

35 Declarations of Interest

Members were reminded that they must declare any personal or prejudicial interests they knew they might have in items of business on the meeting's agenda. They were reminded that they would need to repeat their declaration at the appropriate point in the meeting and leave the room if the interest was a prejudicial one.

All Councillors declared a general interest in the planning application as patients of Danbury Medical Centre.

Cllr Berlyn declared a further general interest by virtue of his employment with the NHS Ambulance Service.

Cllr Clacy declared a further general interest by virtue of being acquainted with the named applicant, Mr N Ker.

36 Public Question Time

The Chairman invited members of the public to address the meeting and to ask questions of the Architect and the representatives of the Medical Centre.

In the ensuing discussion it became clear that a small number of members of the public were opposed to any development on the heritage site.

A further minority accepted the proposals and saw the provision of the new medical centre as an important benefit to the village.

The majority of those present were in favour of the proposal in principle but had concerns about the detailed proposals. The following were the main concerns raised and discussed:

- The unexpectedly large and intrusive size of the development, in terms of the footprint and of the third storey, and the number of additional staff proposed;
- Unease about the inclusion of facilities for private dentists and other practitioners, and the impression that the new medical centre was more than simply an expanded replacement of the existing GP practice;
- Concern that the existing pharmacy might move to the new site resulting in a loss of amenity to the village generally;
- The building, especially the third storey, would overlook the properties opposite, and the need for more screening, including evergreen trees, to protect residents' privacy;
- The white colour proposed for the building, which was inappropriate to the street scene;
- The unwelcome increase in traffic on the already busy Maldon Road and greater difficulty for those living opposite in exiting from their own driveways;
- Safety concerns linked to traffic turning into the medical centre and the risks to pedestrians attempting to cross the road; the lack of proposals to counteract these risks, such as a roundabout and/or pedestrian crossing;
- Inadequate parking provision for the increased staff and visitor numbers, and concerns as to how the sharing arrangements with Danbury Mission car park would be managed;
- Concern about the possible future use of parts of the land not yet to be developed;
- The inclusion in the building of a caretaker's flat, which appeared to set a precedent for residential use of the site.

After over an hour of discussion the Chairman drew Public Question Time to a close. He thanked members of the public for giving their views, and reminded them that they could make their own comments on the planning application to Chelmsford Borough Council, either online or by letter.

The meeting was adjourned for 15 minutes at this point

37 Parish Council's response to 08/00601/FUL: Danbury Medical Centre

The Chairman reminded members that their discussion and the comments to Chelmsford Borough Council must relate to material planning considerations.

There was a wide-ranging discussion which covered many of the points raised by members of the public. In particular councillors were concerned about traffic and safety issues; the increased size of the building over the preliminary plans and the addition of a third storey; the colour of the building and its impact on the street scene; the effects of the development on residents living opposite the site; and the future of the remaining part of Hitchcock's Field.

The Council agreed to submit to CBC the comments agreed in the resolutions below.

37.1 General principle:

The Council agreed that it continued to support the location of a new medical centre on Hitchcock's field. Cllr Allen made a formal proposal to this effect which was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that the Parish Council does not oppose in principle the establishment of a Medical Centre on this site.

37.2 Traffic:

A number of councillors shared the concern of members of the public that the existing problems on Maldon Road would be exacerbated and that the current proposals did not address these concerns. Possible solutions were considered, and it was regretted that no-one had been present representing the Medical Centre who could answer questions on the traffic survey.

Cllr Hawkins made a proposal stating the inadequacy of the current traffic proposals and suggesting that consideration be given to a common entrance for the medical centre and Danbury Mission, a roundabout at the entrance and a pedestrian crossing on the A414. The proposal was seconded by Cllr Allen. Cllr Wood proposed an amendment which did not specify any recommendations but requested that all traffic issues be referred to the County Highways Department. The amendment was seconded by Cllr Telling.

Voting on the amendment was equally divided with 7 votes in favour and 7 against. The Chairman used his casting vote against the amendment, which was therefore lost. Voting on the original proposal was 9 in favour, 0 against and 5 abstentions, and the motion was therefore carried.

RESOLVED: that the proposal for dealing with traffic appears inadequate. The Council requests that this be reviewed and consideration given to the following:

- a) a common entrance for the Medical Centre and Danbury Mission;
- b) a roundabout at the entrance;
- c) a pedestrian crossing on the A414.

37.3 Suspension of Standing Orders:

At 10pm the Chairman proposed that Standing Orders be suspended to allow the meeting to continue. The proposal was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that Standing Orders be suspended to allow the meeting to continue.

37.4 Size and bulk of the building:

Members were concerned that the building was larger than in the draft proposals and included a third storey. While some members accepted the medical centre's argument that the size was necessary to allow for expansion of services, others were concerned at the bulk and height of the building in the conservation area.

After discussion, Cllr Hawkins made the following proposal, which was seconded by Cllr Telling: "Whilst we regret that the building has 3 storeys, we accept that this keeps the footprint to a minimum and we feel that is the necessary size."

Cllr Allen proposed the following amendment, seconded by Cllr A Wells: "We have serious concerns about the height of the building being 3 storeys, as the building does not complement the street scene by way of size and bulk. We request that the proposal be reviewed with a view to reducing it to two storeys and the originally-proposed footprint." The amendment was put to the vote and the results were: 7 for the motion, 5 against and 2 abstentions. The amendment was therefore carried and original proposal lost.

RESOLVED: that the Council has serious concerns about the height of the building being 3 storeys, as the building does not complement the street scene by way of size and bulk. We request that the proposal be reviewed with a view to reducing it to two storeys and the originally-proposed footprint.

37.5 Design issues: Car park surface, lighting, building colour, screening:

A query was raised about the proposed tarmac surface for the car parking areas. There was also concern about the effect of the lighting on the area and especially on properties on the opposite side of the Maldon Road. The colour of the building and the amount of screening provided were also discussed. After discussion Cllr Keeler made the following proposals, which were seconded by Cllr Langley:

"1. We note that a tarmac surface is proposed for the car parks. We understood that this is not permitted in a conservation area;

"2. We are concerned about the likely impact of lighting on the residents living opposite and within the conservation area;

"3. We feel that the white colour of the building is inappropriate to the surrounding street scene;

"4. We request that the screening on the front boundary be improved, especially for the winter months, by the inclusion of appropriate evergreen plantings to protect residents opposite the site."

Cllr Hawkins proposed an amendment to item 4 specifying that Conifers should not be used as part of the screening. Cllr Thomson seconded the amendment. Voting on the amendment was 2 in favour, 9 against and 3 abstentions. The amendment was therefore lost. Voting on the original proposals was as follows: 11 in favour, 0 against and 3 abstentions. The motion was therefore carried.

RESOLVED:

a) We note that a tarmac surface is proposed for the car parks. We understood that this is not permitted in a conservation area;

b) We are concerned about the likely impact of lighting on the residents living opposite and within the conservation area;

c) We feel that the white colour of the building is inappropriate to the surrounding street scene;

d) We request that the screening on the front boundary be improved, especially for the winter months, by the inclusion of appropriate evergreen plantings to protect residents opposite the site.

37.6 Permitted development rights:

In order to prevent further development of the medical centre site, Cllr Wood proposed that the Council request that, if the application were approved, permitted development rights be withdrawn. Cllr Allen seconded the proposal, and in voting the motion was carried by 13 votes to 1.

RESOLVED: that, if the application is approved, we request that permitted development rights be withdrawn from the site.

37.7 Future of the remainder of the site:

Members wished to go further to ensure that the part of the medical centre site which was not shown as being used for building or car parking was protected against future development, and to ensure the same protection for the remainder of Hitchcock's Field. Cllr Allen, seconded by Cllr Keeler, proposed that the Council request that the undeveloped part of the site, together with the adjacent part of the field which is in different ownership, be protected from development in perpetuity. The motion was carried by 9 votes to 0, with 4 abstentions.

RESOLVED: that the undeveloped part of the medical centre site, together with the adjacent part of the field which is in different ownership, be protected from development in perpetuity.

37.8 Cllr Bolwell proposed that the Parish Council's Environment Committee be asked to consider whether any further action should be taken through the Borough Council to ensure the protection of the area. This was agreed.

RESOLVED: that the protection of Hitchcock's Field from any further development be referred to the Environment Committee.

38 Closure of meeting

At the end of the discussion and voting the Chairman thanked his fellow councillors for their hard work and the remaining members of the public for their patience. Business having been concluded, he drew the meeting to a close at 10.49pm.

Signed: Chairman

Date:

Planning Application 08/00601/FUL: Danbury Medical Centre

The Parish Council's comments as submitted to Chelmsford Borough Council:

1. The Parish Council does not oppose in principle the establishment of a Medical Centre on this site;
2. We have serious concerns about the height of the building being 3 storeys, as the building does not complement the street scene by way of size and bulk. We request that the proposal be reviewed with a view to reducing to 2 storeys and the originally proposed footprint;
3. The proposal for dealing with traffic appears inadequate. We request that this be reviewed and consideration given to the following:
 - a) a common entrance for the Medical Centre and Danbury Mission
 - b) a roundabout at the entrance
 - c) a pedestrian crossing on the A414;
4. We note that a tarmac surface is proposed for the car parks. We understand that this is not permitted in a conservation area;
5. We are concerned about the likely impact of lighting on the residents living opposite and within the conservation area;
6. We request that the screening on the front boundary be improved, especially for the winter months, by the inclusion of appropriate evergreen plantings to protect residents opposite the site;
7. We feel that the white colour of the building is inappropriate to the surrounding street scene;
8. If the application is approved, we request that permitted development rights be withdrawn from the site;
9. We request that the undeveloped part of the site, together with the adjacent part of the field which is in different ownership, be protected from development in perpetuity.