

Planning Statement

Sidmouth Health Centre

January 2024

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For and on behalf of NHS Property Services Limited

1. Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared on behalf of NHS Property Services Limited ('NHSPS') in support of a Permission in Principle ('PiP') application for the redevelopment of the former Sidmouth Health Centre, Blackmore Drive, Sidmouth, Devon, EX10 8ET ('the Site') within the administrative area of East Devon District Council ('EDDC').

1.2 The full description of the proposed development ('the development') is:

Permission in principle for change of use of the former Sidmouth Health Centre to provide up to 9 no. residential units (Use Class C3) and other associated works.

1.3 NHSPS manages, maintains, and improves NHS properties and facilities, working in partnership with NHS organisations to create safe, efficient, sustainable, and modern healthcare environments. NHSPS has a clear mandate to provide a quality service to its tenants and minimise the cost of the NHS estate to those organisations using it. Upon the sale of a surplus site, any proceeds raised are reinvested back into the NHS.

1.4 The application is for PiP as provided for in the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017 (as amended) ('the Order 2017'). The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) advises that this is an alternative way of obtaining planning permission for housing-led development which separates the consideration of matters of principle from the technical detail. The permission in principle consent route has two stages:

- Stage 1: Permission in Principle ('PiP') establishes whether a site is suitable for housing-led development in principle
- Stage 2: Technical Details Consent ('TDC') assesses development proposals in detail such as design, appearance and layout

1.5 This application relates to the first stage only.

1.6 The Site is occupied by the former Sidmouth Health Centre and hardstanding used as demarcated car parking. Sidmouth Health Centre was vacated in October 2023 and services were relocated to the Beacon Medical Centre, which was recently extended to provide 16 new clinical rooms, an additional operating theatre with recovery, large meeting/training room and additional car parking. Further reconfiguration works are due to take place at Beacon Medical Centre to provide additional clinical rooms and administrative space. In addition, a new 3 room facility with reception will operate from Sidmouth Victoria Hospital. NHS Devon ICB has confirmed Sidmouth Health Centre is surplus to requirements and is not required for delivery of existing or future primary care services.

1.7 EDDC unable to demonstrate a deliverable 5 year housing land supply. The current position is that EDDC has 4.28 years supply. For the purposes of assessing relevant planning

applications means the tilted balance in terms of Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged and the presumption in favour of sustainable development will apply.

1.8 We consider that the development proposal will bring a number of key public benefits as follows:

- Optimisation of the development potential of the Site in line with the NPPF objectives;
- Redevelopment of a vacant brownfield site within a highly accessible location adjacent to a Town Centre;
- Provision of up to 9 new residential units which contributes to EDDC housing targets and five year housing supply position;
- Ability to provide a mix of 1 to 2 bedroom homes;
- Provision of the Pebblebed Heaths SPA Habitat Mitigation Contribution.

1.9 The proposed development accords with the development plan when viewed as a whole.

Submission Documents

1.10 This Planning Statement should be read in conjunction with the following forms, plans and supporting documents, submitted as part of the planning application:

- Application Form – prepared by NHSPS
- CIL Form – prepared by NHSPS
- Location Plan, drawing no. 001 Rev A – prepared by RHM Planning
- Existing and Proposed Plans – prepared by RHM Planning
 - Existing Site Plan, drawing no. 002 Rev A
 - Existing Floor Plans, drawing no. 003
 - Proposed Site Plan, drawing no. 004 Rev A
 - Proposed Floor Plans, drawing no. 005 Rev A
- Existing Access Arrangement and Swept Path of an Estate Car, drawing no. SK01 – prepared by TPA
- Letter regarding health services – prepared by NHS Devon ICB
- S.111 Form for Pebblebed Heaths SPA Habitat Mitigation Contribution – prepared by NHSPS

Structure of the Planning Statement

1.11 This Planning Statement is arranged in the following sections;

- Section 2 describes the Site within the immediate locational context;
- Section 3 identifies the relevant planning history of the Site;
- Section 4 outlines the development proposals in detail;
- Section 5 identifies the relevant national, strategic and local policy context;
- Section 6 addresses the material planning considerations of the proposals; and
- Section 7 draws together the conclusions of the report.

2. Site and Surrounding Area

The Site

- 2.1 The Site is situated in Sidmouth Town Ward in East Devon, in the administrative area of EDDC. The Site comprises 0.13ha and is occupied by a two storey building of brick construction with a flat roof and associated area of hardstanding used as car parking to the southeast of the building. Sidmouth Health Centre previously occupied the Site and vacated in October 2023, with services relocated to the Beacon Medical Centre and Sidmouth Victoria Hospital. The Site has been declared as surplus to the operational healthcare requirements of the NHS by healthcare commissioners.
- 2.2 The Site is bound to the north and northwest by two storey residential properties, with Victoria Hospital Sidmouth beyond, to the northeast and east by properties in a mix of commercial, retail and residential use ranging in height up to three storeys with the High Street beyond, to the southeast by Sidmouth Library which ranging in height up to two storeys, and to the west by Blackmore Gardens which is a public open space. The location of the Site is shown in Figure 1.

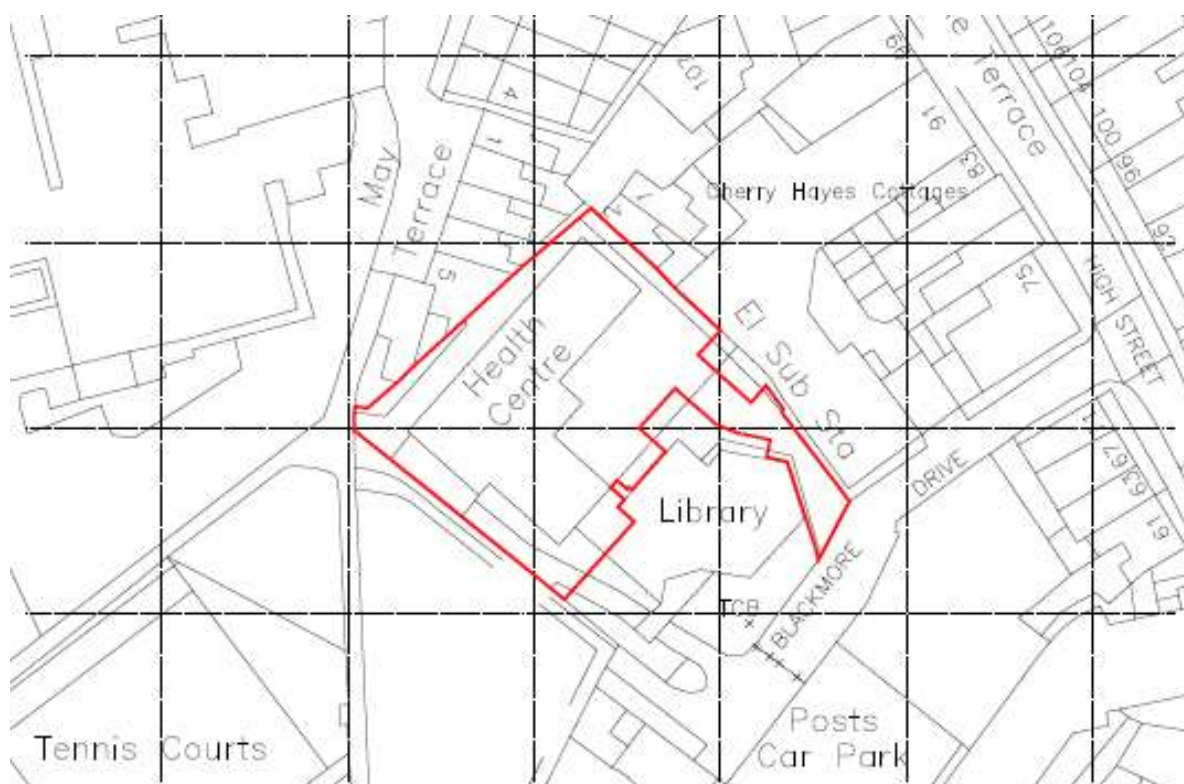


Figure 1: Site Location

- 2.3 The Site lies adjacent to the Town Centre Shopping Area boundary, 50m from the High Street.

- 2.4 Vehicular access into the Site is provided via an access road from Blackmore Drive to the south. When the Health Centre was operational the access was restricted to use by doctors and staff. This route also provides pedestrian access with a further pedestrian access provided with a path which lies to the west of the Site and leads onto Blackmore Drive. There is no public right of way within the Site.
- 2.5 In respect to public transport, there are bus stops on All Saints Road, 180m north of the Site, serviced by bus lines 9, 9A, 382, 387, 899 to Exeter, Honiton, Seaton, and Whimple. The nearest rail stations to Sidmouth are located in Feniton, Honiton, and Whimple.
- 2.6 The Site lies within Sidmouth Area 'A' Town Centre Conservation Area but does not contain any statutory or locally listed buildings or structures.
- 2.7 The Site is located in Flood Zone 1 (low risk) and has very low risk to surface water flooding according to the Environment Agency website.
- 2.8 The Site is not identified as an Asset of Community Value or on the Brownfield Land Register.
- 2.9 The Site lies within the Pebblebed Heaths SPA Contribution Zone.

The Surrounding Context

- 2.10 To the southeast of the Site is land formally occupied by the St John's Ambulance Hall which received consent in 2019 for demolition of the hall and construction of a 3-storey block comprising 8 no. 2-bedroom dwellings (Use Class C3) with 8 no. car parking spaces and other associated works (LPA ref. 18/1994/FUL).

3. Planning History

- 3.1 This section includes a summary of the relevant planning history for the Site based on a review of the Council’s online planning register. These applications related to the use of the Site as a health centre and are not considered of relevance to the proposed development.
- 3.2 The lawful use of the existing property is Class E(e) ‘medical or health services’, and there are no conditions or S106 obligations which restrict the use.

Application Reference	Description of Development	Decision and Date
07/1310/FUL	Replacement windows on southwest elevation	Grant – 09 July 2007
85/P0691	Extension to reception area (Circular 7/77 application)	No objection – 29 May 1985

Table 1: Planning History

- 3.3 Written pre-application advice was received from EDDC in 2017 in relation to redevelopment proposals for the Site for the demolition of the existing building and construction of a three-storey building providing a new doctor’s surgery and eight apartments with increased car parking. The advice confirmed there was no objection to the principle of mixed use on the Site and for the introduction of residential use alongside health care.

4. Proposed Development

- 4.1 This section of the Planning Statement sets out the proposals in greater detail. The description of the development is:

Permission in principle for change of use of the former Sidmouth Health Centre to provide up to 9 no. residential units (Use Class C3) and other associated works.

- 4.2 PiP is sought of the development. TDC will be sought separately.
- 4.3 The PiP stage does not require the submission of supporting layout or floorplans. However, in the interests of clarity and to assist the Council in determining the application, the application is accompanied by an indicative proposed site plan and floorplans to show how the existing building could be converted to provide 9 no. residential units (Use Class C3).
- 4.4 The plans demonstrate that the existing building could be converted into 4 no. 1-bedroom and 5 no. 2-bedroom residential units, all of which meet or exceed the minimum National Technical Space Standards. No external changes are proposed.
- 4.5 No changes are proposed to the existing vehicular or pedestrian accesses for the Site. Vehicular access into the Site would remain via an access road from Blackmore Drive to the south. The enclosed swept path analysis demonstrates suitable visibility and access for two cars to pass at the access point. This route also provides pedestrian access with a further pedestrian access provided with a path which lies to the west of the Site and leads onto Blackmore Drive.
- 4.6 Refuse servicing currently takes place along Blackmore Drive and no changes are proposed to these servicing arrangements.
- 4.7 There are currently 17 car parking spaces located between the former Health Centre and the adjacent Library. Noting the accessible location of the Site in proximity to the Town Centre, 1:1 car parking provision for the residential units is proposed. Therefore, it is intended that a total of 9 car parking spaces would serve the residential scheme, with the remainder to serve the Library and therefore shown outside of the application boundary. Further details on car parking can be secured at TDC stage.
- 4.8 Cycle parking can be provided to serve the proposed residential units. The proposed ground floor plan shows an indicative location for the cycle store. Further details on cycle parking can be secured at TDC stage.

5. Planning Policy

- 5.1 This section of the Planning Statement summarises the relevant planning policy context which the planning application will be determined.
- 5.2 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) makes it clear that ‘if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material consideration indicate otherwise’.
- 5.3 The development plan for EDDC comprises:
- East Devon Local Plan 2013-2031 (2016) and Policies Map
 - Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2032 (2019)
- 5.4 Other material considerations are:
- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (December 2023)
 - The National Design Guide (and Ministerial Statement on First Homes) (last updated in 2021)
 - EDDC Interim Guidance Note: East Devon - First Homes (2022)
 - Affordable Housing SPD (2020)
 - East Devon Planning Obligation SPD (2017)
 - Sidmouth Interim Conservation Area Review (undated)
 - Sidmouth Town Centre Conservation Area - Shopfront Practice Notes (2002)
 - Sidmouth Conservation Area Appraisal (1999)

The Current Adopted Development Plan

EDDC Local Plan 2013-2031 (2016)

- 5.5 EDDC’s Local Plan (2016) is the key strategic and statutory planning document for EDDC and will guide decisions about the developments that will take place in the local authority area over a 15 year period to 2031.

Policies Map (2016)

- 5.6 EDDC’s Policies Map has been accessed and an excerpt has been included below in Figure 2. The Site is not allocated for development in the Local Plan. The Site is subject to the following designations:
- Sidmouth Area ‘A’ Town Centre Conservation Area
 - Aerodrome Safeguarding Outline Only for Exeter Airport
 - Built-up Area Boundary (Strategy 6)



Figure 2: Extract of EDDC Policies Map (2016)

Sid Valley Neighbourhood Plan 2018-2032 (2019)

- 5.7 The Neighbourhood Plan (2019) sets out additional planning policies for Sid Valley which includes Sidmouth in relation to the built and natural environment, housing, access and connectivity, economic resilience, community and culture, and area policies for the Eastern Town and Port Royal.

Other Material Considerations

The Housing Delivery Test

- 5.8 The Government’s 2022 Housing Delivery Test (HDT) published in December 2023 identified that EDDC had a need for 2,360 homes over the 3-year period 2019/20-2021/22, and that 2,971 homes were delivered (126%). EDDC therefore met the HDT.

Five Year Housing Land Supply

- 5.9 EDDC published a Housing Monitoring Update (up to 31st March 2023) on its five year supply of deliverable sites in September 2023 which set out a 4.28 year supply (assuming requirement for a 5% buffer) for the five year period from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2028. The shortfall across the five year period is 685 dwellings. Given a five year supply cannot be demonstrated by EEDC, for the purposes of assessing relevant planning applications the

tilted balance in terms of Paragraph 11(d) of the NPPF is engaged and the presumption in favour of sustainable development will apply.

NPPF

- 5.10 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published by the Government on 20th December 2023. It sets out the Government's national policy for planning issues in a single, comprehensive document.
- 5.11 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to and aid in the achievement of sustainable development. The NPPF asserts that the planning system should carry a "presumption in favour of sustainable development", and places this at the heart of the Framework running through the creation of development plans and in the decisions taken by local planning authorities when determining planning applications.
- 5.12 Paragraph 8 sets out the three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the objectives): economic (to help build a strong, responsive, and competitive economy); social (to support strong, vibrant, and healthy community); and environmental (to protect and enhance our natural, built, and historic environment).
- 5.13 Paragraph 38 confirms that local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way. They should use the full range of planning tools available, including brownfield registers and permission in principle, and work proactively with applicants to secure developments that will improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area. Decision-makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible.
- 5.14 Paragraph 70 acknowledges small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting the housing requirement of an area, and are often built-out relatively quickly. To promote the development of a good mix of sites local planning authorities should:
- c) use tools such as area-wide design assessments, permission in principle and Local Development Orders to help bring small and medium sized sites forward;
 - d) support the development of windfall sites through their policies and decisions – giving great weight to the benefits of using suitable sites within existing settlements for homes;
- 5.15 Paragraph 127 states local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs.
- 5.16 Paragraph 205 states when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is

irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

- 5.17 Paragraph 208 sets out that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 5.18 Paragraph 213 acknowledges that not all elements of a Conservation Area will necessarily contribute to its significance.

Emerging Policy Context

EDDC

- 5.19 EDDC commenced a review of its Local Plan with Regulation 18 (Preferred Options) consultation undertaken from November 2022 to January 2023. EDDC's Local Development Scheme published in December 2023 sets out that further consultation is intended for March/April 2024, with Regulation 19 consultation in December 2024/January 2025, and submission for Examination in Public in Spring 2025.
- 5.20 The Site is not allocated for development in the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan, and the current designations remain unchanged.
- 5.21 Given the Draft Local Plan has not yet been examined we consider the draft policies should not currently be afforded any weight in the consideration of applications. Nevertheless, for completeness the proposed development has been considered against all relevant policies within the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan and this is set out in Section 6.

6. Planning Considerations

- 6.1 The Order 2017 sets out that the relevant considerations for an application for PiP (the first stage) are limited to location, land use, and amount of development proposed. All other matters are reserved for consideration at TDC stage (the second stage). As such, the development has been assessed against the Development Plan with respect to location, land use, and amount of development proposed and these matters are considered in turn below.

Location

- 6.2 Local Plan Strategy 6 is an overarching strategy that applies for all development within built up area boundaries. It states that built-up area boundaries are considered appropriate through strategic policy to accommodate growth and development, and development will be permitted if it is compatible with the character of the area, would not lead to additional pressure on services, and would not harm various amenities.
- 6.3 Local Plan Strategy 26 covers development in Sidmouth. With respect to housing, Strategy 26 states the approach for Sidmouth will see limited housing development within the existing built up area boundary with a 50-home allowance for windfall completions.
- 6.4 Draft Local Plan Strategic Policy 1 states new development will be directed towards the most sustainable locations in East Devon, consistent with the spatial strategy to promote significant development at various locations including Sidmouth to serve their own needs and that of the wider surrounding areas.
- 6.5 Draft Local Plan Strategic Policy 2 and 3 acknowledge windfall sites as contributing towards meeting housing provision requirements.
- 6.6 The Site is situated in Sidmouth Town Ward and comprises previously developed land (brownfield) in a highly accessible location, adjacent to the Town Centre Shopping Area boundary and 50m from the High Street. The principle of redevelopment is supported by the development framework, particularly as national and local planning policy encourages the effective reuse of brownfield land.

Conservation Area

- 6.7 The legislation governing listed buildings and conservation areas is the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 ('the Act'). Section 72(1) of the Act requires decision makers with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area to pay 'special attention... to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area'.
- 6.8 Conservation Areas are 'designated heritage assets', as defined by the NPPF. 'Significance' is defined in the NPPF as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic'.

The Historic England 'Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 2' (2015) puts it slightly differently and states 'the significance of a heritage asset is the sum of its archaeological, architectural, historic, and artistic interest'. The 'Conservation Principles, Policies and Guidance for the sustainable management of the historic environment' (Historic England, April 2008) describes a number of 'heritage values' that may be present in a 'significant place'. These are evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal value.

- 6.9 NPPF Paragraph 199 states when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.
- 6.10 NPPF Paragraph 200 sets out that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Paragraph 202 sets out that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.
- 6.11 Local Plan Policy EN9 states the Council will not grant permission for development involving substantial harm or total loss of significance of a designated heritage asset unless it can be demonstrated that it is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or various criteria listed in the policy apply. Where a development proposal would lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, the harm will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal, including securing its optimum viable use.
- 6.12 Local Plan Policy EN10 states that proposals for development, including alterations, extensions and changes of use, or the display of advertisements within a Conservation Area, or outside the area, but which would affect its setting or views in or out of the area, will only be permitted where it would preserve or enhance the appearance and character of the area. This is carried forward into Draft Local Plan Policy 104 which states proposals for development within or affecting the setting of a Conservation Area must conserve or enhance its special interest, character, setting and appearance.
- 6.13 The Site lies within Sidmouth Area 'A' Town Centre Conservation Area but does not contain any statutory or locally listed buildings or structures.
- 6.14 The existing building on-site dates from the 1950-60s and is a simple L-shape form of two storeys in height with brick construction and a flat roof. The associated area of hardstanding is used as car parking. Given the modern age of the building, its modest height and the absence of any significant or special design features, it is considered to make a neutral contribution to the Conservation Area. It is noted that the Council's Pre-application Response in 2017 confirms the building 'is of a form and design that offers little by way of contribution to the wider significance of this part of the designated conservation area'.

- 6.15 No external changes are proposed to the existing building under this application. The submitted plans demonstrate that the existing building could be altered internally to provide 9 no. residential units, all of which meet or exceed the minimum space standards, with windows into each habitable room. Given all the changes would be internal and no external changes would be made, the appearance and character of the Conservation Area would be preserved in accordance with the NPPF, Local Plan Policy EN9 and EN10, and Draft Local Plan Policy 104.
- 6.16 With respect to the introduction of residential use on the Site, residential units are already present within the wider Conservation Area and consent has been given for the introduction of wholly residential buildings in the Conservation Area, including on land formally occupied by the St John's Ambulance Hall which received consent in 2019 for comprehensive redevelopment to provide a 3-storey block of 8 no. 2-bedroom units (LPA ref. 18/1994/FUL). In addition, the Council's Pre-application Response in 2017 confirmed no objection to the principle of the introduction of residential use alongside health care (which was intended to be re-provided on-site at the time). The introduction of residential use on the Site is therefore considered compatible and complementary to the existing nature and character of the Conservation Area.
- 6.17 As set out above, the NPPF identifies two levels of potential 'harm' that might be caused to a heritage asset by a development: 'substantial harm...or total loss of significance' or 'less than substantial'. Both levels of harm must be caused to a designated heritage asset (i.e. the Conservation Area). The only potential for 'substantial' harm would be if the proposed scheme caused the loss of something central to the special interest of the heritage asset. There is nothing about the proposal that would give rise to this level of harm. The internal changes to the existing building and the introduction of residential use, individually or cumulatively, do not reach the threshold of harm that would cause the scheme to fail to preserve the special interest of the Conservation Area. In addition, the proposed development would not give rise to less than substantial harm. The development will assist in sustaining the life of the existing building and enable re-use of previously developed (brownfield) land, and is a similar form of development to that which has already been accepted on other sites within the Conservation Area.
- 6.18 The proposed development therefore complies with the relevant legislation, the NPPF, Local Plan Policy EN9 and EN10, and Draft Local Plan Policy 104.

Flood Zone

- 6.19 The Site is located in Flood Zone 1 (low risk) and has very low risk to surface water flooding according to the Environment Agency website. Residential uses are considered compatible in Flood Zone 1 in the NPPF and PPG. No further assessment is therefore required at this stage and the provision of residential units on the Site is acceptable in this regard.

Habitat Mitigation

- 6.20 The Site lies within the Pebblebed Heaths Special Protection Area (SPA) Contribution Zone. As such the proposal amounts to 'habitats development' for the purposes of the Order 2017. On other sites EDDC has accepted the completion of the S.111 Form and payment of the mitigation contribution as a suitable approach to mitigate the impact of development to be delivered by way of PiP. This approach is also reflected in appeal decision ref. APP/A1530/W/20/3250629.
- 6.21 The application is accompanied by a completed S.111 Form and the required mitigation payment has been made to EDDC. As suitable mitigation has been secured the provision of residential units on the Site is acceptable in this regard.

Land Use

- 6.22 NPPF Paragraph 120 states that substantial weight should be given to using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and that the development of under-utilised land and buildings should be promoted.
- 6.23 Local Plan Strategy 32 states the Council will resist the loss of employment, retail and community uses. This will include facilities such as buildings and spaces used by or for job generating uses and community and social gathering purposes, such as pubs, shops and Post Offices. Permission will not be granted for the change of use of current or allocated employment land and premises or social or community facilities, where it would harm social or community gathering and/or business and employment opportunities in the area, unless:
1. Continued use (or new use on a specifically allocated site) would significantly harm the quality of a locality whether through traffic, amenity, environmental or other associated problems; or
 2. The new use would safeguard a listed building where current uses are detrimental to it and where it would otherwise not be afforded protection; or
 3. Options for retention of the site or premises for its current or similar use have been fully explored without success for at least 12 months (and up to 2 years depending on market conditions) and there is a clear demonstration of surplus supply of land or provision in a locality; or
 4. The proposed use would result in the provision or restoration of retail (Class A1) facilities in a settlement otherwise bereft of shops. Such facilities should be commensurate with the needs of the settlement.
- 6.24 Local Plan Policy RC6 states planning permission will not be granted for developments that would result in the loss or closure of a community facility unless the community facility is no longer needed, or is not viable, or an alternative facility of equal or higher value is being provided.

- 6.25 Draft Local Plan Policy 108 states planning permission will not be granted for developments that would result in the loss or closure of a community facility unless at least one of the following tests is met:
- the community facility is no longer needed or is not viable;
 - an alternative facility of equal or higher value is being provided as an explicit replacement for that facility.
- 6.26 The existing building was occupied by Sidmouth Health Centre until October 2023. The lawful use of the existing building is Class E(e) 'medical or health services', and there are no existing conditions or S106 obligations which restrict the use to health. As such the property could be converted to any other use within Class E without the need for planning permission or the Council's prior approval. Nevertheless, the proposal has been assessed against policies relevant to a health use.
- 6.27 The application is accompanied by a Letter from NHS Devon ICB (Integrated Care Board) confirming services that operated from Sidmouth Health Centre were relocated to the Beacon Medical Centre, which was recently extended to provide 16 new clinical rooms, an additional operating theatre with recovery, large meeting/training room and additional car parking. Further reconfiguration works are due to take place at Beacon Medical Centre to provide additional clinical rooms and administrative space. In addition, a new 3 room facility with reception will operate from Sidmouth Victoria Hospital. NHS Devon ICB confirm that Sidmouth Health Centre is vacant and no longer required for delivery of existing or future primary care services. Any future services will be commissioned from other sites in accordance with the ICB's service strategy.
- 6.28 With respect to Local Plan Strategy 32, one of four tests is required to be satisfied if there is harm to social/community gathering opportunities in the area as a result of a development. If there is no harm, no assessment against the tests is required. The existing building was in use as a Health Centre from the 1960's until October 2023. As a Health Centre only patients or staff were permitted access, and therefore the building did not provide a social/community gathering opportunity for the public in the way that a community centre, library, sports centre or place of worship would, and which Local Plan Strategy 32 seeks to protect. As the Health Centre did not provide a social/community gathering opportunity, and does not currently given it is vacant, the proposal for redevelopment to residential would not harm gathering opportunities in the area and does not trigger assessment against the tests set out in Local Plan Strategy 32.
- 6.29 Should the Council consider that Sidmouth Health Centre did provide some form of social/community gathering opportunities through the provision of health services, it is noted that NHS Devon ICB has confirmed all services have been relocated to Beacon Medical Centre and Sidmouth Victoria Hospital. As services have already been relocated, there will be no loss or harm to social/community gathering opportunities in the area as a result of the proposed development and no assessment against the tests set out in Local Plan Strategy 32 is required.

- 6.30 It is also pertinent that Schedule 2 Part 3 Class MA of the GPDO (2015, as amended) sets out a permitted development right to allow a change of use from Use Class E to Use Class C3 where certain criteria are satisfied and prior approval secured. This is considered to represent a 'fallback' option for the Site and could be pursued once the 3-month vacancy requirement is met in early 2024. As the requirement can be met imminently, the fallback position is deemed to be a material consideration relevant to the determination of this PiP application.
- 6.31 With respect to Local Plan Policy RC6 and Draft Local Plan Policy 108, the Letter from NHS Devon ICB confirms all services have been relocated to Beacon Medical Centre (which has been considerably extended) and Sidmouth Victoria Hospital, and the Site is no longer required for delivery of existing or future primary care services. As the Site has been declared surplus to operational healthcare requirements and services have been relocated to alternative facilities, Local Plan Policy RC6 and Draft Local Plan Policy 108 are satisfied.
- 6.32 As the proposed development comprises the conversion of an existing building into flats, Local Plan Policy H3 is also relevant. Policy H3 requires proposals for the conversion of buildings to be compatible with other relevant policies in the Local Plan and the following criteria:
1. The proposed conversion will not materially adversely affect the character and amenities of the surrounding area or the building itself.
 2. Development is located close to a range of accessible services and facilities to meet the everyday needs of residents.
 3. Provision is made for adequate bicycle storage and car parking. Hard surfacing of front gardens to facilitate car parking will not be permitted where this would have an unacceptably harmful effect on the appearance of the area or on flooding.
 4. Provision is made for storage of refuse
- 6.33 With regard to the criteria, the proposed conversion will not materially adversely affect the character and amenities of the surrounding area or the building itself as set out within the above sections of the Planning Statement, satisfying the first criteria. The Site lies adjacent to the Town Centre Shopping Area boundary, 50m from the High Street, and therefore in proximity to a range of accessible services and facilities to meet the everyday needs of residents, in accordance with the second criteria. The latter sections of this Planning Statement discuss car, cycle and refuse arrangements, all of which can be accommodated on-site with further detail provided at TDC application stage, meeting the requirements of the third and fourth criteria. All criteria of Local Plan Policy H3 are therefore satisfied and compliance with all other relevant policies for an application for PiP is set out in this Planning Statement.
- 6.34 In summary, the proposed development accords with the NPPF, Local Plan Strategy 32, Policy RC6 and Policy H3, and Draft Local Plan Policy 108 with respect to land use.

Amount

Residential

- 6.35 The Local Plan does not specify a minimum or maximum density for development. Local Plan Policy D1 states that proposals will only be permitted where they ensure the density relates well to their context. Draft Local Plan Policy 63 states proposals for residential development will be permitted provided that the development optimises the density of the site in a manner that conserves or enhances the character of the area and makes efficient use of land.
- 6.36 Local Plan Policy H2 seeks a mix of units for schemes of 15 dwellings or more, or on sites of 0.5 ha or larger. There is no prescriptive mix sought on schemes or sites which fall below this threshold. Draft Local Plan 43 seeks a mix of units, demonstrating how the site responds to robust, up to date evidence about housing need, including the mix of property sizes for market housing shown in the East Devon Local Housing Need Assessment 2022.
- 6.37 PiP is sought for up to 9 no. residential units (Use Class C3). The proposed development will make the best use of this accessible, underutilised brownfield Site in accordance with Local Plan Policy D1 and Draft Local Plan Policy 63.
- 6.38 The PiP stage does not require the submission of supporting layout or floorplans. However, in the interests of clarity and to assist the Council in determining the application, the application is accompanied by an indicative proposed site plan and floorplans to show how the Site could be redeveloped to provide 9 no. residential units (Use Class C3). The plans demonstrate that the existing building could be converted into 4 no. 1-bedroom and 5 no. 2-bedroom residential units, all of which meet or exceed the minimum National Technical Space Standards. The provision includes 2-bedroom, 4-person dwellings which would be suitable for occupation by small families. Given the small-scale nature of the development proposals, the location of the Site 50m from the Town Centre, and that the adopted Local Plan does not set a prescriptive unit mix, the proposed indicative dwelling mix is considered acceptable with regard to the aspirations of Local Plan Policy H2 and Draft Local Plan Policy 63.
- 6.39 Full details on the layout and design of the proposed units can be provided at TDC application stage. In addition, further detail on how the amenities of neighbouring occupiers is protected can be set out at TDC application stage if needed.
- 6.40 The amount of residential development sought by the application is considered acceptable and in accordance with the Development Plan.

Access, Car and Cycle Parking

- 6.41 Local Plan Policy TC2 states new development should be located so as to be accessible by pedestrians, cyclists and public transport and also well related to compatible land uses so as to minimise the need to travel by car. Draft Local Plan Strategic Policy 65 states new

development should incorporate the features of a “20-minute neighbourhood” with walking and cycling prioritised.

- 6.42 Local Plan Policy TC9 states as a guide at least 1 car parking space should be provided for one bedroom homes and 2 car parking spaces per home with two or more bedrooms. At least 1 bicycle parking space should be provided per home. Draft Local Plan Policy 68 states new residential developments will be required to provide parking provisions to an average of not less than 1.6 car parking spaces per dwelling and 2 cycle parking spaces per dwelling (rounded up to the nearest whole number in individual applications). Both the adopted and draft policies state that in town centres where there is access to public car parks and/or on-street parking, lower levels of parking, and in exceptional cases where there are also very good public transport links, car parking spaces may not be deemed necessary.
- 6.43 No changes are proposed to the existing vehicular or pedestrian accesses for the Site. Vehicular access into the Site would remain via an access road from Blackmore Drive to the south, which leads onto the High Street and Town Centre. The enclosed swept path analysis demonstrates suitable visibility and access for two cars to pass at the access point. This route also provides pedestrian access with a further pedestrian access provided with a path which lies to the west of the Site and leads onto Blackmore Drive. Refuse servicing currently takes place along Blackmore Drive and no changes are proposed to these servicing arrangements. The development will therefore be accessible by pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles, with public transport in walking distance, in accordance with Local Plan Policy TC2 and Draft Local Plan Strategic Policy 65.
- 6.44 With respect to car parking, there are currently 17 car parking spaces located between the former Health Centre and the adjacent Library. Noting the accessible location of the Site in proximity to the Town Centre, 1:1 car parking provision for the residential units is proposed. This quantum (1:1) was accepted on the St John’s Ambulance Hall scheme, 50m southeast of the Site, which received consent in 2019 for 8 no. 2-bedroom units served by 8 parking spaces (LPA ref. 18/1994/FUL). Therefore, it is intended that a total of 9 car parking spaces would serve the proposed residential units, with the remainder to serve the Library and therefore shown outside of the application boundary. Further details on car parking and management of the spaces can be secured at TDC stage.
- 6.45 Cycle parking can be provided to serve the proposed residential units. The proposed ground floor plan shows an indicative location for the cycle store. Further details on cycle parking layout can be secured at TDC stage.

7. Conclusion

7.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires development proposals to be determined in accordance with the development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The application is for PiP as provided for in the Town and Country Planning (Permission in Principle) Order 2017 (as amended) and therefore the relevant considerations are limited to location, land use, and amount of development proposed.

7.2 The full description of the proposed development is:

Permission in principle for change of use of the former Sidmouth Health Centre to provide up to 9 no. residential units (Use Class C3) and other associated works.

7.3 The proposed location, land use, and amount of residential units has been carefully considered and the details provided as part of the application accord with the requirement of the Order 2017.

7.4 We consider that the development proposal will bring a number of key public benefits as follows:

- Optimisation of the development potential of the Site in line with the NPPF objectives;
- Redevelopment of a vacant brownfield site within a highly accessible location adjacent to a Town Centre;
- Provision of up to 9 new residential units which contributes to EDDC housing targets and five year housing supply position;
- Ability to provide a mix of 1 to 2 bedroom homes;
- Securing the Pebblebed Heaths SPA Habitat Mitigation Contribution.

7.5 This Planning Statement demonstrates that the development complies with the development plan viewed as a whole, and it should therefore be approved without delay.