
ITEM	OUT/2007/6181	WARD Pensby and Thingwall
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Location: Land at Warren Nurseries Thingwall Road East Thingwall Wirral CH61 3UY

Proposal: Outline application for the development of a One Stop Primary Care Centre, including new vehicular access off Thingwall Road East and ancillary car parking

Applicant: Wirral PCT/W Wirral Group Practice c/o Taylor Young Limited Vanilla Factory 39 Fleet Street Liverpool L1 4AR	Agent: Mr Mark Cawood Taylor Young Limited Vanilla Factory 39 Fleet Street Liverpool L1 4AR
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Development Plan allocation and policies: NATIONAL PLANNING GUIDANCE

PPS1 - Delivering Sustainable Development, January 2005.
PPG2 - Green Belts, January 1995.
PPG13 - Transport, March 2001.
PPS22 - Renewable Energy, August 2004

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN CONTEXT

Regional Spatial Strategy (RPG13, March 2003)

Policy DP1 - Economy in the Use of Land and Buildings.
Policy DP3 - Quality in New Development.
Policy SD3 - Key Towns and Cities outside the North West Metropolitan Area.
Policy SD5 - The Green Belts
Policy UR2 - An Inclusive Social Infrastructure
Policy UR4 - Setting Targets for the Recycling of Land and Buildings
Policy ER13 - Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency

Wirral Unitary Development Plan (February 2000)

Policy URN1 - Development and Urban Regeneration
Policy GB2 - Guidelines for Development in the Green Belt
Policy GR5 - Landscaping and New Development
Policy NC7 - Species Protection
Policy LAN1 - Principles for Landscape
Policy LA7 - Criteria for Development at the Urban Fringe
Policy TRT1 - Provision for Public Transport
Policy TR9 - Requirements for Off-Street Parking
Policy TR12 - Requirements for Cycle Parking
Policy TR13 - Requirements for Disabled Access
Supplementary Planning Document SPD4 - Parking Standards, June 2007.

Planning History: OUT/2003/6894/D - Erection of two story health centre. Refused 07.01.2004.

Representations and consultations received: Representations:

PRE-APPLICATION REPRESENTATIONS

Correspondence from PCT asking Planning Department for pre-application advice and comments on The Warrens as the preferred site and on alternative sites at Townshend Avenue, Irby; site adjacent to Irby Village Community Centre; land to the north of Thingwall Road, Irby; and the West Kirby Concourse. Planning Department outlining planning process and planning considerations and highlighting in particular the difficulties with such developments in the Green Belt and emphasising the need for sound supporting evidence when submitting such applications, especially in terms of alternative site selection and the requirement for very special circumstances to be shown by the applicant in order to justify the conflict with national Green Belt policy.

Patient Focus Group requesting discussion and attendance at public meetings from the Council about finding a location for a new health centre.

Correspondence from PCT to Council listing sites considered and reasons not able to proceed, highlighting how a new unified centre complies with NHS Policy, and the PCT's Estates Strategy for future developments to be undertaken by the PCT, in particular the urgent need of the West Wirral Group Practice, (this being an amalgamation of the existing 3 GP practices at Irby, Thingwall and Heswall) to find a suitable location for a new medical centre to provide a better service.

Report of the Deputy Chief Executive of Wirral Borough Council and Director of Corporate Services addressing Cabinet meeting of 5th October 2005 (Minute 247 refers) stating:

Background of the PCT seeking a new site for a combined surgery and raised at Joint Wirral Council: PCT Property Working Group; identification by the PCT of The Warrens site as the PCT's preferred option; issues pertaining to Council ownership and use of the site; Planning Implications, particularly the need to show very special circumstances to develop in the Green Belt and the need for a Travel Plan.

Update to members given on 28th June 2006 Cabinet meeting (Minute 25 refers) stating: that the PCT have provided information requested, in the PCT's view justifying the development in the Green Belt and outlining consultations and a Transport/Traffic Survey undertaken; that in the PCT's view, the Warrens site was the only suitable site identified by the PCT; that the Social Care and Health Select Committee considered a report which stated that a horticultural training social enterprise was still viable if the PCT built on part of the site; that Director of Regeneration has not declared the land surplus; that the Planning implications remain that very special circumstances will have to be demonstrated to build in the Green Belt; that Wirral Green Belt Council expressed concern over use of the site for this purpose.

Correspondence between the Wirral Society and Wirral Green Belt Council and Chief Executive of Wirral Borough Council, whereby the Wirral Society and Wirral Green Belt Council supported a request from Ben Chapman M.P. that the Council not sell or lease any Green Belt land for development in contravention of its' policies; and encouraged a more sustainable site for the Health Centre within the existing urban envelope. Chief Executive replied ensuring that the need to protect the Green Belt is extremely important to Wirral Council, that it has and will continue to assist the PCT to find a suitable site and that the planning issues and policies will be put before members.

Correspondence from PCT to Wirral Borough Council in 2005 outlining space requirements and a potential design for the new centre on The Warrens site with car park requirements and an illustrative sketch of an E Shaped potential design; also requesting that the site be available to be leased for the purposes of the One Stop Shop Primary Care Centre. Deputy Chief Executive replied stating that he will formally progress the PCT's formal request to lease part of the Warrens Nursery site.

A Mr Marsden wrote to the Chief Executive of Wirral Borough Council stating that alternative non-Green Belt sites must be looked at exhaustively, for example the Pensby Hotel and redundant schools in Pensby; it is inappropriate for the Council to act as landowner or make declarations as to whether a lease would be granted before planning permission is given; application must be called in. Chief Executive assured Mr Marsden of the importance of maintaining the Green Belt and that no decision will be taken other than in a proper and thoroughly professional way.

Heswall Society stated that it would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt and asked detailed questions relating to the exact nature of the PCT's proposals.

Correspondence to Ben Chapman M.P. explaining that the PCT has concluded that the Pensby Hotel site would not be large enough to accommodate its needs.

Letter from the Deputy Chief Executive of Wirral Borough Council to Stephen Hesford M.P. advising of a report being prepared on alternative uses for The Warrens Nursery and enclosing a Minute of the Cabinet discussion of 5th October 2005 whereby Cabinet resolved that the decision on the matter be deferred pending further information.

Taylor Young Consultants submitted a report making the case for The Warrens site and providing an overview of the range of documents to be produced in the forthcoming planning application, covering issues over alternative sites, Transport and Access, Amenity, Ecology, and illustrative material.

Letter from Martyn Smith Planning Consultants to Practice Manager at GP Group from 2004 outlining the case for omitting the Warrens site from Wirral's Green Belt; warning of difficulties in achieving consent in the Green Belt; stating that Council has to consider an approach if land is redundant; and outlining a potential strategy for achieving planning permission for The Warrens site.

Strutt and Parker made the following points about the benefits of the alternative site at Townsend Avenue:

- It is within the main search area; is screened by trees; would have minimal impact on views from Irby Road and A540; good visibility at access; development would be an improvement at the site and supported locally; site is sufficient size; landowners confirmed interest; would not look out of place next to large buildings; it is most suitable Green Belt site; easily accessible by bus; Warrens site is on congested roads; Townsend site is nearer local shops than Warrens; and is not entirely green field; "resident consultation" meetings were flawed and objections ignored, and information given is partial in favour of Warrens site.

- They comment on the pre-application transport and traffic assessment report for the Warrens:

It is entitled "Planning Application Support Document" and is thus not independent; Patients are on the whole closer to Townshend site than the Warrens; bias shown against Townshend site and for the Warrens site, in terms of visibility, access by bus and vehicular access and by rounding traffic figures up for Townshend and rounding down for Warren and significantly more traffic (40% more) at the Warrens than Townshend site, shown in report.

Ben Chapman M.P. for Wirral South submitted pre-application comments from Hilary Ash of Wirral Wildlife, who stated the following:

- Provided the substantial mature tree belt is retained, no serious objection can be raised on wildlife grounds.
- Severe concerns on sustainability grounds, as it would increase car use.
- Existing services should be upgraded, to retain local services for local needs.
- Not central to area served, thus less easily accessible for many.
- Site is on Green Belt land, other sites such as school sites may be more sustainable.
- Experience at the Treetops in Eastham where 2 surgeries merged into 1 should be looked at.
- Smaller surgeries offer a better, more personal service.

REPRESENTATIONS RAISED POST SUBMISSION OF THE APPLICATION

Objections received from local residents.

There were individual letters of objections received from residents of the following 129 addresses, with some households producing more than 1 objection, these where:

1 Richmond Way, Thingwall, 1 Sunningdale Drive, Thingwall, 1 Thingwall Road East, Thingwall, 1A Thingwall Road East, Thingwall, 10 Cestrian Drive, Thingwall, 10 Heathbank Avenue, Irby, 10 Marine Park, West Kirby, 10 Newlands Road, Bebington, 10 Thingwall Drive, Irby, 102 Dingwall Drive, Greasby, 11 Egerton Drive, West Kirby, 11 Mostyn Avenue, Lower Heswall, 11 Penrhyd Road, Irby, 11 Thingwall Road East, 12 Hazel Grove, Irby, 12 Greenheys Road, Irby, 12 Leachway, Irby, 12 Mill Road, Thingwall, 12 Sussex Close, Pensby, 12 Windermere Road, Prenton, 120 Eleanor Road, 122 Ridgewood Road, Pensby, 13 Inveresk Court, Noctorum Lane, Birkenhead, 13 Riverside Walk, Neston, 137 Thingwall Road, 14 Copeland Close, Pensby, 14 St Austell Close, Moreton, 15 Long Meadow, Gayton, 15 Thingwall Road

East, Thingwall,15 Thingwall Road East, Thingwall,157 Thingwall Road, Irby,16 Loomsway, Irby,17 Copeland Close, Pensby,17 Fleet Croft Road, Upton,17 Poulton Road, Bebington,17 Torrington Road, Thingwall,17 Village Court, Thingwall,181 Arrowe Park Road, Upton,185 Irby Road,19 Parkway, Irby,2 Briar Avenue, Irby,2 Kirby Park Mansions, Ludlow Drive, West Kirby,2 Kylemore Way, Heswall,2 Lynwood Drive, Irby,2 Menlo Avenue, Irby,2 Mill Yard, Thingwall,2 Moorland Close, Heswall,2 The Close, Irby,20 Kentmere Drive, Pensby,20 Old Greasby Road, Upton,20 Thingwall Drive, Irby,200 Irby Road, Pensby,21 Thingwall Road East, Thingwall,22 Gibbs Court, Dane Close, Irby,22 Glenwood Drive, Irby,23 Gibbs Court, Dane Close, Irby,23 Pensall Drive, Pensby,23 Thingwall Drive, Irby,23 Thingwall Drive, Irby,24 Hazel Grove, Irby,24 Primrose Hill, Port Sunlight,24 Torrington Drive, Thingwall,26 Thingwall Drive, Irby,27 Bridgenorth Road, Irby,28 Greenheys Road, Irby,28 Torrington Drive ,29 Mill Hill Road, Irby,3 Mill Road, Thingwall,30 Sparks Lane, Thingwall,31 Bridgenorth Road, Irby,31 Coniston Road, Irby,31 Thingwall Road East, Thingwall,32 Hazeldende Avenue, Thingwall,32 Torrington Drive, Thingwall,33 Thingwall Road East, Thingwall,34 Torrington Drive, Thingwall,35 Cross Lane, Bebington,35 Marlston Avenue, Irby,36 Fairview Way, Pensby,38 Glenwood Drive, Irby,384 Pensby Road, Pensby,39 Thingwall Road East, Thingwall,41 Ambleside Close, Thingwall,41 Thingwall Road East, Thingwall,43 Thingwall Drive, Thingwall,44 Torrington Drive, Thingwall,45 Hazel Grove, Irby,46 Thingwall Drive, Irby,5 Briar Avenue, Irby,5 Cavendish Road, Birkenhead,5 Upton Court,5 Thingwall Road East, Thingwall,5 Village Court, Irby,52 Torrington Drive,54 Gwendoline Close, Thingwall,56 Coombe Road, Irby,57 Thingwall Road East,58 Torrington Drive, 585 Pensby Road, Thingwall,591 Pensby Road, Thingwall,60 Parkhill Road, Prenton,61 Birch Avenue, Upton,62 Torrington Drive, Thingwall,63 Heyville Road, Higher Bebington,64 Torrington Drive, Thingwall,65 Milner Road, Heswall,66 Torrington Drive, Thingwall,67 Thingwall Road, Irby,68 Charmond Drive, Irby,7 Christophers Close, Pensby,7 Gibbs Court, Dane Close, Irby,8 Graham Road, West Kirby,8 Heywood Boulevard, Thingwall,8 Lyndhurst Road, Thingwall,8 Mill Road, Thingwall,86 Glenwood Drive, Irby,86 King's Drive, Irby,9 Marine Park, West Kirby,9 Parkway, Irby,9 The Crescent, Pensby,9 Thingwall Road East, Thingwall,Andy Green "Irby", "D. Rimmer", "Greenwood", 12 Halton Crescent, Greasby, Millers' Hey, 80 Mill Hill Road, Irby,Minicopse Cottage, 81A Saughall Massie Lane, Upton,Radnor, 7 Elm Road, Irby,The Lodge, Barnston Road, Barnston,The Warrens Cottage,Thingwall Road East, Thingwall,"Windrush", 34 Oldfield Way, Heswall.

The many individual points of objection can be summarised through grouping them into broad categories, for greater clarification. While the points raised may be relevant to more than one category, it is considered that they are presented here in the most appropriate category. After this list of broader categories, there follows a list of other more specific points of objection not grouped into the general categories.

Loss of the site's amenity value as a Green Belt location that provides a valuable recreational function.

There were a total of 198 individual points made objecting to the loss of the site's amenity value as a Green Belt location that provides a valuable recreational function. The specific points that were made were as follows (some points made more than once):

- The role of parks and open spaces are diverse, and this land has high value for a future role as open space and providing facilities for sport and recreation.
- The applicants have not demonstrated that proposals are widely supported or that the land is surplus to requirements, contrary to the Government's Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) Note 17 that relates to Open spaces, Sport and Recreation.
- Proposal is contrary to PPG2 (Green Belts) and Wirral Unitary Development Plan (UDP) policies relating to Landscape, Heritage and Conservation, Sport and Recreation, Urban Greenspace, Trees and New Development, Development at Countryside Recreation Sites and Nature Conservation.
- The park has already been built upon following the building of the hospital itself.
- The park has declined following loss of rangers' facilities.
- No further parkland or greenspace should be built upon.
- Detrimental change in character of area.
- Reduction in aesthetic quality of area.

- Park is used for leisure and recreation, and should remain as such.
- Green Belt is being increasingly encroached upon.
- If nursery is no longer to be used, site should revert to parkland.
- This site has only been used for agricultural purposes in the past.
- It is local, regional and national policy not to build on Green Belt land.
- The public is able to walk on proposed site and do so regularly, contrary to what the applicants have stated.
- A longstanding footpath is located on the site.
- It is in direct contradiction of policies GB2 and GB3 of the Unitary Development Plan or Policy on Local Agenda 21.
- If this is approved, further expansion is likely.
- Loss of view for residents opposite
- Hazel Blears has said that the Government categorically supports the protection of the Green Belt.
- The countryside is beneficial to mental health.
- A Community Claim has been registered, reflecting public access over 20 years or more.
- Arrowse Park is the largest park on the Wirral.
- Land was gifted by Lord Leverhulme for use as a park, not for this development.
- We are mere custodians of the park.

Loss of the valuable flora and fauna on the site.

There were a total of 81 individual points made objecting due to the loss of the valuable flora and fauna on the site. The specific points that were made were as follows (some points made more than once):

- There are many and varied trees on site of horticultural merit.
- The site is an established and varied wildlife habitat.
- There are valuable and endangered species present on site, e.g. barn owls, sparrowhawks, badgers, foxes, bats, newts, field voles, and many species of trees not found elsewhere on Wirral.
- The neighbouring Arrowse Country park is home to many species of trees, woodland birds and butterflies and pond life.
- Wirral's biodiversity plan has targets to conserve bats and barn owls and both are present on the site.
- Hedgerows and an impressive meadow would be lost.
- There is an Arboretum on site, containing many rare and unusual trees, that represents the most diverse collection the Council owns.
- The Arboretum should be preserved, irrespective of whether the proposal goes ahead or not.

Other more suitable sites are available for this development.

There were a total of 92 individual points made objecting on grounds that other more suitable sites are available for this development. The specific points that were made were as follows (some points made more than once):

- There were very many objectors who made the point that the Pensby Park Primary School site would be a more suitable site because it would lead to no irreversible damage to the Green Belt or loss of wildlife or detract from the character of Wirral. This was by far the most mentioned potential alternative site.
- Other more suitable sites include: Landican Cemetary, Pensby Wood, Fishers Lane, land opposite Irby Village Hall, Puddydale in Heswall, Kwik Save site in Heswall, 2 building plots next to Thingwall surgery.
- The Warrens site is not central to the 3 surgeries it would replace, meaning greater travelling for patients.
- There have been many new builds in the 3 areas recently, eg many flats and the Marks and Spencer store in Heswall.
- The Pensby Park surgery in Fishers Lane is more centrally located.
- Pensby Primary School is a more appropriate site.
- Plenty of brownfield sites were clearly available, given the amount of other development in the areas.
- Sites where local schools are to close are preferable.
- The applicant has not attempted to purchase non-Green Belt sites because they

would be more expensive.

- Existing surgeries could be extended or modernised or the Arrowe Park Hospital site could be built upon.
- Local policy is to locate these types of development in town centres and where there is good access for users, and The Warrens is neither.
- The new site is outside of the catchment areas for the existing surgeries.

Traffic problems around the site.

There were a total of 129 individual points made objecting on grounds that the development would lead to traffic problems around the site. The specific points that were made were as follows (some points made more than once):

- There would be increased traffic on already congested and dangerous roads and junction.
- Traffic on Thingwall Road has increased threefold in the last 7 years, and there have been extra traffic lights installed and fatal incidents nearby. This development would lead to extra traffic lights and more danger.
- More residents would travel to the surgery by car than at present, due to the peripheral location, increasing traffic.
- Extra traffic from deliveries to the centre.
- The roads accessing the development are already busy and dangerous.
- Merseyside Police cite this as one of the most dangerous roads on the Wirral.
- Traffic from Thingwall corner may find it easier to park on a slip road opposite the site, causing problems for residents.
- It would be dangerous for pedestrians crossing Thingwall Road East.
- HGV traffic has been redirected onto Thingwall Road East recently already.
- Increased parking difficulties in the area.
- Heavy traffic on narrow access road would be dangerous.
- The greater use of disabled parking bays would take up more land, as would staff parking and goods vehicle spaces.
- Patients will have to cross a busy road to get to bus stops to travel back to Heswall, Pensby and Irby, which could be dangerous, particularly for disabled people.
- There have been so many accidents on this stretch of road, and this will make it worse.
- Increased car fumes bad for health.
- Visibility is poor for proposed access.
- Traffic from Heswall and Pensby may use Whaley Lane.
- The proposal is in conflict with local policy TRT3 - Transport and the Environment, policy TR9 - Requirements for Off Street parking, and policy TRT1 - Provision for Public Transport.
- Parking restrictions are likely to be placed on nearby roads.
- A broken white line currently indicates that there is a road safety hazard by the proposed access point.

Negative effects upon the surrounding local communities as a result of the closure of their local surgeries.

There were a total of 30 individual points made objecting to the direct negative effects upon the local communities as a result of the closure of their local surgeries. The specific points that were made were as follows (some points made more than once):

- There would be considerable inconvenience caused for patients of the 3 surgeries that would close, particularly those who find it difficult to travel such as elderly and disabled users.
- People shouldn't have to drive or take public transport when unwell or on medication.
- Pharmacies and other local small businesses would lose business and jobs could be lost.
- Surgeries contribute to the local communities, and their loss would cause them to deteriorate.
- Closure shows disregard for patients and public.
- Loss of amenity for local residents.
- Irby village would be particularly affected.
- This would rip the heart out of Irby and Thingwall.
- As the site is on the periphery but not served well by public transport, this is bad for the elderly and vulnerable.

Environmental sustainability

There were a total of 11 individual points made objecting on environmental sustainability grounds. The specific points that were made were as follows (some points made more than once):

- The trees and green area should be kept as they contribute to stopping climate change.
- Increase in car use is environmentally damaging, through greater carbon emissions.
- Security lighting will use up electricity.
- More tarmac will lead to less land for surface water to drain into.
- It is ironic that those who exhort people to go green are those who would destroy the environment.

Points of objection querying statements, petitions, consultations and pronouncements made in support of the application

There were a total of 23 individual points of objection querying statements, petitions, consultations and pronouncements made in support of the application. The specific points that were made were as follows (some points made more than once):

- The petition in support submitted by the PCT does not mention the actual proposed location as being The Warrens, and so signatories may in fact oppose the use of The Warrens site itself.
- Some of the sheets in the petition specifically mention "The Warrens" and some do not.
- Signatories were misled as to the nature of the site at present.
- Petition is not in favour of this application as it was collated in 2005.
- People who have signed have stated that they did not have a realisation of what they were signing for.
- Patients may have signed petitions in favour out of loyalty to their doctors.
- Doubts are raised over Stephen Hesford's petition and pronouncements that 90% of Pensby residents are in favour of the development, as he has no evidence.
- Applicant has issued publicity that is biased and partial.
- The applicant's transport consultants have misrepresented the number of bus routes that serve the site as they counted both directions separately, and 3 of the services listed run simultaneously.
- The PCT claims to have consulted with local residents, but this has not happened.
- The submitted Design and Access Statement contains many errors, including errors relating to road names and speed restrictions, which leads to its' reliability being called into question.
- The Green Belt issues have not been dealt with sensitively and professionally, as stated by Mr Hesford.
- The Patient Focus Group evidence is not representative.
- The 2 meetings held locally in Irby Village Hall do not constitute a proper consultation process.
- Liverpool and Warrington PCTs have undertaken meaningful consultation and found that local people want local facilities.
- The appraisal of alternative sites appears to be woefully inadequate.
- There are doubts cast on the PCT's reasons for not pursuing the Townshend Avenue site, especially the traffic survey, and it is alleged that the PCT simply looked at the alternative sites without taking them seriously.
- Local Wirral News Group article on a new limited liability partnership for health practices was not published in the Heswall edition.

Other points of objection

For the following list of other points of objection that have been made, each point has been raised only once unless indicated otherwise:

- There were a total of 5 individual points made objecting on grounds that the development would lead to an increase in anti-social behaviour, particularly unruly behaviour, vandalism, attraction of drug users and there could be theft of drugs.
- The road improvements are an unnecessary expense.
- Local residents should be compensated.
- There were a total of 2 individual points made objecting on grounds that a similar

application has already been refused, the decision should be the same.

- Studies have shown that smaller and more local surgeries are to be preferred.
- Detrimental effects upon house values.
- There were a total of 3 individual points made objecting on grounds that Liverpool Council has reversed its' decision to build large health centres, similar to that now proposed.

Representations in favour

Stephen Hesford M.P., the Labour Member of Parliament for Wirral West stated that the Planning Committee must find in favour of this application because:

- There is no other site available.
- Over 6 years of looking, 22 other sites in the area proved to be unusable. The Warrens site is the only option.
- The site is relatively well screened making visual impact of a health centre unobtrusive.
- The plans reveal a sensitive and effective model for dealing with parking and other traffic issues (reducing disturbance etc to a minimum).
- The Warrens is not virgin greenbelt and has long-been in use.
- The proposal would help to preserve the site because at present it is falling into disuse (due to the running down of the nursery) and is now prone to youths using it in an anti-social manner.
- The local community needs the new health facilities.
- The 3 current surgeries are becoming unfit for purpose and are illegal in the sense that they do not comply with the Disability Discrimination Act (and they cannot be made to comply).
- The new health centre would provide extra facilities, including minor surgery, phlebotomy, diabetes clinics, chiropody and x-rays.
- It is Government policy that people should be able to access health services nearer to their homes.
- The above 4 points promote social inclusion for those with disabilities and raise the quality of life and personal well-being of patients generally.
- The facilities at the 3 surgeries are so inadequate that they are finding it difficult to recruit new GPs.
- The 2 extensive surveys involving some 15,000 homes point out that 9 out of 10 local people want the new surgery at the Warrens.
- It is wrong to assert: that the Warrens will be damaged; that there is another site available; that there is no need to re-provision the existing facilities; that the Warrens site is part of Arrowe Country Park; that many people are against this planning application.
- Thingwall surgery, for example, is inaccessible for disabled people and mothers with prams.
- As this is an outline application it demonstrates a cautious and considered approach. The actual design and layout can, therefore, be subject to further extensive discussion.
- The Council Cabinet has already taken a decision in principle to sell or lease the site in question to the PCT for the purpose contained in this application.
- There is recent reasonably local precedent for this type of development. A similar development of a new health centre on greenbelt was given the go-ahead and was not referred to or called-in by the Government Office North West.

Letters in support of the application were received from residents of the following 12 addresses, some of which sent in more than one letter:

14 Glenwood Drive, Irby, 16 Tower Road North, Heswall, 18 Tower Road North, Heswall, 213 Pensby Road, Heswall, 26 Hillfield Drive, Pensby, 48 Mill Hill Road, Irby, 493 Pensby Road, Thingwall, 530 Pensby Road, Thingwall, 7 Harrock Wood Close, Irby, 7 Lynwood Drive, Irby, 79 Pipers Lane, Heswall, Sunfold, Pipers Lane, Heswall.

There were 18 points made highlighting the need for a new facility due to the unsuitability of the existing premises. The specific points that were made were as follows (some points made more than once):

- There is an overriding social need for this facility for nearly 15,000 patients.
- Premises with adequate parking are long overdue.
- The existing 3 buildings are unsuitable for alteration.
- The 3 existing premises are unsuitable and there is an overriding case for comprehensive and modern facilities with disabled access.
- Lack of privacy in existing premises.
- Thingwall surgery is almost impossible to access for patients with disabilities.
- New facilities needed for patients with sight and hearing impairments.
- New facilities needed for staff as rooms are too small.
- Poor facilities prevent recruitment of GPs to the area, leading to health care difficulties.
- For 7 years every new doctor has only agreed to join the existing practice on the basis that they will soon be able to move to more appropriate premises, but after 7 years this is wearing a little thin. As such, the future of the practice hangs on this decision.
- More space is required for minor surgery and blood sampling and vaccinations

There were 5 points made stating that there is an absence of any other suitable sites for the development.

There were 11 points made stating reasons why site proposed is suitable. The specific points that were made were as follows (some points made more than once):

- The Warrens site has been disused for a long time.
- The site is in an excellent position and has good access.
- Location would be within easy reach for a large proportion of the practice patients.
- Ideal location as over 8,000 of West Wirral Group Practice patients live in the vicinity of Thingwall corner.
- Location is near bus stops.
- Safe vehicle access could be achieved by locating the entrance away from the junction with Pensby Road.
- This section of road has had very few accidents.
- Visual impact would be minimal due to screening from trees.
- Design could be environmentally sensitive and enhance the environment in which it is situated.

PETITIONS

West Wirral Group Practice submitted a petition with 2,736 signatories in favour stating: "We the undersigned are fully supportive of the proposal to build a Primary Care Health Centre for our community on part of the land at The Warrens site on Thingwall Road East, using green belt land.

We now want our councilors and planning officers to give us their full support in helping to move the proposed development forward."

A total of 497 of the forms were returned not in favour.

West Wirral Group Practice submitted a petition with 2,273 signatories in favour stating: "We the undersigned are fully supportive of using Green Belt land for the building of a new Health Centre for our community if no other sites are available. We now want our councilors and planning officers to give us their full support in helping to move the proposed development forward. We now want our councillors and planning officers to give us their full support in helping to move the proposed development forward." Within this petition, some of the sheets specifically mention "The Warrens" as an example of Green Belt land, and some of the sheets do not mention The Warrens site.

The Friends of Arrowe Country Park submitted a petition in opposition to the development, stating that it was collated through doorstep canvassing and that very few of those approached were in favour. There were 321 signatories, and the petition stated: "We, the undersigned, call on Wirral Borough Councillors, to conserve, 'The Warrens', part of Green Belt Arrowe Park land, for community leisure use, of rural nature, and in particular to oppose the notion of development of this land for the erection of a health centre, thereby resulting in destruction of habitat, in contradiction to WBC's own bio-diversity policy. We oppose any destruction of Green Belt, and

vigorously are opposed to the loss of this verdant habitat, supportive of specific plant and wildlife."

The Friends of Arrowe Country Park and "Irby Village Anti-Health Centre Group" submitted a petition in opposition to the development, stating that it was collated through doorstep canvassing and that very few of the residents in this specific Irby catchment area who were approached were in favour of having their GP services at Thingwall. There were 528 signatories, and the petition stated: " We, the undersigned, being immediate residents of Irby, and committed to saving our village character and life, hereby register our complete rejection of any proposal to merge our village surgery with others, in a 'one stop shop' multi-surgery health centre, and in particular, reject the notion that patients in need of seeing their doctor, should be expected to travel out of the village."

Resident of 67 Oldwood Road, Pensby, objected on grounds that existing surgeries should be left where they are, reducing need to travel, and submitted a petition with 13 signatories objecting on traffic safety and congestion grounds.

A petition with 118 signatories was submitted with lead petitioner Mr D Hall of 86 Kings Drive, Irby, opposing any development for any purpose other than horticultural use.

Ben Chapman, M.P. for Wirral South constituency set out objections made by constituents:

Alternative sites not in Green Belt must be available; this would set an undesirable precedent in the Green Belt; No adequate presentation of a counter case has been made; access difficulties.

Friends of Arrowe Country Park objected on the following grounds:

Loss of part of Arrowe Country Park; loss of Green Belt; loss of wildlife habitat for a number of species; loss of unique arboretum; a Community Claim has been registered on this piece of land; peripheral location of site; hazardous implications for traffic; assessment of open space and proper consultation locally, as required by PPG17, has not been carried out; other more suitable sites are available, particularly the Pensby Park Primary School site. Further evidence submitted in support of their objections was as follows:

- Three Wirral Borough Council tourist maps showing the Warrens site as part of Arrowe Country Park.
- A local newspaper article covering the opposition to the super-surgery (submitted from Friends of Arrowe Country Park and Warrens Campaign).
- A national newspaper article making a case against 'super surgeries'.
- Photographs showing recently developed site where Thingwall surgery could have expanded, a barn owl chick and field voles, attractive seasonal views of the site.
- Publicity literature produced by Friends of Arrowe Country Park against the development.
- Minutes of a full Council meeting of 18th December 2006, with Minute 76 highlighted at points 1 and 4 as follows:
 - "Council condemns the action taken to cease activity at the Warrens Nursery", and "Council resolves that immediate steps be taken to secure the continued use of The Warrens site for horticultural purposes and prohibits the sale of any land or other assets associated with The Warrens, or their movement off site, without the express permission of the Cabinet, until such a time as Council has approved the future of The Warrens site."
 - An invitation to a public forum from West Wirral Group Practice and Bebington and West Wirral PCT from 2004 with the following text highlighted: "We propose that the new health centre should be as close as possible to the areas served by our three existing surgeries, and "We also have to face the fact that any move we do make will mean some patients will have a slightly longer journey."
 - Various maps showing the site now, in the past and in relation to other potential sites.
 - Committee report of refused application OUT/2003/6897/D for a two storey health centre in Pensby Wood.
 - A DVD containing Community Statements about the development.

Wirral Parks Friends Forum objected on the following grounds:

Further encroachment onto parkland; loss of Green Belt; loss of wildlife habitat; loss of unique arboretum; land has high visual amenity value and future potential role for Sport and Recreation; no needs survey of local needs for parkland and recreational facilities or survey of all patients has been undertaken as required by PPG17. As such development does not confirm with local Wirral UDP policy on Protection of Urban Greenspace; Protection of Landscape; Sport and Recreation; Nature Conservation.

Wirral Society objected on the following grounds:

Loss of Green Belt; loss of some of Arrowe Country Park; peripheral location for catchment area and greater car use; alternative Primary School site should be properly considered. There has been an increase in volume of local traffic and an increased emphasis on the Green Belt since the previous application was refused, principally on these grounds.

Barnston Conservation Society objected on the following grounds:

School closure site could be used instead; site is within a mile of Arrowe Park Hospital that offers same facilities; road is very busy and extremely dangerous.

Strutt and Parker, planning consultants, objected on the following grounds:

The Townshend Avenue site should be looked at properly, but applicants clearly favour the Warrens site; process of elimination has not been conducted thoroughly; new premises should be central to the 3 existing practices; removal of arboretum; exacerbation of existing traffic congestion; more suitable sites available if Green Belt is to be used; local residents could claim rights of access as Warrens has been used for recreation and access for over 20 years.

Wirral Footpath and Open Spaces Preservation Society objected on the following grounds:

No special circumstances which would warrant over-riding the normal rejection of any application to build on Green Belt land.

Irby, Thurstaston and Pensby Amenity Society objected on the following grounds:

Loss of Green Belt; poor accessibility.

The Bromborough Society objected on the following grounds:

Loss of Green Belt; poor accessibility due to peripheral location; sites of school closures are preferable; less personal service offered in a larger centre; vehicular access and parking would be problematic.

The Heswall Society objected on the following grounds:

Harm to Green Belt; sandstone boundary wall has value and is a clear marker of start of Green Belt; the transport case is overplayed by the applicants; a local site of school closure is preferable, particularly as residential development would not be an option due to Council planning policy.

Wirral Green Belt Council objected on the following grounds:

Loss of Green Belt and special circumstances are not proved; other viable non-Green Belt sites have been, and will be available; peripheral location of site; public do not favour large medical centres; publicity has been heavily weighted in favour of the development.

Campaign to Protect Rural England objected on the following grounds:

Loss of Green Belt; site is within Arrowe Country Park; site is peripheral to catchment area and other more central options are now becoming available.

Wirral Wildlife objected on the following grounds:

If approved, condition should be added to ensure recommendations in Section 5 of Ecology Report is carried out, and further research on "green roof" be undertaken; approval would set a dangerous precedent; school closure sites should be considered instead; potential damage to trees onsite; Sustainable Urban Drainage methods should be applied; more central site is desirable on grounds of sustainability.

Merseytravel made following comments:

Wished Council to be assured traffic can be accommodated on local highway network, and that bus services would not be impeded; requested developers formulate and implement a Full Travel Plan; asked for appropriate arrangements for dial-a-ride services; good walking routes to bus stops should be created and developer should fund enhancement of bus facilities.

The Open Spaces Society objected on the following grounds:

No special circumstances demonstrated for development to proceed on Green Belt land or in Arrowe Country Park; alternative sites outside of the Green Belt should be revisited; particularly recently closed schools; assessment of whether the open space is surplus to local requirements and consultation should be undertaken in line with PPG17.

CONSULTATIONS:

Director of Regeneration (Housing & Environmental Protection): no objection.

Director of Technical Services (Traffic Management): no objection.

Director of Technical Services (Highway Maintenance): no objection.

Natural England: no objection. Natural England is not aware of any statutory sites of nature conservation importance that would be significantly affected by the proposed planning application. It may, however, affect wild birds and bats, which are statutory protected species. Therefore, it is recommended that appropriate and enforceable planning condition(s) be attached to mitigate and protect the highlighted species.

Environment Agency: no objection subject to the informative notes attached to this recommendation.

Directors comments:

PROPOSAL

The proposed development is for an OUTLINE planning application submitted by Wirral Primary Care Trust (WPCT) and West Wirral Group Practice (WWGP) for development of a One Stop Primary Care Centre (PCC) on part of the Warrens Nursery site, off Thingwall Road East, Thingwall. All matters of detail (Layout, Siting, Access, Appearance and Landscaping) are reserved for subsequent approval, although the application is accompanied by indicative material demonstrating how these details could potentially be achieved.

The wider Warren's Nursery is a horticultural centre. The land on which the development is proposed forms part of this and was previously used as a demonstration garden. It is not therefore considered as previously developed land.

The development proposes the construction of a two storey building along with a new vehicular access and ancillary car parking and landscaping. The accompanying plans illustrate two alternative options for the location of the single new vehicular access point.

The development aims to consolidate three existing doctors' surgeries (at Thingwall, Heswall and Irby), which is considered to allow a wider range of health services, in a more efficient and effective manner, from a purpose designed high quality building.

A previous outline application (OUT2003/6894/D) on the same site, with all matters reserved apart from siting and means of access, was refused planning permission in January 2004, for the development of a two storey health centre. The reasons for refusal were:

1. The Site lies within the Green Belt and the development proposed would conflict with the principles of Green Belt Control, the Wirral Unitary Development Plan and with guidance set out in the Department of the Environment's Planning Policy Guidance Note 2. The Local Planning Authority does not consider that there are any very special circumstances in the present case to justify overriding Green Belt Policy.
2. The proposed eastern access by reason of its location near to the junction of Pensby Road and Thingwall Road East would lead to an unacceptable reduction in road safety and an unacceptable effect on the free flow of traffic.
3. Insufficient information on traffic generation and the internal car park layout has been submitted to enable the Local Planning Authority fully to consider the impact of the proposal on highway safety and the free flow of traffic.

The planning issues section of this report refers to these earlier reasons for refusal and addresses them in relation to the current proposal. The policy context section responds to additional policy issues.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

The land is designated as Green Belt in the adopted Wirral Unitary Development Plan. In accordance with national policy in PPG2 - Green Belts and Policy GB2 of the Wirral UDP, the construction of new buildings inside a Green Belt uses which are for the purposes of agriculture, forestry, cemeteries, or sport and outdoor recreation are considered appropriate. The proposed development is for none of these appropriate uses; and, therefore represents a departure from the Wirral UDP. It is therefore for the Council's Planning Committee to decide if the applicant has sufficiently demonstrated exceptional circumstances to override Green Belt policy.

If it is considered that exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated then the application will need to be referred to the Government Office for the North West. This is due to the fact that the proposed development is a departure on land designated as Green Belt and also because the land is owned by the Council.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The application site is located to the north of Thingwall Road East and encompasses approximately 0.92ha of land. It is relatively rectangular in shape and was formerly intensively cultivated as part of the wider Warrens Nursery site. Although outside of the application boundary, the wider site comprises 9 glasshouses and 5 polytunnels plus 2 mesh tunnels on the site, as well as a brick building housing potting areas, offices and a classroom.

The wider Warrens Nursery site extends to the east of the application site, with its vehicular access road, to immediate east. On the opposite side of the access is a detached stone faced private residential property located in front of the Warrens Nursery buildings. Thingwall Road East forms the southern edge of the application site, with houses, set back from the road, on its opposite side. The site road frontage is formed by a low stone wall set in front of a mainly dense tree and shrub screen.

An extensive belt of mature trees encloses the site from the north and east and forms a natural boundary between the Warrens Nursery and Arrowe Country Park and Golf course.

POLICY CONTEXT

The applicant has submitted a detailed Planning Statement which aims to describe the details of the development, its functions and impact.

The need for the development

The applicant considers the need for change in relation to the existing West Wirral surgeries is driven by a national requirement to improve local healthcare and expand the range of services provided locally from a single high quality building.

The applicant indicates that there is also a demand from patients and staff at the Heswall, Thingwall and Irby surgeries that improvements are implemented to the healthcare and working environment; which is considered by the applicant to be inadequate and not what should now be reasonably expected by the PCT.

The applicant concludes that the proposed development to develop a One Stop Primary Care Centre at the Warrens Nursery site will enable a significant step forward for local healthcare provision to be realised.

SITE APPRAISAL OF THE EXISTING GP PRACTICES

The applicant considers that none of the existing 3 sites offer a clear potential for significant extensions and it is the case that none of them offers the opportunity for the development of a single one stop primary care centre to serve all of the 3 existing practices areas.

None of the three sites are considered by the applicant to be of a sufficient size to accommodate a new One Stop Shop and limitations associated with conforming to the local character and car parking are considered further inhibitors.

The applicant considers that each of the current sites fail in some way to meet the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. A proportion of the registered population of the practice have disabilities and while some steps can be taken to improve facilities the applicant states it is impossible for the current buildings to become fully compliant with the act.

With the staff of the practice currently being split over the three sites, the applicant considers it is becoming increasingly difficult for the practice to co-ordinate their activities. They consider that bringing the team together in one building would foster improved working arrangements and lead to an enhanced service being provided to registered patients.

The applicant states that the existing 3 practices are currently frustrated that they do not have the space to improve and offer the full range of services required by patients. Each of the family doctors within the existing 3 practices have skills and specialist interests in specific areas of health and wish to use these skills in a more productive manner. Examples include:

- In 2004 the phlebotomy service at Heswall Surgery had to be discontinued due to a number of accidents which had occurred as a result of lack of space;
- Antenatal clinics can no longer be held at Irby or Thingwall surgeries meaning patients have to travel to Thingwall surgery for part of their maternity care, resulting in lack of consistency in patient care;
- Baby clinics (vaccinations) can no longer be carried out at Heswall Surgery because the large number of patients at any one time exceed the capacity of the car park resulting in highway safety issues, with prams blocking the small waiting room increasing risk of accidents on stairs;
- West Wirral group practice cannot offer leg ulcer treatment due to inadequate treatment rooms meaning patients have to travel and use services outside of the practise area;
- Thingwall and Irby Surgeries do not meet PCT standards for carrying out minor surgery which again means patients have to travel and use services outside of the practice area;
- Size restrictions mean that flu clinics cannot be held at any of the existing surgeries. As such, this takes place at Irby Church and Heswall Hall which are locations considered far from ideal from a clinical perspective by the applicant.

The applicant considers that there is an inability to extend the role of practice nurses

to enable some of the less complicated treatments to be performed by a nurse this releasing doctor time to address more complicated areas of care, with resultant improvement in access times. There is also an inability to bring outside agencies into the existing 3 practices to provide advice/sessions to the existing 3 practices population e.g. Citizens Advice Services.

The applicant wishes to become a training practice and they consider that space presently available limits their ability to achieve this aim. According to the PCT, bringing medical students into the existing 3 practices not only goes towards achieving the national target of bringing doctors into primary care but further enhances the practices reputation in primary care which can bring additional resources to the existing 3 practices, allowing additional services to be provided.

The applicant considers the ability to recruit primary care professionals within the existing 3 practices are hindered by the current premises arrangements.

The existing standard of accommodation available for staff and patients is considered by the applicant to be poor with an inability to improve this to a level of comfort that should be expected. They suggest that it is impossible for one or more of the existing surgeries to be further extended to fully satisfy the additional needs of the PCT due to:

- the limited size of the sites;
- the sites relationship to neighbouring uses;
- the necessity to respond to the local character in terms of building footprints;
- the inability for the sites to comply with DDA requirements; and
- the inability to provide off street parking.

Overall, the applicant considers there are significant efficiency gains, particularly on managerial, staffing and IT grounds, arising from delivering health services from one site, rather than three although none of the existing sites allows for this advancement to be fully realised.

ALTERNATIVE SITE INVESTIGATION REPORT

Whilst the initial site investigation identified twenty two sites overall, the applicant reduced these to only five by using the critical issues of size and availability. The five sites which met the basic requirements of the PCT were all located within the Green Belt, and the PCT is faced with the need to demonstrate very special circumstances for development of any of the chosen sites as well as demonstrating that other facets of the Green Belt in each location, such as visual amenity, will not be harmed.

Site A: Land at Townsend Avenue

The applicant considers that the proposed development may have an adverse visual and parking impact on the amenity of local residents. Furthermore, the positioning of the site on Irby Road, and access/egress to and from it, may according to the applicant raise road safety issues.

Although dense vegetation partially covers the front on Irby road, the north, west and south boundaries are very open. In the opinion of the applicant a new PCT building in this location would particularly harm the openness of the Green Belt.

Site B: Land adjacent to Bassett Hound Pub, Barnston Road

The site is within the Green Belt and development on such land contravenes planning policy unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated and other harm to the Green Belt overcome.

The applicant considers that development of this site may impact on the amenity of residents who overlook the site at its north and west boundary. They also consider that the visual impact of the development on the character and openness of the Green Belt would be significant because the site is largely open.

The applicant notes that Public Transport accessibility to the site is limited, with few services on Barnston Road. However the PCT consider that Barnston Road allows for

good sightlines for any new access points onto the site.

Finally, the applicant suggests that the site is less convenient to existing patients, relative to some of the other sites. The large size of the site is considered by the PCT to be greater than necessary, but would allow for future expansion, although no such need for additional land for building has been identified by the PCT. Again, further building would also have to be justified in terms of Green Belt Planning Policy.

Site C: The Depot, Station Road, Barnston.

The site is within the Green Belt and development on such land contravenes planning policy unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated and other harm to the Green Belt overcome.

The applicant considers that development of the site as a Primary Care Centre would have a significant visual impact because of the site's location with open countryside; although they consider the site to be previously developed land.

The applicant states that the site is not notably close to existing homes so residential amenity would not be significantly affected. However it is suggested by the PCT that the development would have an adverse impact upon neighbouring highways, as they consider that the site is in an isolated location which creates a greatly enhanced need to use the private car, and because the road is very narrow adjacent, potentially causing traffic flow and parking problems.

The PCT consider the site to be the furthest from existing patients relative to the other sites investigated and consider that it is poorly served by public transport.

Finally the applicant suggests that the site occupies an irregular shaped plot and does not offer the potential for future expansion.

Site D: Land at Thingwall Road East

The site is within the Green Belt and development on such land contravenes planning policy unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated and other harm to the Green Belt overcome.

The applicant considers that the development of the site for a Primary Care Centre would have a significant visual impact because the site is prominently located within open countryside and is thus highly visible. It is also considered by the PCT that the straight road layout of Thingwall Road East allows for good sightlines for any new access points onto the site.

The applicant considers that the site forms part of a larger plot, and there is consequently potential for expansion. The PCT consider the site to be the most centrally located, of the five shortlisted sites, in proximity to the existing patients.

Site E: Warrens Nurseries, Thingwall Road East, Thingwall.

The site is within the Green Belt and development on such land contravenes planning policy unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated and other harm to the Green Belt overcome.

The PCT consider that the site is well enclosed and screened, particularly from areas to the north and west, and also to a lesser extent from Thingwall Road. Visual impact would be the least of all the sites considered according to the applicant. The PCT also consider that the layout of Thingwall Road East allows for good sightlines for a new access point on to the site.

The PCT consider that the site is reasonably close to the densest concentrations of existing patients relative to the other 5 sites but is more distant from the catchment areas to the south west.

The applicant states that the site is the most readily served by public transport; and, that the site has scope for expansion although this would need to be justified in Green

Belt Policy terms.

APPEARANCE AND AMENITY ISSUES

These matters are reserved for future consideration. However, Paragraph 3.15 of PPG2 considers the subject of visual amenity. It states that the visual amenities of the Green Belt should not be injured by the proposals for development that, although they would not prejudice the purposes of including land in Green Belts, might be visually detrimental by reason of their siting, materials or design.

The applicant considers in relation to PPG2 para 3.15 that the site's character, given the erection of a new building and associated hard standing, will change, although this will be lessened through additional tree and shrub planting and the potential inclusion of natural building materials, such as timber cladding, as well as a sedum roof, which is considered by the PCT to compliment the site's existing character.

The PCT consider that the impact of the appearance of any proposed building will further be reduced through its design - its orientation, tree planting and potentially sloping grass building roof which the PCT consider will ensure that the development fits with its immediate surroundings, minimising visual intrusion. The applicant proposes that additional planting within the site will further soften the appearance of the building from the road.

Therefore the applicant ultimately considers that the development proposed does, given the proposed erection of a two storey building, impact on the openness of the Green Belt, which would result in a reduction in openness; even though in visual impact terms, views of the development will be limited. The PCT do however consider that there are very special circumstances, which exist to justify inappropriate development that outweighs harm by reason of inappropriateness.

TREES AND LANDSCAPING

The applicant has submitted a full British Standard Tree Survey which the Council's tree officer has raised no objection to; subject to the conditions attached to this report.

HIGHWAY IMPLICATIONS

The outline application for the development of a one stop Primary Care Centre, including new vehicular access off Thingwall Road East and car parking for 98 vehicles has been accompanied by a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan prepared on behalf of Wirral PCT to support the application.

The aims of the TA are to predict travel demand for the development, to demonstrate safe and effective multi model accessibility to the development and to identify, assess and propose mitigation for any net transport related impacts likely to arise from the development.

VEHICULAR ACCESS

Vehicular access to the development will be from an access off Thingwall Road East. The applicant has submitted details of options for two alternative accesses either on the east side of the site or the west. In either case the site access will be located more than 20m away from both the Pensby Road junction and the opposite residential access road. This will be a single form of access to be used by all employees, patients and servicing/delivery vehicles. Access to the on site car park and bin storage points will be obtained from this proposed access road.

PARKING

It is proposed to provide ninety-eight on site parking spaces to serve the development. Thirty spaces are allocated for staff use and sixty-eight for patients.

It is present policy to set standards for maximum parking levels in developments and in some cases minimum levels also. National recommended standards are set out in PPG13 and DFH Memo 07-03, regional standards in RPG13 and Local Standards in

SPD4. The usual procedure is to adopt whichever of the standards is most restrictive for each particular use.

The proposed parking provision of 98 spaces is not in excess of the recommended limit of 134 spaces and it is therefore concluded that the proposed parking provision is compliant with the policy and appropriate for the predicted demand.

PEDESTRIAN ROUTES

The proposed site is located on the opposite side of Thingwall Road East to the large residential areas bounded by Thingwall Road East and Pensby Road and will require the minimum provision of a pedestrian refuge recommended within the TA to be sited on Thingwall Road East to facilitate pedestrian movements from these residential areas and the bus stops on Pensby Road to the site.

At 7.5m in width Thingwall Road East has insufficient width to accommodate a pedestrian refuge without a road widening scheme being undertaken which will require to be secured through a Section 106 agreement to facilitate the highway works.

The application also proposes the provision of a pedestrian direction signing scheme to direct pedestrians from Pensby Road to the site.

TRAFFIC GENERATION

Wirral Council requested that the applicants use information currently held by Wirral PCT on the existing GP surgeries be used to calculate the proposed developments trip generation. The latest edition of the TRICS database was also used to estimate the car trip generation rates of the development.

The junctions of Thingwall Road East / Pensby Road (B5135) and Thingwall Road East / Pensby Road / Barnston Road (A551) have been modelled to calculate an estimate of trips generated by the proposed development and the effect on how these junctions will operate with the development in place. Information currently held by Wirral PCT and the existing GP surgeries was used together with the latest edition of the TRICS database.

Guidelines for Traffic Impact Assessment suggest that on a congested urban network a development generated traffic increase of over 5% on two way link flows can be considered material.

The junction assessments indicate that the impact is below the 5% threshold for both the AM and PM peak period for the Thingwall Road East / Barnston Road / Arrowe Park Road roundabout. Some material impact is predicted on the Thingwall Road East / Pensby Road junction. However a junction assessment of the impact on both junctions concluded that the junction will operate within capacity for all development scenarios.

In summary, it is considered that the traffic impact of the development on the surrounding network will be insignificant and will not require mitigatory measures such as junction improvements.

HIGHWAY CONCLUSIONS

iii) It is considered that a suitable vehicular access can be provided to the western most side of the site.

ii) Parking provision is in accordance with Council Policy.

iv) Junction assessments indicate that traffic impact of the development will be within the existing capacity of both the Thingwall Road East / Pensby Road junction and the Thingwall Road East / Barnston Road / Arrowepark Road junction.

v) Adequate pedestrian facilities can be provided on Thingwall Road East subject to the securing of a section 106 agreement to allow a road-widening scheme to be undertaken in the vicinity of the site to accommodate a pedestrian refuge on Thingwall

Road East.

Therefore subject to detailed access design there are no traffic or highway safety reasons not to proceed with the application.

RIGHT OF WAY

A number of local residents have made application to the Council to amend its Definitive Map and Statement so as to include a footpath running over and along land from a point at the entrance to The Warrens to a point where the claimed route reaches the woods. In effect, the local residents are asserting that their claimed route has become a public right of way by virtue of public usage over the requisite period. At the present time, the Council is still investigating the application and no decision has yet been made in this regard.

This application does not prevent members from considering and determining this planning application. However, if planning permission is granted and in the event of it being established that a public right of way exists, that right of way would have to be formally extinguished and/or diverted before any development (insofar as it affects any right of way) could be commenced.

ENVIRONMENTAL/SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

The applicant's case is based on grounds that the existing surgeries are unable to provide a range of services such as ante-natal clinics at Irby or Heswall, as the existing premises cannot be extended due to site restrictions and will not be DDA compliant.

The PCT consider that the impact of the appearance of any proposed building will further be reduced through its design - its orientation, tree planting and potentially sloping grass building roof which the PCT consider will ensure that the development fits with its immediate surroundings, minimising visual intrusion. The applicant proposes that additional planting within the site will further soften the appearance of the building from the road.

The applicant has considered 22 alternative sites over the past 6 years. Previously developed sites included Arrowbrook Motors, Pensby Hotel, Thingwall Garage, Pensby Park Primary School at Fishers Lane and a house at 570 Pensby Road. These were discounted by the applicant because of size constraints, or that they were not available.

Public consultation carried out by the applicant indicates that 4,527 responses support the principle of new facilities at the Warrens site. 497 people objected.

The agent seeks to justify development in the Green Belt because taken in isolation it would not conflict with the purpose of restricting urban sprawl. They accept that there will be a reduction in openness, but views to the building would be limited.

The very special circumstances put forward by the agent are that no other suitable sites are available, the Warrens Site is the best option available and is accessible, a new fit for purpose building would provide an opportunity for providing new care services, which need space to function. Hygiene and infection control would be improved and the existing 3 practices could operate more effectively. In the applicant's view, the existing surgeries cannot be modified to provide a standard of care that patients should expect to enjoy.

SUMMARY OF DECISION

It is considered that the applicant has put forward sufficient information to demonstrate the release of a Green Belt site as a departure in relation to Policy GB2 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan and National Planning Guidance contained with PPG2: Green Belt. The application is recommended for approval on this basis.

Recommendation: Approve subject to a Section 106 Legal Agreement (subject to confirmation from Govt. Office For The North West)

Condition(s):

- 1 Outline (C51A)
- 2 Approval of Layout, Siting, Access, Appearance and Landscaping) before commencing (C51B)
- 3 Statutory Outline permission commencement time limit (C51C)
- 4 Time limit for submitting details (C51D)
- 5 Detailed landscaping scheme to be agreed prior to commencement (C71A)
- 6 Scheme for protection of trees. (C71B)
- 7 Reserved matters to have tree survey and proposals for all trees. (C71E)
- 8 Replacement of diseased planting for a period of 5 years from completion. (C71G)
- 9 Landscaping works to be carried out in accordance with the approved details as set out in Condition 6. (C71J)
- 10 Vehicular sight lines to be provided at Thingwall Road East. (C61E)
- 11 Pedestrian visibility splays of 2.4m x 2.4m to be provided at Thingwall Road East (C61C)
- 12 Cycle parking scheme to be submitted and completed prior to occupation (C61L)
- 13 No use of premises between 23.00 hours and 8.00 hours nor Sundays or Bank Holidays. (C62A)
- 14 Floodlighting details to be submitted and agreed before use. (C63A)
- 15 Land drainage scheme to be submitted and agreed. (C63B)
- 16 Site level survey and proposed site and floor levels to be submitted. (C65B)
- 17 Conformity with proposed ground and floor levels as approved.(C65D)
- 18 No works or development shall take place until a scheme for the protection of the retained trees (section 7, BS59837, the Tree Protection Plan) has been agreed in writing with the LPA. This scheme shall include:
 - A) a plan to a scale and level of accuracy appropriate to the proposal that shows the position, crown spread and Root Protection Area (para. 5.2.2 of BS5837) of every retained tree on site and on neighbouring or nearby ground to the site in relation to the approved plans and particulars. The positions of all trees to be removed shall be indicated on this plan.
 - B) the details of each retained tree as required at para. 4.2.6 of BS5837 in a separate schedule.
 - C) a schedule of tree works for all the retained trees in paragraphs (a) and (b) above, specifying pruning and other remedial or preventative work, whether for physiological, hazard abatement, aesthetic or operational reasons. All tree works shall be carried out in accordance with BS3998, 1989, Recommendations for tree work.
 - D) written proof of the credentials of the arboricultural contractor authorised to carry out the scheduled tree works.
 - E) the details and positions (shown on the plan at paragraph (a) above) of the Ground Protection Zones (section 9.3 of BS5837).
 - F) the details and positions (shown on the plan at paragraph (a) above) of the Tree Protection Barriers (section 9.2 of BS5837), identified separately where required for different phases of construction work (e.g. demolition, construction, hard landscaping). The Tree Protection Barriers must be erected prior to each construction phase commencing and remain in place, and undamaged for the duration of that phase. No works shall take place on the next phase until the Tree Protection Barriers are repositioned for that phase.
 - G) the details and positions (shown on the plan at paragraph (a) above) of the Construction Exclusion Zones (section 9 of BS5837).
 - H) the details and positions (shown on the plan at paragraph (a) above) of the underground service runs (section 11.7 of BS5837).
 - I) the details of any changes in levels or the position of any proposed excavations within 5 metres of the Root Protection Area (para. 5.2.2 of BS5837) of any retained tree, including those on neighbouring or nearby ground.
 - J) the details of any special engineering required to accommodate the protection of retained trees (section 10 of BS5837), (e.g. in connection with foundations, bridging, water features, surfacing)
 - K) the details of the working methods to be employed with the demolition of buildings, structures and surfacing within or adjacent to the RPAs of retained trees.
 - L) the details of the working methods to be employed for the installation of drives and paths within the RPAs of retained trees in accordance with the principles of "No-Dig" construction.
 - M) the details of the working methods to be employed with regard to the access for and use of heavy, large, difficult to manoeuvre plant (including cranes and their loads, dredging machinery, concrete pumps, piling rigs, etc) on site.
 - N) the details of the working methods to be employed with regard to site logistics and

storage, including an allowance for slopes, water courses and enclosures, with particular regard to ground compaction and phytotoxicity.

O) the details of the method to be employed for the stationing, use and removal of site cabins within any RPA (para. 9.2.3 of BS5837).

P) the details of tree protection measures for the hard landscaping phase (sections 13 and 14 of BS5837).

Q) the timing of the various phases of the works or development in the context of the tree protection measures.

- 19 No works or development shall take place until a specification of all proposed tree planting has been approved in writing by the LPA. This specification will include details of the quantity, size, species, position and the proposed time of planting of all trees to be planted, together with an indication of how they integrate with the proposal in the long term with regard to their mature size and anticipated routine maintenance. In addition all shrubs and hedges to Schemes be planted that are intended to achieve a significant size and presence in the landscape should be similarly specified. All tree, shrub and hedge planting included within that specification shall be carried out in accordance with that specification and in accordance with BS 3936 (parts 1, 1992, Nursery Stock, Specification for trees and shrubs, and 4, 1984, Specification for forest trees); BS4043, 1989, Transplanting root-balled trees; and BS4428, 1989, Code of practice for general landscape operations (excluding hard surfaces).
- 20 The following activities must not be carried out under any circumstances:
- a) No fires shall be lit within 10 metres of the nearest point of the canopy of any retained tree.
 - b) No works shall proceed until the appropriate Tree Protection Barriers are in place, with the exception of initial tree works.
 - c) No equipment, signage, fencing, tree protection barriers, materials, components, vehicles or structures shall be attached to or supported by a retained tree.
 - d) No mixing of cement or use of other materials or substances shall take place within a RPA, or close enough to a RPA that seepage or displacement of those materials or substances could cause them to enter a RPA
 - e) No alterations or variations to the approved works or tree protection schemes shall be carried out without the prior written approval of the LPA.
- 21 A landscape management plan, including long term design objectives, management responsibilities and maintenance schedules for all landscape areas, other than small, privately owned, domestic gardens, shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority prior to the occupation of the development or any phase of the development, whichever is the sooner, for its permitted use. The landscape management plan shall be carried out as approved.
- 22 Development shall not be commenced until a Travel Plan has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The provisions of the Travel Plan shall be implemented and operated in accordance with the timetable contained therein and shall not be varied other than through agreement with the local planning authority. For the avoidance of doubt, such a plan shall include:
- Access to the site by staff and visitors;
 - Information on existing transport services to the site and staff and visitor travel patterns;
 - Travel Plan principles including measures to promote and facilitate more sustainable transport;
 - Realistic targets for modal shift or split;
 - Identification of a Travel Plan co-ordinator and the establishment of a travel plan steering group;
 - Measures and resource allocation to promote the Travel Plan; and
 - Mechanisms for monitoring and reviewing the Travel Plan, including the submission of an annual review and action plan to the local planning authority.

Reason for conditions

- 1 Standard (CR51)
- 2 Standard (CR51)
- 3 Standard (CR86)
- 4 Standard (CR52)

- 5 In the interests of the visual amenities of the area. Policy GR5 of the UDP (CR79)
6 To protect trees which are of significant amenity value to the area. Policy GR7 of the UDP (CR80)
7 In the interests of the visual amenities of the area. Policy GR5 of the UDP (CR79)
8 In the interests of the visual amenities of the area. Policy GR5 of the UDP (CR79)
9 In the interests of the visual amenities of the area. Policy GR5 of the UDP (CR79)
10 Highway safety (CR13)
11 Highway safety (CR13)
12 To promote more sustainable forms of transport. Policy TR12 of the UDP (CR69)
13 In the interests of the amenities of the occupants of the adjoining residential properties and having regard to Policy GB2 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.
14 To ensure that satisfactory details of floodlighting are submitted and approved, and to ensure the adequate protection of local amenity, having regard to Policy GB2 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.
15 To secure adequate land drainage, and the adequate protection of local amenity, having regard to Policy GB2 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.
16 To ensure a satisfactory appearance and avoid overlooking having regard to Policy GB2 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.
17 To ensure a satisfactory appearance and avoid overlooking having regard to Policy GB2 of the Wirral Unitary Development Plan.
18 To protect trees which are of significant amenity value to the area. Policy GR7 of the UDP (CR80)
19 To protect trees which are of significant amenity value to the area. Policy GR7 of the UDP (CR80)
20 To protect trees which are of significant amenity value to the area. Policy GR7 of the UDP (CR80)
21 To protect trees which are of significant amenity value to the area. Policy GR7 of the UDP (CR80)
22 In accordance with PPG13 paragraph 89
"The Government considers that travel plans should be submitted alongside planning applications which are likely to have significant transport implications, including those for:
All major developments comprising jobs, shopping, leisure and services (using the same thresholds as set out in annex D).

Last Comments By: 26 July 2007

56 Day Expires On: 06 September 2007

Case Officer: Mr N Culkin

Notes:

INFORMATIVES:

1. All bat species are legally protected from any harm, damage or disturbance under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981), as amended by the Countryside & Rights of Way Act (2000). It is a criminal offence to knowingly or recklessly harm, damage or disturb bats or their roosts. Bats are also protected under the Conservation (Natural Habitats) Regulations (1994). Approval must be sought from Natural England for any works affecting bats or their roost sites.

2. All breeding birds in the wild are protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981). It is therefore an offence to disturb or kill any wild bird while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or to disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

3. The great crested newt (*Triturus cristatus*) and its habitat (aquatic and terrestrial) are afforded full protection by the Wildlife & Countryside Act (1981) (Section 9, Schedule 5), and are listed on Annex II and Annex IV of the Habitats Directive. Under this legislation, it is an offence to damage or destroy a breeding site or resting place of a great crested newt, or to disturb a great crested newt while it is occupying a structure or place.