006) and the application must therefore be assessed against those that are applicable to the proposals. The application site lies outside the urban edge and within an area of designated countryside/local gap, in this case the Bursledon / Hamble / Netley Abbey local gap where saved Policies 1.CO and 3.CO apply. Policy 1.CO sets out a presumption against new development within the countryside which does not comprise an extension to an existing building or use, unless it is for specified agricultural, recreation or public utility purposes, whereas Policy 3.CO relates to local gaps and states that planning permission will only be granted for appropriate development which cannot be acceptably located elsewhere and which would not physically or visually diminish a local gap. The objectives of these policies are not only to protect the countryside for its own sake, but also to prevent the visual and physical sprawl of towns and villages, to prevent the coalescence of settlements and to support the provision of development that is appropriate for such a location.

58. Policy 1.CO does allow some specific non-agricultural related development outside the urban edge. Of particular relevance in this instance is criterion (iii) which states that “Planning permission will not be granted for development outside the urban edge unless: … iii. it is essential for the
provision of a public utility service or the appropriate extension of an existing education or health facility and it cannot be located within the urban edge”. That proposed is for a C2 residential care use, albeit a very specialised use, and would also be a brand new facility, which while adjacent to the existing health centre will not be directly linked to it either physically or in terms of its management, so could not be viewed as an extension of an existing health facility. As such, the proposal would be contrary to the requirements of Policy 1.CO and planning permission should therefore be refused unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

59. Also of relevance is saved Policy 59.BE which is a general design and amenity policy which requires development to take full and proper account of the context of the site including the character and appearance of the locality and be appropriate in mass, scale, materials, layout, design and siting. It also requires a high standard of landscape design, a satisfactory means of access and layout for vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians, to make provision for refuse and cycle storage and avoid unduly impacting on neighbouring uses through overlooking, loss of light, loss of outlook, and noise and fumes.

60. This principle is reiterated within the Council’s adopted ‘Accommodation for Older People and Those in Need of Care’ SPD which supports the development plan and provides additional guidance on this particular matter. Whilst it is not the purpose of the document to define such material considerations in respect of C2 uses, it suggests that these may include but not be limited such considerations as: demonstrable need; support of the relevant health authority; compliance with the Health and Social Care Act 2008 and Care Quality Commissions (CQC) Essential standards of quality and safety; and proximity to services and facilities. These matters along with those others that are also deemed to be material to the assessment of the application are considered further below.

61. The principle of development is not supported by the adopted Development Plan. However, the development cannot simply be refused for this reason and regard must be had to other material considerations including the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and appeal decisions.

**Sustainable Development**

62. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is, as noted above, a significant material consideration in the decision making process. The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (Para. 6). Paragraph 14 sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development, with Paragraph 197 requiring that in assessing and determining development proposals, local planning authorities should apply this presumption. In doing so, due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing local plans according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (Para. 215).

63. Sustainable development is defined within the NPPF as containing three dimensions: economic, social and environmental (Para. 7) which should not
be taken in isolation, because they are mutually dependent (Para. 8). The development proposal is considered and assessed under each of these dimensions below.

**Social Sustainability:**

64. Paragraph 50 of the National Planning Policy Framework requires local planning authorities to plan for the needs of different groups in the community which includes older people and people with disabilities. In addition, the National Planning Practice Guidance sets out that in decision taking, evidence that development proposals for accessible and manageable homes specifically for older people will free up under-occupied local housing for other population groups is likely to demonstrate a market need that supports the approval of such homes.

65. In these regards, the development would contribute to a need for high quality specialist care facilities within the local area, and through the provision of 64 additional bedspaces, it has the potential to release on to the market under-occupied family and other dwellings vacated by the future tenants of the residential home.

66. The application is supported by a Planning Needs Assessment which considers the level of unmet need within the care home’s defined market catchment area which is based upon a five mile radius from the subject site, as well as that within the Borough of Eastleigh. This assessment utilises a range of sources including census data and population statistics and projections of the Office of National Statistics, with the calculated level of need then being considered against current and planned supply in the aforementioned areas. This is based upon what are described as ‘market standard beds’, with these being those that provide en-suite facilities, and identifies an unmet need of 293 bed spaces within the aforementioned five mile market catchment area, which includes part of Southampton and 142 within the Eastleigh Borough Council boundaries. These figures are based on estimated unmet need including all planned bedspaces and include developments where permission has been granted but where construction is yet to commence.

67. Whilst acknowledging that this assessment does not include total registered capacity within the area (i.e. all bed spaces regardless of facilities), it is recognised and accepted that there remains an overall shortfall in care space provision to meet existing and future needs which includes specialist accommodation for older people such as dementia care, the proportion of which is expected to continue to increase in the Borough. This increase in the elderly population has been highlighted in the primary care trust’s consultation response, who also point out the increased pressures upon local health practices because of this and the more complex needs of this age group.

68. In addition to quantitative need, it is also necessary to consider the qualitative aspects of the development. The home has been designed specifically with
the needs of dementia patients in mind and is intended to meet the ‘Stirling’
Gold standard in dementia care. This looks at various aspects of the design
and the accommodation proposed and how well it relates to the needs of
dementia sufferers. While many of the residents would have already
progressed to the later stages of their illness, the objective of the applicant is
to help residents to keep their independence and live a normal and happy
life for as long as possible.

69. The increased pressure upon local health services are noted but overall these
factors are a significant social benefit of the development and an important
material planning consideration which must be taken into account and may
be capable of outweighing the conflict with the applicable countryside
policies, subject to the development being considered to be acceptable and
sustainable in other respects.

**Economic Sustainability:**

70. One of the core planning principles of the NPPF is to proactively drive and
support sustainable economic development to deliver amongst other things,
the homes and thriving local places that the country needs (Para. 17). The
Framework also reiterates the Government’s commitment to securing
economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity (Para 18).

71. The delivery of the proposed care facility will provide economic benefits that
would support growth within the local economy through the provision of jobs
and the support of local services. The development would also create
construction jobs during the build phase, which will in turn result in increased
spending within the local economy, for example on materials, goods and
other services.

72. It is estimated that once operational the home would provide employment
equivalent to around 60 fulltime posts, from care home managers and
carers, through to kitchen, laundry and maintenance staff.

73. These factors are considered to be benefits of the development that weigh in
its favour when considering the planning balance of the application and are
considered to be economically sustainable in terms of the NPPF
requirements.

**Environmental Sustainability:**

74. There are a number of facets to environmental sustainability, which have
been considered in turn below:

**Layout, Design and Impact upon the Countryside and Local Gap**

75. As has been set out above, the development has been designed to primarily
cater for the specific needs of dementia patients, although they may also
have other secondary health needs. It is this, together with the operational
requirements of such a facility which have influenced the internal layout and
resulting form of the building. These requirements have also influenced the external spaces around the building which include secure gardens and external terraces for use of residents and their visitors. While the external environment outside the site boundaries will have little influence on residents living at the home, the building has nonetheless been design to make best use of the site’s southerly aspect and views to the east across the adjoining paddocks. The site would be extensively landscape both internally and around the site boundaries where required to provide screening and soften the building’s visual impact. However, there are concerns that the footprint of the building takes up too much of the site and would leave cramped and uninviting external spaces for the use of residents, particularly those along the northern side of the building which would be severely overshadowed by the substantial leylandii hedge.

76. In acknowledging the countryside and gap location of the site and its potential visual impact, the building has been designed to be no more than two storeys in scale and is not intended to be any higher than the neighbouring Blackthorn Medical Centre. However, a facility such as that proposed is both expensive to build and operate and there is a minimum size which needs to be achieved before it becomes financially viable. This has resulted in a sizable footprint which does take up a large proportion of the site and a building which would be substantially bigger, in mass, scale and footprint, than any neighbouring structure, including the medical centre. The shape and form of the building has been designed in such a way so as to try and visually break up its mass and it is intended to use darker materials such as red brick and grey slate to ground it in the landscape. As a piece of architecture and when viewed in isolation, the proposal is considered to be of good quality, especially given the operational constraints of such a facility where the internal layout and how the building functions is more important than its external appearance. However, despite the efforts which have been made to limit the visual impact of the building, concerns still remain that a building of the size and scale proposed will both physically and visually diminish the local gap.

77. The application is supported by a Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) to try and quantify the likely impact of the proposal. This looks at the characteristics of the site and its surroundings and makes an assessment as to impact of the proposal from various vantage points. This concludes that the development would be visible within the landscape, albeit would be screened to some extent by existing boundary planting around the site and wider field and road boundaries. It does however acknowledge that views of the development would be clearly available from Satchell Lane and the public right of way to the east, despite the new landscaping proposed.

78. While it is acknowledged that similar facilities to that proposed have been relatively recently approved at Otterbourne and off Pavilion Road in Hedge End, both of which are outside the urban edge and one within a local gap, it is considered that the particular circumstances of those applications and sites was such that an exception to policy was justified. Both of these sites are adjacent to established development and the urban edge, and far less
obvious in their wider landscape context due to topography and boundary planting/screening. The much flatter and more open landscape characteristics of the Hamble peninsular, in particular the land within the Bursledon / Hamble / Hound Local Gap mean that any development of even a moderate scale would be clearly visible, even from areas where established boundary planting would soften its visual prominence. As such the development would be contrary to the requirement of saved Policy 3.CO to ensure that any new development does not visually diminish the gap.

79. Policy 3.CO also requires that any new development does not physically diminish the gap, so as to preserve the separate identities of the settlements it is intended to protect. The Bursledon / Hamble / Hound Local Gap in particular is currently under considerable development pressure with two significant development proposals currently pending their final appeal decisions (Mallards Road and Hamble Station). A development of the scale proposed would have a significant impact on the gap and as such, when assessed alongside the appeal sites the need to protect the individual characteristics of the surrounding settlements and prevent coalescence becomes more salient. This is especially so where the clear physical and visual separation between the settlements of Bursledon, Hamble and Hound is considered to be extremely important in maintaining the identities of the settlements, each of which have a differing character despite their relatively close proximity. Clear demarcation of the settlement boundaries and the sense of leaving one settlement before entering another need to be maintained and would only be eroded by the proposed development. Any land lost to development within the gap will be lost forever and cannot be replaced.

80. The importance of gaps as a tool for protecting the identities and preventing the coalescence of settlements has been reaffirmed in a recent report to Cabinet on 15th June 2017. This sets out revised gap designations for the new local plan and clearly shows the application site being in the middle of the revised Bursledon / Hamble / Hound Gap. This report has been approved and is now considered to be adopted as a material planning consideration for officers and Local Area Committees in determining planning applications.

81. The Blackthorn Heath Centre Appeal has been highlighted by the applicants as having many similarities in terms of location, need and impact upon the gap, and on initial review this appears to be the case. However, there are a number of significant differences to that being proposed for the adjoining site. Firstly, while both are considered as medical facilities, the difference is that the Blackthorn development was intended to replace and amalgamate two existing doctor’s surgeries, one in Hamble and one in Hound, to serve the existing local population, rather than the brand new facility currently proposed. Secondly, the physical scale of the Blackthorn Centre is substantially smaller than that proposed for the dementia care home, and as such had a much smaller physical and visual impact upon the local gap. And thirdly, this appeal decision was made in 2004 at a time when there was far less development pressure upon the gap and the peninsular as a whole.
82. A site search statement has been submitted in support of the application which details the sequential process that has been followed in considering other sites within the local area. This identifies twelve potential sites which could be suitable for the proposed dementia care home, including the application site. All but the application site were dismissed for varying reasons including being within designated gaps. It is acknowledged that there may well be difficulties in sourcing a suitable site, particularly given the charitable nature of the applicant and their need to ensure funding is used wisely. Nevertheless it is not considered that sufficient evidence has been provided to suggest that the application site is the only or best option within or in close proximity to the defined catchment area for the care home.

Transport and Highway Issues

83. A key concern of objectors has been traffic movements generated by this development compounding the existing problems of congestion along Hamble Lane. Hamble Lane is the main route on and off the peninsular and experiences congestion problems, particularly during the peak morning and afternoon/evening periods. With the construction of more housing at the northern end of the lane and pressure to build elsewhere on the peninsular, there is a very strong feeling amongst residents that further development will only add to the existing problems being experienced. The objections and concerns raised are therefore fully understood.

84. Notwithstanding these concerns, the submitted transport assessment and the consultation response from Hampshire County Council Highways sets out that any increase in vehicle movements associated with the proposed development would be minimal. At a modelled 8 vehicle movements during the AM peak and 12 in the PM peak, this would equate to an increase in 1.8% (AM) and 3.1% (PM) respectively along Satchell Lane and 0.5% (AM) and 0.8% (PM) along Hamble Lane. With such small percentage increases the impact could not be classed as severe, as required by the NPPF in order to substantiate a highway reason for refusal.

85. The applicants also state that they would ensure that staff shift changes take place outside of these peak periods and that staff would be encouraged to take advantage of the regular bus service along Hamble Lane and the nearby Hamble railway station. To offer real alternatives to the use of a car for staff it is possible to condition a travel plan as part of any planning approval should the principle of development be accepted. This can control things such as when shift changes occur and how much on-site parking provision can be dedicated for staff use.

86. The scheme proposes a total of 30 on-site parking spaces, which is the maximum allowed if the development is to meet the BREEAM Excellent standard, together with dedicated ambulance and servicing spaces. No parking would be required for residents given their medical condition and while the facility would provide around 60 fulltime equivalent jobs, it is a 24 hour operation, meaning that the actual number of staff on site at any one
time would be significantly less. This should therefore leave sufficient parking provision for visitors, most of whom would visit outside of peak periods.

87. The current site access is considered to be acceptable to also serve the proposed development and no highway safety or capacity issues have been raised in this respect by Hampshire Highways. The proposals also include an extension of the existing pavement and cycleway along the northern side of Satchell Lane to link to the current vehicular junction with the lane. This will prevent the need for staff and visitors who walk and cycle to pass through the medical centre car park.

88. Whilst acknowledging the strong concerns of locals with regards to traffic generation, evidence has been provided to demonstrate that any increase in vehicle movements associated with the proposed development would be negligible and could not justifiably be used as a reason to refuse the application. There is some scope to encourage staff and visitors to use alternative and more sustainable means of transport to access the site and it is considered that on-site parking provision should be sufficient so as to prevent overspill parking along the access road or within the medical centre car park, both of which are in private ownership and can be subject to parking enforcement.

Residential Amenity

89. In terms of the amenity of neighbouring uses, in particular those residential dwellings which front Hamble Lane, it is not considered that there would be any adverse impact in terms of loss of privacy, light or outlook due to the orientation, relationship and proximity of those dwellings to the proposed development. Some concern has been raised that the balconies proposed could result in overlooking but these would be some distance away from the site boundaries and further still from the rear elevations of the closest properties. Equally, the orientation and distance between windows within the development and those along the northern elevation of the neighbouring medical centre more than meet the usual Council standards required to preserve privacy.

90. As to other issues of amenity, while a large facility with a considerable number of staff and residents, it is not considered that it would result in any unacceptable disturbance to existing residential neighbours or those who use the medical centre. The concerns raised as to noise disturbance from fixed plant on the building could be addressed through suitable acoustic screening. Equally, the concerns raised with regards to the proximity of the adjacent electrical substation to resident’s rooms can be addressed through the orientation and glazing specification of windows, including mechanical ventilation if required.

91. While there would inevitably be a degree of disturbance during construction of the development, this would be for a temporary period and appropriately
worded conditions to protect the amenity of neighbours and minimise disturbance could be applied to any planning approval.

Flooding and Drainage

92. The application site lies within Flood Zone 1 and has been assessed as having a low risk of flooding and as such would be suitable for a more vulnerable facility such as that proposed.

93. Southern Water Services have also confirmed that there is sufficient capacity within the local foul sewer network to facilitate the development, although there is no surface water drainage in the area. However, the submitted flood risk and drainage assessment does set out that the local ground conditions as sufficiently permeable for surface water drainage to be dealt with on site via a suitable SuDS system. This would be a condition of any planning approval and would ensure that surface water run-off rates are no greater than the present greenfield situation and that climate change is also taken into consideration, as well as protection of water quality so as not to impact upon the Solent and Hamble River SAC and SPAs.

Trees and Biodiversity

94. The site is currently used for grazing, bordered on two sides by built development and along its northern boundary by a substantial conifer hedge. It is therefore considered to have very limited habitat and biodiversity potential, a view backed up by the Phase I habitat survey submitted in support of the application and the Borough’s Biodiversity Officer. Equally, the site is not near to any watercourses or known locations of any protected species. The field shelter on site has been assessed for bat roost potential and considered to be negligible, and there was no evidence of other protected species such as badgers.

95. With regards to trees, any present are within the existing boundary planting which would be retained and enhanced.

Sustainability Measures

96. It is intended that the proposed care home would be built to meet BREEAM ‘Excellent’ standard and a pre-assessment estimator report has been submitted to this effect. Meeting BREEAM Excellent is a local planning policy requirement and such an aspiration by the applicant is welcomed and would be a condition of any planning approval for the development.

Land Contamination

97. No information in relation to potential land contamination has been provided. While it is not expected that there would be anything which would prevent development of the site, given the sensitive end use an appropriate assessment is considered prudent. This can be addressed via conditions
requiring a site assessment to be undertaken and any necessary mitigation measures agreed prior to commencement of development.

**Air Quality**

98. The high levels of traffic using Hamble Lane have resulted in issues of air pollution. As such, Hamble Lane is now subject to an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA). Any development which results in additional vehicle movements along Hamble Lane would add to the current pollution issues. While the number of movements associated with the proposed development would be modest, there would be an increase and it is for this reason that the Head of Environmental Health has requested planning obligations towards monitoring and management of the AQMA.

**Environmental Sustainability Conclusion**

99. Despite a number of aspects weighting in the application's favour, such as the good quality design, meeting the BREEAM Excellent standard, having no unacceptable highway or traffic impact, or impact upon drainage, flooding or local biodiversity, the concerns remain with regards to both the physical and visual impact of a development of this size and scale upon a local gap which is already experiencing considerable development pressure. As such the development is not considered to meet this final environmental aspect of sustainability as required by the NPPF.

**Other Material Considerations:**

Submitted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011 - 2029, July 2014

100. Reference needs to be made the Submitted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011 - 2029, July 2014. However very little weight can be given to these policies as, although the Submission Local Plan has not been withdrawn the Council has confirmed that it has decided to prepare a new local plan which will cover the period up to 2036. With regards to this application, the new policies essentially echo those of the current plan and are not considered to affect the recommendation put forward.

**Planning Obligations/Considerations**

101. In accordance with the guidance contained within the NPPF, Saved Policies 101.T and 191.IN of the adopted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review (2001-2011), Policies DM23 and DM37 of the Submission Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011-2029, the Council’s ‘Planning Obligations’ SPD and the requirements of Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Regulations, there is a requirement for developers’ contributions to ensure on and off-site provision for facilities and infrastructure made necessary by the development, or to mitigate against any increased need/pressure on existing facilities. This is in addition to the requisite on-site provision of affordable housing.
102. Contributions / Obligations towards the provision of the following infrastructure have been agreed and would be secured via a Section 106 agreement index linked as per the Planning Obligations SPD and HCC requirements:

- Hamble Lane / Satchel Lane junction improvements, which will be required over time as the junction begins to exceed capacity due to future predicted growth (from development) outlined in the TA;
- Footway works in the local vicinity to further aid sustainable transport;
- Local bus infrastructure improvements, inclusive of elements such as shelter upgrades and Real Time Information screens; and
- Bus service subsidisation as required to ensure sustainable bus travel options remain in the area; and
- Air quality monitoring and management of Hamble Lane AQMA.

103. The projects and measures identified for contribution expenditure will comply with the 3 tests set out in Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy 2010, in that the monies would go towards the projects which are directly related to the development, and are fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the proposed development. The contributions would be index-linked to ensure the contributions rise in line with the costs of providing the identified projects/measures. The obligations sought are necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms and to meet the needs generated by the new residents and the potential impact on existing services and facilities.

104. These contributions have not been secured and this will form a reason for refusal.

Conclusion

105. Although it is accepted that there is an increasing need for this form of specialist residential care, and acknowledged that the proposed development has a number of material considerations which weight in its favour, significant concerns remain as to the physical and visual impact of the development upon the Bursledon / Hamble / Hound Local Gap, which is already under considerable development pressure. The need to protect the identities of these settlements and prevent coalescence is considered to be extremely important because of this, a goal which would not be achieved if the development were to go ahead. The benefits of the scheme and financial constraints of the applicant are acknowledged but this on its own is not considered to be sufficient justification to warrant granting planning approval for a development which would be contrary to policy. As such the application is considered to be contrary to saved Policies 1.CO, 3.CO and 59.BE of the adopted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan Review (2001-2011), as well as Policies S9 and DM1 of the Submitted Eastleigh Borough Local Plan 2011 - 2029, July 2014 and is recommended for refusal.