

Planning Statement

## **Installation of an automated prescription collection machine**

Marsh Medical Practice, North Somercotes Surgery, Keeling Street, North Somercotes, Louth LN11 7QU

December 2022

Ref: 22106

Rev #

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Plande has been appointed to submit a supporting statement for the installation of an automated prescription collection machine.
- 1.2 This statement has been prepared for the exclusive use of the applicant as part of their planning application and in accordance with the agreed scope of the project. The document may not be reproduced in whole or in part, without the prior written consent of Plande. The copyright in this document (including its electronic form) shall remain vested in Plande. Plande will not be liable for the contents or use of this document by any person for any purpose.
- 1.3 This statement, which should be read in conjunction with the supporting information submitted with the application, aims to give an appraisal of the planning issues and merits in context with planning and other policies, guidance and material considerations.

## 2. THE EXISTING SITE

- 2.1 The existing site contains a detached modern purpose-built medical centre building on a long narrow plot with parking and amenity space. The property is single-storey and of a traditional appearance with brick elevations.
- 2.2 The immediate neighbouring properties are predominantly residential although the site is located in close proximity to a range of non-residential properties.
- 2.3 The location is situated within Flood Zone 3. The village is deemed by the East Lindsey District Council Local Plan (2018) to be within the 'Coastal Zone'.

## 3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 A planning history search illustrates no relevant applications for the site, on the Council website.

## 4. THE CONCEPT

- 4.1 The Pharmaself24 is the market-leading automated prescription-collection service allowing patients to simply and securely pick up their medicines when it is convenient for them.
- 4.2 Surgery staff dispense the medicines as normal and then load the dispensed bags securely into the machine using barcode technology.
- 4.3 Patients are notified that their prescription is ready and provided with a 1-time-use-only PIN number which they use to collect the medicine, which only takes a few seconds.
- 4.4 The benefits to the existing Surgery business is that this is more efficient, reducing queuing time and staff resources while offering more convenience to their customers. This allows pharmacies to spend more time with patients who need it and delivering new services, to the benefit of the community. In addition, the collection point also allows the Surgery to reduce the need for home deliveries which leads to a reduction in its carbon emissions.
- 4.5 The benefits to the customers are reduced waiting times, negating wasted journeys and allowing the convenience to collect medicines when they want (for example on their way to or from work, shift workers, carers and on Sundays etc). This is particularly useful for repeat prescriptions and working patients who are unable to collect prescriptions during opening hours.
- 4.6 Experience from previous installations shows that the vast majority of patients will collect from the Pharmaself24 during the Surgery's normal opening hours, but the ability to allow patients, who cannot get to the Surgery during opening hours to collect outside of these times (for example Sundays, Bank Holidays, on their way to or from work etc), means patients do not miss out taking their medicines.

This has a positive impact on the local infrastructure such as reducing emergency requests for medicines at out of hours medical services and A&E.

- 4.7 The machines have operated in numerous premises throughout the current pandemic and have proved itself invaluable in providing a contact-free and continuous service, supporting the NHS services and providing an invaluable community benefit while negating footfall inside of buildings and reducing face-to-face meetings.

5. THE MACHINE

- 5.1 The Pharmaself24 Compact is a self-contained, secure machine measuring approximately 1.9m tall and 1m wide externally, fitted securely into elevation of the Surgery, featuring the business logo, a touchscreen, credit card terminal and five collection doors. The Compact has a capacity of up to 100 bags and instructional signage may be added adjacent to the machine to provide information to users.

- 5.2 To date, there have been over 500 Pharmaself24 models installed in the Netherlands and approaching 100 currently in the UK, including within pharmacies, dispensing GP surgeries, hospitals and prison pharmacies. Pharmaself24s have been used in the UK for over a decade now and are listed on the General Pharmaceutical Council's website as an example of "innovative technology to support the safe and efficient collection of assembled medicines" (<https://inspections.pharmacyregulation.org/knowledge-hub/notable-practice/using-pharmacy-vending-machines-to-support-access-to-medicine-316>). The General Pharmaceutical Council is the government's professional regulator for pharmacies.



An example of an installed machine (NB colours shown indicatively).

## 6. USE AND AMOUNT

- 6.1 The planning application is for the provision of an automated prescription collection machine within the existing elevation of the business and associated works.
- 6.2 It is suggested that the use of the site will be in keeping with and complementary to the vitality and mix within the area and will not have a negative impact on the amenity of the surrounding properties, the vitality, character, viability of the area as a whole.

## 7. LAYOUT, SCALE AND MASSING & APPEARANCE

- 7.1 The proposed siting of the machine is intended to facilitate safe, appropriate access and is considered in relation to the surrounding context and specific site constraints and existing servicing.
- 7.2 The machines have been designed to have an elegant and contemporary appearance, using coloured metal and decals (to reflect the Surgery's branding), to be in keeping with modern retail. It is suggested that the machine will not materially change the premises.
- 7.3 It is therefore suggested that the installation of the machine into the existing building will not materially harm visual amenity.
- 7.4 No amendments to the existing landscaping or boundary treatments are proposed as part of the application.

## 8. ACCESS & PARKING

- 8.1 The proposed works make no alterations to the existing access, either from the main road or into the site. It is proposed that the nature of the machine and the existing use means that there will be no material increase in vehicle or pedestrian movements into and out of the site or create a negative or unacceptable impact on the existing local highway network, especially when compared to potential maximum potential for the existing use. It is therefore suggested that the proposed machine will not result in any discernible detrimental amenity impacts.
- 8.2 In addition, the site is well served by on-site parking and public transport. It is proposed that the Surgery as a whole provides safe and suitable access.
- 8.3 The proposals do not affect the car parking availability or existing servicing arrangements. As such it is suggested that the proposals conform with the relevant local policies.
- 8.4 It is also suggested that, by the very nature of the location, that visitors to the site are likely to visit the other premises and make use of the other services within the local centre which would reduce the overall trip generation.
- 8.5 The location of the proposed machine will not hinder any device used for security and surveillance purposes and will not cause an obstruction to transport or pedestrian safety. The use of the machine will not result in hindering pedestrians use of the footway which it is suggested is sufficient to allow pedestrians to pass while customers use the machine.
- 8.6 The machine is designed to be accessible by a range of users, including wheelchair access.
- 8.7 It is therefore proposed that the works conform to the relevant local policies as well as the national generally.

## 9. SECURITY

- 9.1 The proposed location of the self-service machine will mean that users of the machine will benefit from natural surveillance, of passing motorists and pedestrians along the road.
- 9.2 Data illustrates that less than 10% of prescriptions are paid for, with the majority (children, elderly, low-paid and medical exemptions) receiving free prescriptions.
- 9.3 For the customers who need to pay for prescriptions, the machines only accept cards. Due to the cost of prescriptions (c. £9), the majority of transactions (of the small % who actually pay) are able to use secure contactless payment technology, which negates the possibility of PIN number theft. Furthermore, receipts are sent electronically so there is no paper waste as well as reducing the potential for data theft. The machine doesn't accept cash. The Ingenico credit card terminal on the machine is designed as an unattended system (for example as per Toll Roads etc) and has a secure encrypted payment gateway to prevent tampering.
- 9.4 Unlike a traditional pharmacy dispensary where items are arranged in alphabetical order, the dispensing bags within the machine are not ordered in any particular logical way and are not labelled with the contents. There is no consistency of the contents i.e. it could be a simple dressing or an inhaler. Compared to the medicines stored within the dispensary, there is little incentive to target the Pharmaself24 and its contents. This is reflected in the hundreds of installations across Europe with no reported attempted break-ins to-date.
- 9.5 The machines are replenished internally by the appropriately trained staff having undertaken a general risk assessment. The Surgery has standard operating procedures in place for all of its workflow and this will include the loading of the machine. Standard Operating Procedures are a regulatory requirement for pharmacies and so the process will be documented, and staff trained accordingly. In addition, dispensed bags in pharmacies are currently put on a shelf or handed to a delivery driver for home delivery. The Pharmaself24 adds a level of security to this process by storing bags in a locked secure unit and having a full audit trail of when bags are loaded and collected - this significantly enhances governance over the collection process.
- 9.6 From the data provided by Pharmaself24 on the machines previously installed, around 80% of prescriptions, collected from the machine, are collected when the Surgery is open.
- 9.7 The principle of the Pharmaself24 is to allow the collection of regular repeat medicines for people on long term stable conditions who are comfortable with managing their treatments. This is the majority of patients and the Pharmaself24 empowers this process. The Pharmaself24 just automates the manual 'handing out process' and the Surgery team is still able to talk to patients as required.
- 9.8 The contents of the machines vary; however, the Pharmacist has to make a professional decision about what is suitable and appropriate for the machine, with face-to-face consultations still required for key patients. The machine will **not** be loaded with controlled drugs including all Schedule 2 or Schedule 3 medicines that fall under the normal safe custody requirements.
- 9.9 With a large proportion of machines, the value of the prescription medicines does not tally with any notional prescription charge, with items such as painkillers being worth pence and inhalers being valued at a couple of pounds.
- 9.10 The collection PIN numbers are provided to the customers, by SMS message, and are 1-time-use-only linked only to the dispensing bag, rather than any patient details.
- 9.11 External CCTV will monitor the machine and its users which will form part of the Surgery's existing CCTV system. A BSIA Accredited CCTV system will be capable of receiving high-quality colour images of evidential quality. Any footage will be recorded onto a securely located and locked hard drive to prevent tampering of the captured footage. Such footage will be retained for no longer than is necessary. CCTV signage will also be installed, to act as a further deterrent. It is intended that the

installation of the CCTV system will assist with crime reduction and detection, management of the Surgery as well as staff and public safety.

- 9.12 The machine will be appropriately illuminated, taking into consideration existing street-lighting and other background illumination, to further help reduce the opportunity for crime as well as the fear of crime. The lighting will be compatible with the installed CCTV system.
- 9.13 The machine itself has a 15-inch colour touchscreen and the central cross is backlit with a 10-watt LED light. There is a small light sensor fitted on the front of the PS24 which monitors the ambient light and so as dusk falls, the front screen gets less bright. During the day it emits 1,000 lumens (so people - especially the elderly can clearly see the screen in bright daylight) but by dusk, the brightness reduces to 600 lumens (which is sufficient for use on darker evenings).
- 9.14 The Compact is installed through the existing building with an outer steel frame which is bolted (internally) onto the machine, which itself weighs c 280kg. This outer frame creates a secure fit into the building with the frame, or machine, having no visible fixings on the outside.
- 9.15 The majority of the machine is located within the Surgery building and as such will be covered by the alarm of the Surgery .
- 9.16 It is suggested that the machines are similar to the internet retailer collections points, for example, Amazon lockers, which provide a secure environment for customers to collect items that are not readily identifiable or accessible by others.
- 9.17 One of the key objectives, of the Local Plan is to support safer communities. It is proposed that the installation of the machine meets the requirements of the relevant policies, by ensuring it has been designed in ways that reduce the opportunities for crime as well helping to reduce the fear of crime.
- 9.18 The design and siting of the machine responds to the physical context of the site, doesn't affect the boundaries between public and private spaces, will ensure that the site as a whole is easily understood by users, provides a high-quality design, reflects the changing social, technological, economic and market conditions, maximising the site. In addition, the proposals, pro-actively respond to climate change and sustainable principles.

## 10. RELEVANT LOCAL POLICIES

10.1 The relevant policy considerations for the proposed development are the relevant policies of the East Lindsey Local Plan, supplementary planning guidance as well as the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

10.2 The relevant adopted Local Development Plan policies are suggested as: SPI, SP2, SPI0, SPI7, SPI6

### PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

10.3 The provision of the machine is complementary and ancillary to the existing use, is appropriate for its context, will not conflict with neighbouring land uses, will not impact unacceptably on the local highway network and will not have an adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area and/ or the amenities of neighbouring occupiers. The principle of development can therefore be considered acceptable in this location.

10.4 Policy SPI of the Local Plan establishes a hierarchy of settlements within the district to guide the distribution, scale and nature of future development. North Somercotes offers a number of key services that support the village itself and surrounding smaller villages. It is therefore well placed in the settlement hierarchy and defines North Somercotes as a 'Large village'.

10.5 SP2 requires the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework

10.6 The proposals are considered sustainable development as defined in the NPPF in that they contribute towards a strong, stable and more diverse economy, minimising the impact on climate change, the need to travel and the use of resources, including the production of waste. It is suggested that any adverse impacts of granting planning permission would be significantly and demonstrably outweighed by the benefits and there are no policies which would indicate development should be restricted.

### DESIGN & AMENITY

10.7 It is suggested the installation of the machine is of a minor nature and accords to the relevant policies in that the design will not have an adverse impact on the street scene or character of the area and are of an appropriate scale, height and material given the context of the area.

10.8 The location of the machine is not directly adjacent to, or overlooked in any close distance by, any residential properties. The nature of the existing building and proposed works mean that there are no material differences in relation to overbearing, overshadowing, overlooking or visual intrusion. The proposed use will not inherently create any noise or odour that would be detrimental to the occupiers of the residential properties.

10.9 The proposals will be distinctive, safe and pleasant, welcoming, adaptable and resource. The proposals will also contribute towards making the area a better and healthier environment, helping to create an appealing place, further embedding the community facility which recognises the needs of all members of society.

10.10 The prescription machine will create a healthy and more equitable environment, responsibly engage will all stakeholders, create innovative solutions, help promote public transport use by giving customers more options for collecting prescriptions, will not result in the deterioration of air quality or unacceptable additional noise.

10.11 The proposals will help to protect and reinforce the existing Health Centre with the proposals and wider use appropriate for its location as well as improving the quality and diversity of the Health Centre. The proposals will not result in a significant loss of character or amenity to the surrounding area.

10.12 The proposals are in keeping with its location and context and respects the local architecture, forms, design and materials. It is suggested that the proposals, for the installation of an automated prescription machine, are of a minor nature and will not materially harm or have a notable adverse

visual impact. In addition, the proposals will not dominate or detract from the architectural details of the building with the proposed materials considered appropriate for its setting.

- 10.13 It is suggested that the proposals would not have a detrimental impact on the appearance of the entrance or building as a whole. The finish and appearance of the machine and surrounding panel would be of a colour and material that would complement the appearance of the existing building.
- 10.14 The proposals will provide a safe, inclusive, convenient and welcoming development which addresses personal safety, security and crime prevention, safe, secure and convenient access, reducing the scope for anti-social behaviour and fear of crime, while integrating successfully into the local area and avoiding harm to the neighbouring amenity.
- 10.15 The proposals ensure the safeguarding and improvement to a community facility which is located where it is accessible by a range of transport modes.
- 10.16 It is suggested that the hours of operation of the machine would therefore not have a material impact on the site or wider area, particularly the surrounding residential properties when compared to the existing and maximum allowable uses of the application site and wider area.
- 10.17 In addition, there is no adverse impact on the neighbouring uses in terms of noise, general disturbance, light pollution, loss of privacy or light and as regards to features that minimise crime and the fear of crime. The proposals would also not lead to an over-intensification of the use of the site.
- 10.18 As such it is suggested that the proposals comply with the relevant local Policies, including SP10 of the Local Plan which states that development will be supported if it does not, amongst other matters, unacceptably harm any nearby residential amenity.
- 10.19 It is suggested that there are no material considerations of sufficient weight to justify the refusal of planning permission.

## 11. CONCLUSION

- 11.1 It is suggested that the installation of an automated prescription collection machine within the Surgery will have a positive impact on the services of the area and aid the wider economy as well as providing an essential service at the current time. It is suggested that the use, in principle, is suitable for its location and of benefit to the community.
- 11.2 It is suggested that the proposal should be considered in accordance with the Development Plan and planning permission should be granted accordingly.
- 11.3 It is also proposed that the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development applies to this application and as such, it is proposed that any perceived adverse impacts of the change of use do not outweigh the benefits in encouraging economic growth.