

DELEGATED OFFICER REPORT



WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Application Number:	251187
Site Address:	281-283, Loddon Bridge Road, Reading, RG5 4BE
Expiry Date:	17 October 2025
Site Visit Date:	26 June 2025
Proposal: Full application for the change of use of 283 Loddon Bridge Road to a dental practice, to be used in conjunction with the existing dental practice at 281 Loddon Bridge Road. Including the addition of an open sided canopy link.	

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Contaminated Land Consultation Zone
Scale and Location of Development Proposals – Major Dev. Location (Earley)
Landscape Character Assessment
SSSI Impact Risk Zones

PLANNING POLICY

National Policy	National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) National Planning Policy Guidance (NPPG)
Core Strategy (CS)	CP1 – Sustainable Development CP2 – Inclusive Communities CP3 – General Principles for Development CP4 – Infrastructure Requirements CP6 – Managing Travel Demand CP7 – Biodiversity CP9 – Scale and Location of Development Proposals
MDD Local Plan (MDD)	CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development CC02 – Development Limits CC03 – Green Infrastructure, Trees and Landscaping CC04 – Sustainable Design and Construction CC06 – Noise CC07 – Parking CC09 – Development and Flood Risk CC10 – Sustainable Drainage TB21 – Landscape Character TB23 – Biodiversity and Development
Joint Minerals and Waste Plan (JMWP)	The JMWP is not applicable to development at this scale.
Wokingham	SS1 – Sustainable development principles SS2 – Spatial strategy and settlement hierarchy

Borough Local Plan Update (LPU)	SS3 – Development within or adjacent to major and modest settlements SS8 – Meeting our employment needs SS17 – Transport improvements CE1 – Design principles for efficient buildings CE2 – Environmental standards for non-residential development CE6 – Reducing energy consumption in existing buildings C1 – Active and sustainable transport and accessibility C2 – Mitigation of transport impacts and highway safety and design C3 – Active travel C4 – Green and blue infrastructure and public rights of way C5 – Parking and electric vehicle charging ER9 – Woodley town centre and Lower Earley district centre H2 – Presumption against residential losses H8 – Conversion and sub-division of buildings FD1 – Development and flood risk (from all sources) FD2 – Sustainable drainage NE1 – Biodiversity and geodiversity NE2 – Biodiversity net gain NE4 – Trees, woodland, hedges and hedgerows NE5 – Landscape and design NE7 – Sites of Urban Landscape Value DH1 – Place making and quality design DH2 – Safeguarding amenity DH4 – Advertisements and signage HC1 – Promoting healthy communities HC2 – Community infrastructure HC7 – Light pollution HC8 – Noise pollution HC10 – Odor, fumes and dust
Other	Borough Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document CIL Guidance + 123 List Sustainable Design and Construction Supplementary Planning Document Woodley Design Statement

PLANNING HISTORY		
Application No.	Description	Decision & Date
961093	Proposed Erection Of Free Standing Sign	Permitted Development 08/10/1996
961429	Proposed Change Of Use Of Residential Room To Dental Consulting Room.	Approved 29/07/1996
050480	Proposed removal of condition 2 of consent 96/63939/F to remove personal occupancy condition and allow use of dental surgery by other dentists.	Approved 14/06/2005
152470	Full application for the proposed erection of a single storey side and rear extension to dwelling.	Approved 20/11/2015

160238	Full application for the proposed erection of a timber clad storage building to replace existing shed.	Approved 23/03/2016
190084	Full planning application for the proposed erection of a storage shed.	Approved 18/03/2019

CONSULTATION RESPONSES

Internal

WBC Environmental Health – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Drainage – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Highways – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Growth & Delivery (Planning Policy) – No comments received
WBC Landscape and Trees – No objection subject to conditions
WBC Cleaner and Greener – No comments received
WBC Ecology – No objection subject to conditions

External

None

REPRESENTATIONS

Parish/Town Council	No comments received
Ward Member(s)	No comments received
Neighbours	One neighbour has commented on this application and their comments are summarised below: - There are existing issues of driveways being blocked and cars parking on the pavement on the layby. An increase in patients attending the practice will exacerbate this situation. <i>Officer comments: This is addressed in the 'Highways Access and Parking Provision' section of the main report below.</i> - Will parking restrictions be introduced to stop people parking across dropped curbs in the area, and to ensure safety on this busy section of road. <i>Officer comments: This is addressed in the 'Highways Access and Parking Provision' section of the main report below.</i>
NHS Integrated Care Board (ICB)	The ICB has advised its 'in-principle' support for this application advising it would add 3 new dental surgeries, boosting capacity for current and future demand, and that the current practice: - holds a large NHS contract with strong performance history and recently commissioned for increased activity, - participates in the Urgent Appointment Scheme to meet government targets.

- will join the Children's Oral Health Improvement Pilot for Wokingham later this year; and
- has already requested ICB approval to vary its premises under its NHS contract.

APPRAISAL

Site Description:

The application site features two properties (nos. 281 and 283) on Loddon Bridge Road, Woodley. No. 281 is currently used as the existing dentist practice, and no. 283 is currently in use as a residential property. The site is located within a predominantly residential area of Woodley, but there is a large industrial estate directly to the east on the other side of Loddon Bridge Road. However, there is significant planting in the form of tall trees and hedgerows on the eastern side of Loddon Bridge Road and these largely obscure views of the industrial estate from the application site.

The submitted existing site plan shows that the existing dental practice at no. 281 only has two parking spaces on the property. However, there is also a cycle stand that has space for 3 no. cycles.



Figure 1: Photograph showing the existing site frontages of nos. 281 (centre) and 283 (right).

Description of Development:

This application seeks permission to change the use of no. 283 Loddon Bridge Road from a residential property to a dental practice, to be used in conjunction with the existing dental practice at no. 281 Loddon Bridge Road. Additionally, an open sided canopy link is proposed between the two properties to allow for covered movement between the two waiting rooms, and this would follow the demolition of the existing car port at no. 283.

The existing dental practice has been an NHS practice since 1957. It is the only NHS practice located in Woodley which currently has over 18,000 NHS patients on its register. The conversion of no. 283 would provide a further 3 dental treatment rooms which will help the practice meet its increasing demand. The practice currently has over 4,000 people on its waiting list, with the current wait time for potential new patients being over 12 months.

Principle of Development:

The National Planning Policy Framework has an underlying presumption in favour of sustainable development which is carried through to the local Development Plan. The Managing Development Delivery Local Plan Policy CC01 states that planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

This application seeks the lawful change of use of No. 283 Loddon Bridge Road from Use Class C3 (Residential) to Use Class E(e) (medical or health services) to facilitate the expansion of an existing NHS dental practice. The key considerations are therefore:

1. The acceptability of changing a dwelling to a community health use; and
2. The resulting loss of a residential unit in the context of Wokingham Borough's housing supply position.

Extended community use

Core Strategy Policy CP2 supports development that contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs. Policy CP2 also states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of an ageing population, particularly in terms of health and wellbeing, also for proposals that meet the requirements of children, young people and families, including the provision of services to meet their needs. The proposed expansion of an NHS dental practice aligns with these objectives by improving access to essential health services within the Borough.

Core Strategy Policy CP3 states that permission will be granted for proposals that: *"Contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities"*. The proposal would enhance the range of health services available locally and reduce the need for residents to travel outside the Borough for dental care, thereby supporting sustainable development principles.

Loss of a dwelling

Policy CP3 also requires that development should not lead to a net loss of dwellings or other residential accommodation or land, unless suitable alternative provision is available. Wokingham Borough currently has a housing land supply of approximately 2.5 years, which is significantly below the five-year requirement set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In this context, the loss of an existing dwelling is a material consideration and weighs against the proposal, as it would exacerbate the shortfall and conflict with the Council's objective to boost housing delivery.

However, the loss of a single dwelling is considered to have **limited weight** in the overall planning balance. While the Borough's housing land supply position is a significant strategic issue, the contribution of one dwelling to meeting housing needs is minimal. The cumulative impact of such losses could be harmful, but in isolation, this proposal is unlikely to materially affect the Borough's ability to meet its housing targets. This harm will therefore be weighed against the benefits of the scheme in the planning balance section of this report.

Principle of Development Summary

The proposal would deliver a clear public benefit by improving access to NHS dental services, which supports Core Strategy Policy CP2 and CP3 objectives for inclusive communities and sustainable networks of community facilities. The loss of a single dwelling conflicts with CP3 and is a material consideration, particularly given the Borough's 2.5-year housing land supply. However, this harm is afforded limited weight in the overall planning balance due to its minor scale. The decision will therefore turn on whether the community benefits of enhanced health provision outweigh the limited harm arising from the loss of one dwelling.

Highways Access and Parking Provision:

MDD Policy CC07 and Appendix 2 of the MDD Local Plan stipulates minimum off-street parking standards and requires that the new scheme retains an appropriate level of off-street parking. Core Strategy Policy CP6 requires developments to provide appropriate vehicular parking, having regard to car ownership, and states that planning permission will be granted for schemes that: "Do not cause highway problems or lead to traffic related environmental problems."

Whilst no objection has been raised from WBC Highways, they have voiced concerns with regards to the shortfall of parking provision on site. According to WBC Parking Standards, Health Centres will require one car parking space per full time equivalent staff member and three parking spaces per consultation room. Regarding the proposed extension of the dentist practice, there will be an additional 3.5 full time equivalent staff (i.e. 3-4 parking spaces), and three additional treatment rooms (i.e. 9 parking spaces).

The submitted existing site layout plan indicates 2 no. parking spaces to the front of the existing dentist practice, and the proposed site layout plan (refer to Figure 2 below) for the whole site shows 5 no. parking spaces to the front. Three new parking spaces are therefore proposed as part of this application, and this is at least 9 spaces short of WBC's Parking Standards which requires at least 12 spaces.

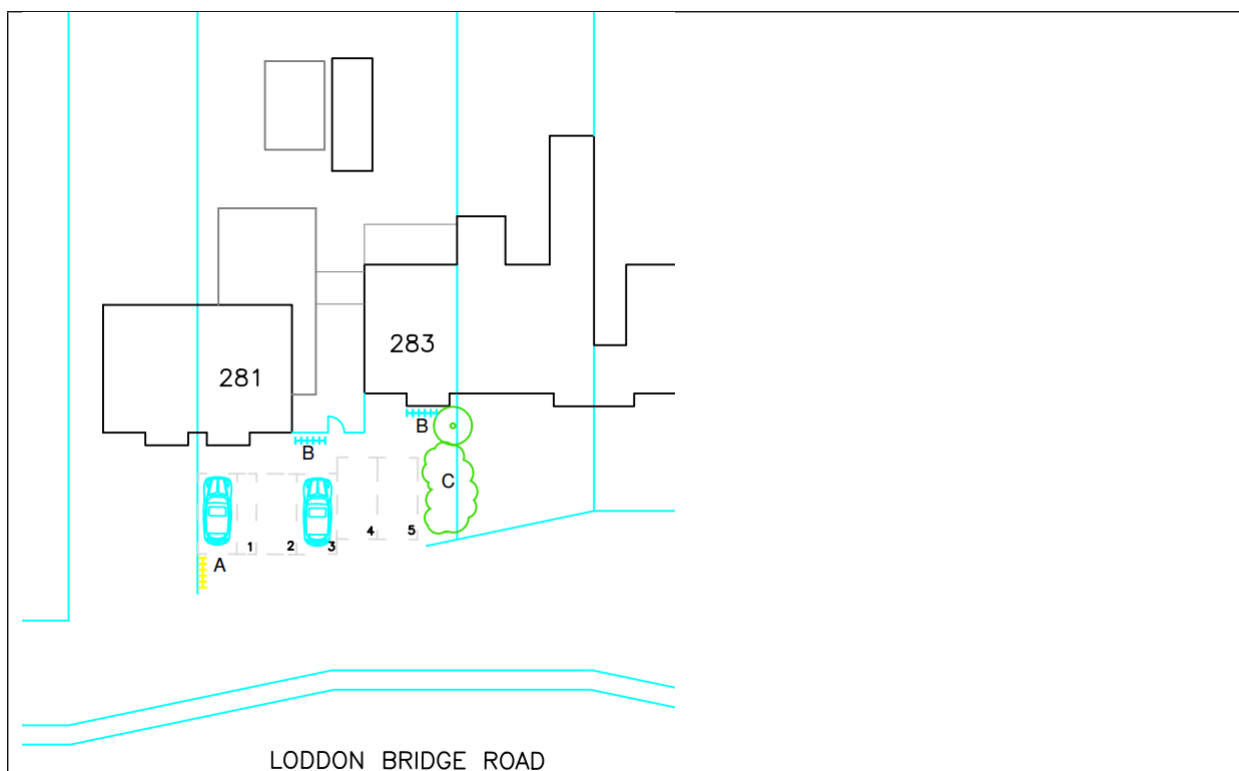


Figure 2: Extract of proposed Site Layout Plan

Discussions were held with the Council's Highways Team and alternative suggestions were discussed. The suggestions included, i) utilising the Highways verge at the front of the property to accommodate more spaces, ii) utilising Highways land off Caldbeck Drive to the rear of the site to provide a small car park, and iii) introducing a Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) on nearby roads where necessary.

However, after further discussions with the Highways Team it was deemed that none of these suggestions were appropriate in planning terms. In terms of i) and ii) above, it is not the role of the LPA to assess alternative proposals and applications must be considered on their merits based on relevant planning policy and other material considerations. A TRO would potentially need to go through public consultation and cannot bind developers or secure financial contributions for the parking mitigation itself. Hence, neither would be necessary, precise or reasonable to warrant imposing conditions or s106 obligations in this instance.

However, following a request for further information from the Council's Highways Officer, a Transport Statement, Parking Management Statement and a Parking Stress Survey have been submitted by the applicant. The submitted Transport Statement highlighted result of a 2015 survey carried out at the dentist practice and found that 66.6% of patients travelled to the practice by car. The vast majority of these patients were able to park on site as the practice operates an electronic booking management system that identifies the patient's mode of transport. This enables the practice to arrange appointments based on the patient's mode of transport, thus enabling them to staffer appointments and allocated times to ensure there will be space to park on site. It is the intention of the applicant to utilize the same electronic booking system for the proposed new practice. The Parking Stress Survey was submitted to assess the

surrounding roads within a 400-metre walking distance of the site to establish parking levels near to the development during the proposed opening hours.

The Parking Stress Survey results demonstrate that Cobham Road, which is located to the south of the application site, and Halstead Close, to the north-west of the application site, are the only roads that reached a parking stress of over 85% at various times through both survey days. Of these two roads, Cobham Road is closest to the application site, and it is recognised that the extension of the practice could add additional parking stress to this road. However, Caldbeck Drive, which is located at the other end of Cobham Road, to the rear of the application site, is at a parking stress level of no higher than 33% on both survey days. Caldbeck Drive is less than a 200 metre walk from the application site, and the survey results indicate that the road is not at a significant parking stress level and there is therefore capacity for further parking along this road. Figures 3 and 4 below demonstrate the difference in parking stress levels between these Cobham Road and Caldbeck Drive.



Figure 3: Google Maps Street View photo of Cobham Road



Figure 4: Google Maps Street View photo of Caldbeck Drive

Additionally, there is a public car park located in the centre of Woodley, next to the Lidl superstore, and this is located less than a 0.5 mile walk from the application site. This demonstrates that there is further parking available within a 10-minute walk of the application site that can be utilised by visitors to the practice. There is also a bus stop 3 mins walk to the north at Headley Road Circle.

Whilst the proposed expansion of the existing dental practice would be unable to comply with the Council's parking standards and therefore represents a less than ideal situation in that respect, the parking available can be better managed through the use of planning conditions.

A Parking Management Strategy (PMS) can include details of how the provided parking spaces will be managed, and how parking, including on local residential streets, will be monitored. The applicant can use the PMS as an opportunity to direct their clients to the nearby residential roads that the submitted parking survey identified as having available capacity.

In addition to the PMS, a condition for a Travel Plan can also be recommended. A Travel Plan would be useful in this context as it will highlight the existing parking provision and constraints, and it can highlight measures to promote sustainable travel. Such measures could potentially include:

- Staff and patient incentives for using sustainable modes (e.g. cycle-to-work schemes, discounted public transport).
- Cycle parking and secure storage.
- Shower and changing facilities for staff.
- Information packs for patients and staff on travel options.

- Appointment scheduling to reduce peak-time congestion (already a part of the existing operation).
- Car sharing schemes for staff.
- Engagement with local bus services to improve access.

It should also include SMART targets and details of monitoring and review for a minimum period of five years.

In summary, the proposal be unable to comply with the Council's parking standards and this is a material consideration. However, this harm can be reduced by virtue to alternative parking locations within the vicinity, nearby bus stops and the imposition of conditions to make the most effective use of available parking. The planning balance will therefore consider this conflict and the limited harm arising from the loss of one dwelling against the community benefits of enhanced health provision.

Character of the Area:

Core Strategy Policy CP3 states that planning permission will be granted for proposals that are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character, together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users, including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life. Policy CP1 of the Core Strategy requires developments to maintain or enhance the high quality of the environment. Core Strategy Policy CP2 aims to ensure that new developments contribute to inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) in order to meet long terms needs.

The only physical changes proposed as part of this application is the installation of an open sided, glass roof canopy that would provide a link between the side of the properties. The canopy would have a maximum height of 2.6 metres, and it is set back from the front of no. 283 by 5.45 metres. To accommodate the canopy, minor fenestration changes are proposed that would see the furthest back ground floor side window of no. 281 being swapped with a door, and the existing side door on no. 283 being pushed further to the rear to be opposite the new door for no. 281. The proposed open sided canopy is set well back from the street scene, would not result in any significant harm to the character of the area.

The application site is located within a predominantly residential area of Woodley. Policy CP2 states that planning permission is granted for proposals that address the requirements of health and wellbeing and also ensures new development contributes to the provision of community facilities. Clinical facilities, such as the existing dentist practice, can commonly be found within residential areas so that they are easy to access. Hence, the proposed expansion of the existing dentist practice into the application site would not cause any significant harm to the residential character of the area. And the proposal therefore demonstrates that it would comply with policies CP1, CP2 and CP3 of the Core Strategy.

Neighbouring Amenity:

Core Strategy Policy CP3 states that development proposals should not result in a detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life.

The only physical change proposed to the buildings is the installation of an open sided canopy to provide a link between the two buildings. The canopy is located to the side of the properties between nos. 281 and 283. The canopy poses no harm to other neighbouring properties as it will not be overlooking, overbearing, or causing a loss of light.

The Council's Environmental Health Officer was consulted on this application and raised concern over potential for noise impacts from dental equipment, increased footfall and vehicle activity, and any proposed mechanical plants (e.g. air condition or extraction systems). This concern was put to the agent/applicant, and they clarified a number of points with regards to equipment, increased footfall and mechanical plants. Following receipt of this further information, the Environmental Health Officer was satisfied that a noise impact assessment would not be required. Overall, the proposed intensification of clinical activities as a result of the proposal would not cause any significant concerns in respect of residential amenity issues over and above that which could be experienced from the existing residential use of the site.

However, to robustly ensure there is no harm to neighbouring amenities the Environmental Health Officer has suggested a condition to limit the operational hours of the dentist practice. Additionally, they have suggested a condition that would require a Construction Management Plan (CMP) to be submitted and this should include limitations for work hours, measure for dust, noise and vibration control, plus responsible site waste storage and disposal. Accordingly, these conditions are recommended.

Flooding and Drainage:

MDD Local Plan Policy CC09 states that all sources of flood risk, including historic flooding, must be taken into account at all stages and to the appropriate degree at all levels in the planning application process in order to avoid inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding. Policy CC10 states that development proposals must ensure surface water arising from the proposed development is managed in a suitable manner.

The application site is located within flood zone 1, and it is at low risk to moderate risk from surface water flooding according to the EA mapping. The Council's Drainage Officer was consulted on this application and they have no objection to the principle of the development, however, they have requested a condition be attached to the permission that would require details of the drainage system of the site to be submitted prior to commencement. Given that the only development proposed is an open-sided canopy link on an area of existing hardstanding, it is considered unreasonable and unnecessary to attach such a condition. Accordingly, the condition is not recommended.

Landscape and Trees:

MDD Local Plan Policy CC03 aims to protect and retain existing trees, hedges and other landscape features as well as existing Green Routes. Core Strategy Policy CP3 aims to create a sense of place in the way buildings integrate with their surroundings including the use of appropriate landscaping.

The application site is located on a road of mature properties under mixed use, set back from the road behind large publicly owned front grass verges. The verges lend important green infrastructure to the houses as many front gardens, including at no. 281, are no hard-surfaced driveways.

The Council's Landscape and Trees Officer has raised no objection to the principle of the proposal. However, given that many of the front verges have disappeared over time to the detriment of the character of the area, and as the proposal will include the removal of some green infrastructure, a condition requiring the submission of a landscaping scheme is recommended by the officer. Given that the submitted site plan indicated some of the planting is to be retained, and given that any of the removed vegetation is not deemed as being significant, it is considered unreasonable and unnecessary to impose a condition requiring the submission of a landscaping scheme. Accordingly, this condition is not recommended.

Ecology:

Policy TB23 of the MDD Local Plan requires the incorporation of new biodiversity features, buffers between habitats and species of importance and integration with the wider green infrastructure network. Policy CP7 states that sites designated as of importance for nature conservation at an international or national level will be conserved and enhanced and inappropriate development will be resisted.

The Council's Ecology Officer has requested a condition to prevent the installation of external to the buildings on the site without the prior written approval of the local planning authority. However, the application site is not located within an area that holds the potential to support bat roosts. Therefore, it is considered that such a condition is unreasonable and unnecessary, and accordingly the condition is not recommended. Whilst the condition is not recommended, to further prevent any unacceptable harm to neighbouring amenities, any external lighting should be designed to prevent light spillage onto neighbouring dwellings. This can be achieved through using appropriate shielding on the lights or using timers or motion sensors where appropriate.

The Council's Ecology Officer has also requested a condition to restrict any further buildings, enlargements or alterations. In this instance, it is not deemed that restricting permitted development rights would be necessary or reasonable given the limited scale of the development proposed, and therefore this condition is not recommended.

Planning Balance and Summary:

Core Strategy Policy CP3 states that: "Planning permission will be granted for proposals that...do not lead to a net loss of dwellings and other residential accommodation or land". The proposed conversion of no. 283 is therefore in conflict

with this policy as the property would be converted to a dental practice and the net loss of a dwellinghouse would occur. However, the existing property could potentially be converted back to a dwellinghouse in the future as the buildings of 283 itself is to be retained. While this is unlikely in the short to medium term, it does offer a future possibility if demand for NHS services declines. Moreover, the purpose of Policy CP2 of the Core Strategy is to ensure that “development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities)” and the proposal is wholly compliant in this respect.

Paragraph 8 of the NPPF sets out that achieving sustainable development means that development should satisfy three overarching objectives in relation to economic, social and environmental benefits.

Economically, the proposed development would enable job creation during the construction period and through employment generated by the expanded practice itself. Given the scale of the proposal, this would be limited.

Regarding the social role, the loss of one residential unit weighs against the scheme. This harm is limited due to the loss of only one dwelling. Another negative social impact of the scheme would be the shortfall in terms of the parking provision, and this could potentially lead to an overspill of parking to surrounding residential roads. However, as stated earlier in this report a combination of alternatives and conditions are recommended to lessen those potential impacts.

Whilst the combined loss of one unit and parking shortfall would have a negative social impact, significant weight must be attributed to the expansion of an NHS dental practice. The expansion would provide much needed dental care facilities in an area where it is recognised there is limited provision. The expansion of the practice holds significant weight in the planning balance.

Regarding the environmental role, the expansion of the practice will result in more visitors travelling to the site by private motor vehicle. However, the site is well connected to a surrounding pedestrian network, cycle routes and public transport, and this means that those attending the practice do have reasonable alternatives to private motor vehicle especially given the limited amount of on-site parking available. These alternatives can be promoted within the requirements of conditions.

Overall, it is considered that the significant weight must be attributed to the provision of the dental practice, and the benefits associated with the scheme are deemed to demonstrably outweigh the harm from the loss of one residential dwelling and the parking shortfall outlined above.

Conclusion:

For the reasons outlined above, the proposed conversion of the existing property to a dental practice and the erection of an open-sided canopy link is acceptable subject to conditions and should be approved.

The Public Sector Equality Duty (Equality Act 2010):

In determining this application, the Council is required to have due regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex or sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that persons with protected characteristics as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application and there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL):

When planning permission is granted for a development that is CIL liable, the Council will issue a liability notice as soon as practicable after the day on which the planning permission first permits development. Completing the assumption of liability notice is a statutory requirement to be completed for all CIL liable applications.

RECOMMENDATION

Conditions agreed:	Yes/No/Not required
Recommendation:	Approve
Date:	12 November 2025
Earliest date for decision:	21 July 2025

Recommendation agreed by: (Authorised Officer)	
Date:	27/11/25

PLANNING CONSTRAINTS/STATUS

Insert where relevant