



**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
CONSTRUCTION OF SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION TO NO.
257 FOLLOWING DEMOLITION OF EXISTING PORTACABIN
BUILDING, CHANGE OF USE OF GROUND FLOOR OF NO. 255 TO
ADDITIONAL DOCTORS' SURGERY ACCOMMODATION AND
ALTERATIONS TO FIRST FLOOR TO PROVIDE A TWO BED FLAT
255-257 WHITLEY WOOD ROAD, READING RG2 8LE**

**PLANNING STATEMENT
DECEMBER 2025**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The application site comprises a pair of semi-detached properties situated towards the south-western end of Whitley Wood Road near its junction with Whitley Wood Lane (Engineers Arms roundabout). The site lies within the defined settlement area of Reading (Whitley).
- 1.2 No. 257 Whitley Wood Road comprises a doctors' surgery (South Reading Surgery) which currently provides 5 no. consulting rooms and a treatment room and is operated by the South Reading and Shinfield Group Medical Practice (which also runs the Shinfield Health Centre). No. 255 Whitley Wood Road is a three-bed house.
- 1.3 The proposals comprise the construction of a single-storey rear extension to No. 257 following the demolition of the existing portacabin at the rear of the property, change of use of the ground floor of No. 255 to provide additional doctors' surgery accommodation, and alterations to the first floor of No. 255 to provide a two-bed flat. 4 parking spaces would be retained to the rear of No. 257 served by the existing side access. Additional parking (3 additional spaces) would be provided to the front of both properties. Cycle parking (8 spaces) would be provided within the parking area to the rear of No. 257 and an internal cycle cupboard is proposed for the two-bed flat.

2.0 Relevant National and Local Plan Policies

National Policy

- 2.1 One of the three main sustainable objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) (NPPF) is to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities by meeting current and future needs and supporting communities' health, social and cultural well-being.
- 2.2 Section 8 of the NPPF seeks to promote healthy and safe communities. Paragraph 96 states that planning policies and decisions should enable and support healthy lives, through both promoting good health and preventing ill-health, especially where this would address identified local health and well-being needs and reduce health inequalities between the most and least deprived communities.
- 2.3 Paragraph 101 of the NPPF states that significant weight should be placed on the importance of new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure (which includes health facilities) when considering proposals for development.

The Development Plan

- 2.4 The statutory development plan for the purposes of S38(6) of the P&CPA 2004 and S70(2) of the T&CPA 1990 is the Reading Borough Local Plan adopted 4 November 2019.
- 2.5 Policies most relevant to the application are:

Reading Borough Local Plan

Policy CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy CC7 Design and the Public Realm

Policy CC8 Safeguarding Amenity

Policy CC9 Securing Infrastructure

Policy EM1 Provision of Employment

Policy H7 Protecting the Existing Housing Stock

Policy TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Policy OU1 New and Existing Community Facilities

Supplementary Planning Documents

Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

3.0 Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

- 3.1 As noted in section 1, No. 257 Whitley Wood Road is an existing and well-established doctors' surgery which has operated from the property since 1992 or nearly 35 years (planning permission PL/90/1173 for change of use from residential to a doctors' surgery with single storey extension and associated car parking was granted in November 1990 and planning permission PL/94/0540 for use as a doctors' surgery with provision of four car parking spaces was granted in January 1995).
- 3.2 The portacabin at the rear of the building, which provides additional consulting rooms, was granted temporary permission for three years in July 2006 (PL/06/0581) and again in October 2009 (PL/09/1091) but the portacabin has remained on site since the latter permission expired on 2 October 2012 (i.e. more than 13 years ago) and is therefore immune from enforcement under the 10 year rule and lawful.
- 3.3 Policy OU1 (New and Existing Community Facilities) states:
- 'Proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site. Proposals for on-site intensification of important facilities, such as schools and healthcare uses, will be supported, subject to other policies in the plan'.**

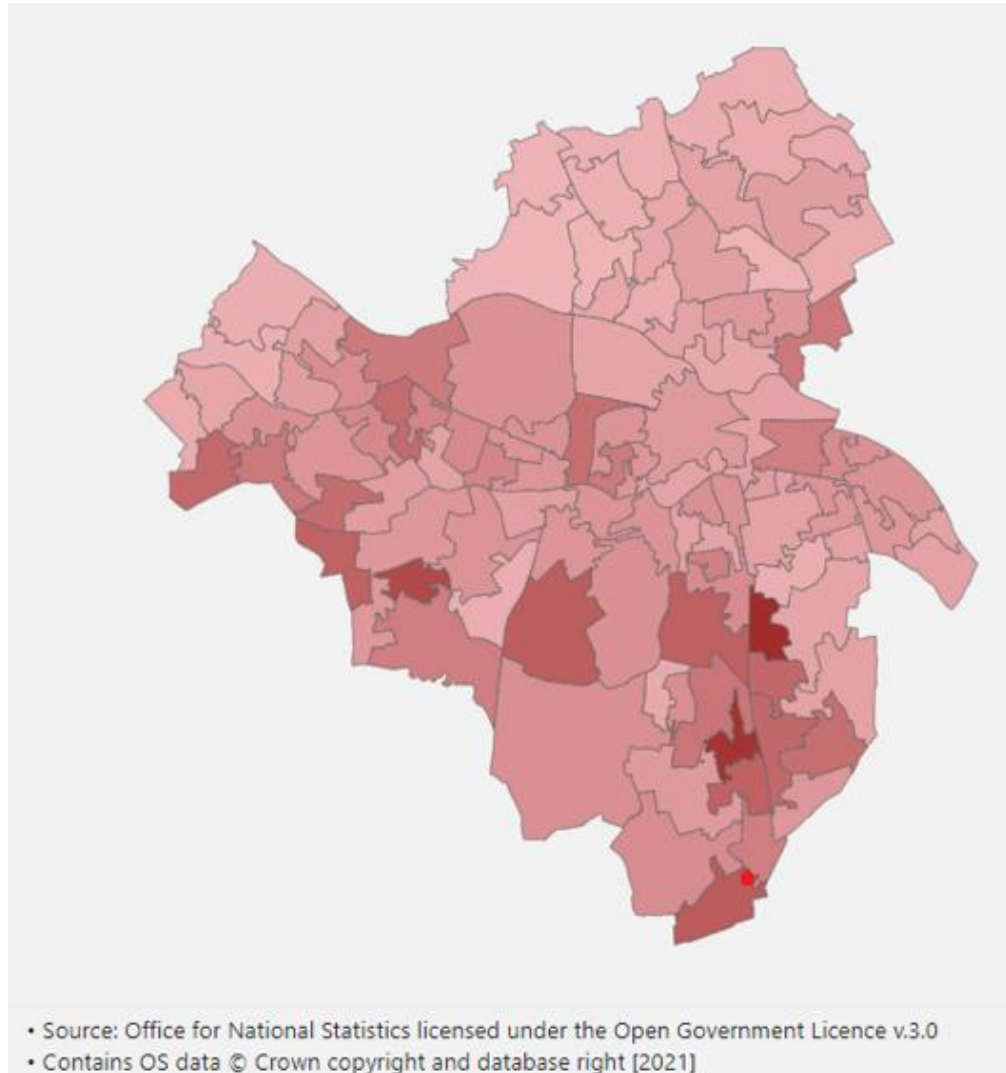
- 3.4 The proposals would support the existing use of the building as a surgery, and as such the proposals would help to enhance the community asset in line with the objectives of Policy OU1.
- 3.5 The proposals would also support the underlying objectives in the supporting text to the policy at paragraphs 4.7.1 and 4.7.3 which note that the provision of sufficient good quality community facilities is crucial to ensuring that Reading is a place in which people want to live and continue living and that the range and quality of facilities serving Reading's communities should be improved and retaining important facilities will be essential.
- 3.6 Local Plan paragraph 4.7.4 acknowledges that
- “Given the dense, built-up nature of Reading and the lack of appropriate new sites, it is inevitable that some of the Borough’s community facility needs will have to be met through intensification of the use of existing sites”.**
- 3.7 South Reading and Shinfield Group Medical Practice has been searching via local agents for alternative larger premises for several years but has been unsuccessful in securing an appropriate alternative site that would meet their needs within the catchment area.
- 3.8 Because of the lack of alternative sites, it is therefore necessary to rely on extending into the adjacent property to meet the future needs of the local community. I note the Long Barn Lane Surgery at 22 Long Barn Lane, Whitley (which serves the adjacent catchment area to the north) is similarly a converted former dwellinghouse, adjacent to other residential properties, which had to significantly expand on its existing site on three occasions to meet local needs (see planning permissions PL/17/0069, PL/17/1134 and PL/21/1117).
- 3.9 The Practice has prepared a Statement of Need which is submitted with the application. This highlights that the Surgery serves an area of higher deprivation. It notes that the Council’s online profile of the Borough identifies that parts of the South Reading area (including the catchment area for the

Surgery) now include Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) which fall within the most deprived 10% nationally.



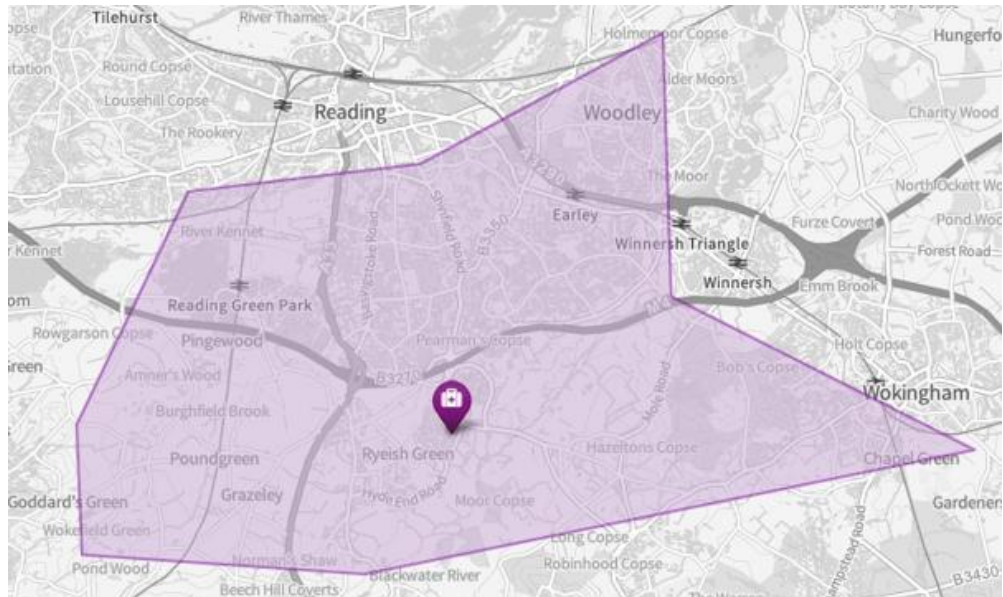
Ward map of the Borough

- 3.10 Office of National Statistics (ONS) data on deprived areas mapped for the Borough (see below) shows the various 'hotspots' of more derived areas which demonstrates greater deprivation in the South Reading area and specifically the southern part of Whitley, which comprises the main catchment area for South Reading Surgery (location shown with a red dot):



- 3.11 The Whitley area has historically relatively poor provision of primary care services. The demographic in this area is demanding and high users of NHS services. This has been evidenced by numerous work streams over last few years during the time of the CCG plus including (frequent users work, NEL and A&E attendance data etc.)
- 3.12 The proportion of older people (aged 65+) in the Borough increased by 17.2% between 2011 and 2021 and is predicted to increase by 40% between 2018 and 2043. This will clearly place additional demands on the public health sector.

- 3.13 The Statement of Need notes a 2019 Health Needs Assessment by Archus which highlights significant projected growth in list sizes for local surgeries. The anticipated growth rate for South Reading Medical Practice is 11.3%. This growth cannot be accommodated in the current premises.
- 3.14 The Practice's list is currently open for new patients despite all the pressures it faces because it is not allowed to close their list. The Practice has a combined list size of 11,600 patients across its two sites of South Reading Surgery and Shinfield Health Centre.



Indicative plan of Practice catchment area (includes Shinfield Health Centre)

- 3.15 Currently South Reading relies heavily on the Shinfield Health Centre site for providing services to the Whitley population. However, because of the significant planned population growth in neighbouring Wokingham Borough, Shinfield Health Centre will not be able to accommodate both its own local population and the demands from South Reading. It is therefore imperative that the South Reading Surgery is expanded to meet forecasted future needs of the local community.
- 3.16 The Statement of Need explains that since the Practice was first established on this site in 1992 their patient list has grown from 600 to nearly 6,000 patients.

The premises have become a significant constraint and are no longer fit for purpose. The lack of space and modern facilities impacts the patient experience and creates substantial hurdles for staff recruitment and retention. There are only five consulting rooms at South Reading surgery (one for every 1,200 patients) and one small treatment room, all of which are undersized by NHS Health Building Note standards. As a result, the team hot desk most of the time. Two of these consulting rooms are in a Portacabin. These rooms are not insulated and so get very cold in the winter and the water pipe freezes at times. There is no space for management, meetings, group consultations or any other modern GP commitments. Due to premises constraints, the Practice is also unable to grow and attract new partners and investment.

- 3.17 The Statement of Need also explains how the proposals accord with NHS local and strategic primary care and estate objectives. It notes the proposal will improve patient experience in the surgery by: (1) improving the estate conditions which is leading to dissatisfaction of patient experience, and (2) improving access.
- 3.18 The Practice has now received approval for Legacy Capital Funding for this project from the NHS (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board). A letter of support from Julie Dandridge, Associate Director – Primary Care Infrastructure, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board, dated 1 December 2025 is submitted with the application. This reaffirms the importance of the project to the NHS. It notes that the current Premises are inadequate to provide modern healthcare facilities and the ICB consider that the best solution for primary healthcare in this area of deprivation is the project described above which will require such a planning application. The letter makes it clear that the funding offer is dependent on the relevant planning permission for the project being granted.
- 3.19 Given the demonstrable need for additional surgery accommodation to meet identified local community needs I conclude that the principle of the development is acceptable.

Housing Policy H7

- 3.20 Policy H7 (Protecting the existing housing stock) states that planning permission will not be granted for any loss of residential accommodation or land unless there are exceptional circumstances. Planning permission will not be granted for a net loss in the number of residential units or gross floor area. The supporting text at paragraph 4.4.56 notes there may be exceptional circumstances where a loss of a limited amount of general residential would help to meet other key identified needs.
- 3.21 The proposal involves the change of use of the ground floor of No 255 Whitley Wood Road to provide additional surgery accommodation and the conversion of the first floor to provide a 2 bed flat. There would be a net loss of about 49m² of residential floor area but importantly there would be no net loss in the number of residential units and only a minor loss of one bedroom (changing a 3 bed unit to a 2 bed unit).
- 3.22 In terms of the planning balance, it is considered the benefits of providing additional doctors' surgery accommodation to meet identified local community needs should be afforded significant weight in accordance with national policy at paragraph 101 of the NPPF on the importance of new, expanded or upgraded public service infrastructure including health facilities. The proposal does not result in a net loss in the number of residential units. The loss of one bedroom is considered to result in low harm.
- 3.23 Overall, it is considered the public benefits resulting from the expanded surgery provision constitute exceptional circumstances of the type envisaged by Policy H7, whereby a loss of a limited amount of general residential (one bedroom) would help to meet other key identified needs (local community GP health facilities). The proposals therefore comply with Policy H7.

Design, character and appearance

- 3.24 Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires all new developments to be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and

appearance of the local area in terms of layout, landscape, density, scale and architectural detail and materials.

- 3.25 The proposal involves the replacement of the existing portacabin to the rear of No 257 with a new purpose-built single storey extension. The siting of the new extension is broadly in the position of the existing portacabin and it would have similar dimensions. The extension is not visible from the public realm and would not result in any material change to the character and appearance of the area. The replacement of the portacabin with a purpose-built extension using materials to match the main building will provide design and visual benefits. There would be no significant changes to the buildings as viewed from the street. The surgery would continue to be accessed from the front of No. 257. The existing entrance to No. 255 would be retained to serve the upstairs flat. On this basis, I consider the development complies with Policy CC7.

Residential amenity

- 3.26 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to ensure new developments do not cause a detrimental impact on living conditions of occupiers of existing residential properties and acceptable living conditions for future occupiers in terms of privacy and overlooking, sunlight and daylight, outlook, noise and disturbance, dusk, fumes etc.
- 3.27 The proposals involve extending the surgery into the ground floor of No. 255 to provide additional accommodation. In numerical terms the proposals will increase the size of the surgery by 2 additional consulting rooms (from 5 consulting rooms and 1 treatment room to 7 consulting rooms and 1 treatment room). In the context of the existing surgery this is not a significant increase and it is not considered it would result in a material increase in noise or disturbance, noting there is no additional car parking to the rear of the site, the parking area has been kept away from the neighbouring garden to No. 253 Whitley Wood Road and the surgery extension will be accessed from No. 257 not No. 255. The replacement extension is single storey and broadly of the same dimensions and in a similar position as the existing portacabin to be

removed and therefore will not result in any material change in terms of residential amenity. The Surgery opening hours are not proposed to be changed: 8:00am - 6:30pm Mondays to Fridays (late evening Thursdays to 8:00pm), once a month Saturdays 8:00am-12noon and Sundays closed.

- 3.28 The proposed 2 bed flat would comply with the relevant space standards in terms of overall unit size and bedroom sizes. The flat would be dual aspect and the habitable rooms would receive sufficient natural light. There would be no material change in the extent of overlooking from first floor rear habitable room windows to the neighbouring garden as these are existing bedroom windows so no change. The proposal include private amenity space for the flat well in excess of the Council's 25m² standard.
- 3.29 I conclude that the development complies with Policy CC8 and relevant space standards and amenity standards.

Highway and parking considerations

- 3.30 Policy TR3 (Access, traffic and highway related matters) requires proposals involving a new or altered access onto the traffic network to be assessed in terms of the effect on safety, congestion and the environment. The proposal retains the existing vehicular access to the side of No. 257 Whitley Wood Road serving the parking area of 4 spaces to the rear of the property. There is no proposed increase in the number of spaces and therefore it is not expected there will be any material change in the use of the existing access. Widened dropped kerbs will be required to serve an additional 3 spaces in the forecourt of Nos. 255 and 257.
- 3.31 Policy TR5 (Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging) requires new developments to provide car and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of the location to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport. The Council's parking standards (2011) are maximum standards. The application site lies within Zone 3 (Secondary Core Area). The proposal involves an additional 2 no. consulting rooms. The Council's parking standards

require a maximum of 2 parking spaces per consulting room. The proposal includes 3 additional parking spaces within the forecourt areas for the surgery and therefore complies with and does not exceed the maximum standards. The plan also shows an EVCP to the front of No. 257 and a further EVCP to the rear of the building.

- 3.32 The Council's parking standards require a maximum of 2 parking spaces for a 3 bed house and 1.5 parking spaces for a 2 bed flat. No. 255 Whitley Wood Road currently has a single off-street parking space. This is retained for the proposed 2 bed flat. The theoretical shortfall is therefore reduced slightly (by 0.5 space).
- 3.33 Previous sections have explained that currently some of the GP health needs of Whitley residents are being accommodated at the Shinfield Health Centre because of the lack of space at South Reading Surgery. This means that local residents are having to make the journey typically by car to Shinfield. The Practice has undertaken a travel survey of patients using South Reading Surgery which is submitted with the application. This shows that some 56% of patients walked to the Surgery and about 30% drive their own car. Thus if additional accommodation can be provided at South reading surgery through the proposed extension so that local residents no longer have to travel by car to Shenfield the majority of additional patients are likely to walk to the surgery. This is a sustainability benefit which weighs in favour of the proposals.
- 3.34 The travel survey is based on 61 responses from a total of 265 appointments booked during the survey week. This equates to a 23% response rate. If 18 surveyed patients used their own car to travel to the surgery, then on a pro rata basis this suggests a total of about 78 patients per week arriving by car, or 14 patients per day (over the 5½ days the Surgery is open) . All surgery appointments are pre-booked. The Surgery is open for 10½ hours on weekdays. On this basis, it seems likely that there are rarely more than 2 or 3 patients' cars at any one time. There are no on-street parking restrictions in Whitley Wood Road (except for double yellow lines at junctions). There is also on-street parking available in the lay by immediately opposite the site. Thus

there is ample unrestricted on-street parking immediately outside the premises available for patients in the event that on-site parking is fully used. However, given the likelihood of only 2 or 3 patients' cars at a time the demand for parking appears to be low in this particular case. This is consistent with observations during site visits and from Google streetview images. Parking associated with the existing Surgery does not appear to be a local issue.

- 3.35 The Surgery is within 50 metres of a bus stop served by the Reading Buses buzz 9 bus service and which connects Central Reading with Green Park Station via the Royal Berkshire Hospital and Whitley Wood, running hourly on weekdays and Saturdays.
- 3.36 The Council's cycle parking standards require a minimum of 1 space per 2 staff and 1 stand per consulting room. The travel survey indicates that in this instance walking is a far more likely means of travel to the Surgery than cycling (only 1 of the 61 responses). However, the proposals make provision for 7 cycle spaces (2 at the front and 5 at the rear of No. 257) for patients in accordance with the 1 space per consulting room standard and 5 cycle spaces to the rear of No. 257 for staff (in excess of the 1 space per 2 staff based on 10 expected staff).
- 3.37 On this basis, the development complies with Policies TR3 and TR5.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- 3.38 The proposal does not result in the loss of 25m² or more of existing habitats and is therefore exempt from the mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain requirement. The proposed extension is sited on existing hard surfaced areas. The majority of the parking area to the rear of No. 257 is on the existing hard surfaced parking area. A part of the fourth space plus its circulation area would be created from the existing garden to No. 255 but this area amounts to less than 25m².

Trees

- 3.39 No existing trees would be affected by the proposal. There are trees located at the southern end to the rear of No. 257 but the proposals do not involve any new development anywhere near these trees. The 3 no. parking spaces to the rear of No. 257 are contained within the existing hard surfaced area so there would be no change that would affect these trees.

Flood risk

- 3.40 The site is in Flood Zone 1 and not within an identified Critical Drainage Area and therefore it complies with Policy EN18.

4.0 Planning Balance and Conclusion

- 4.1 The proposals would provide much needed additional accommodation for the existing South Reading Surgery to meet the identified GP health needs of the local community which is within an area of higher deprivation. The South Reading Surgery is operating to full capacity noting that when it first opened in 1992 its list contained 600 patients and it now has 6,000 patients.
- 4.2 The Practice currently relies heavily on capacity at its sister surgery at Shinfield Health Centre meaning that some Whitley residents have to travel by car to Shinfield. However, both premises are now coming under increasing a capacity pressure due to population growth. The provision of additional consulting rooms and other improved facilities at the South Reading Surgery will enable it to serve Whitley residents who currently have to drive to Shinfield and therefore offers sustainability benefits.
- 4.3 The project has now received approval for Legacy Capital Funding from the NHS (Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board). The NHS notes that the current Premises are inadequate to provide modern healthcare facilities and the ICB consider that the best solution for primary healthcare in this area of deprivation is to extend the existing Surgery.

- 4.4 The proposal retains a 2 bed flat on the first floor of No. 255 Whitley Wood Road. Thus, whilst there is a net loss of one bedroom and some residential floorspace there is no net loss in the number of residential units. In terms of the planning balance, it is considered the benefits of providing additional doctors' surgery accommodation to meet identified local community needs should be afforded significant weight in accordance with NPPF, para. 101. Overall, it is considered the public benefits resulting from the expanded surgery provision constitute 'exceptional circumstances' of the type envisaged by Policy H7, whereby a loss of a limited amount of general residential (one bedroom) would help to meet other key identified needs (local community GP health facilities).
- 4.5 The proposals have been designed to ensure no unacceptable impacts on neighbouring residents. The Surgery will continue to be accessed from the front of No. 257 and the parking area is contained largely behind No. 257, as with the existing parking area, and away from the neighbouring property of No. 253. The proposals provide additional parking provision (including EVCPs) and new cycle provision for staff and patients to accord with the Council's standards.
- 4.6 Overall, the proposal is considered to be sustainable development which meets an important community need without unacceptable harm to the area or neighbouring properties and therefore planning permission should be granted.

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30 December 2025