



Appeal Decision

Site visit made on 20 October 2025

by **R Bartlett PGDip URP MRTPI**

an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State

Decision date: 29th October 2025

Appeal Ref: APP/M0655/W/25/3369888

148 Knutsford Road, Grappenhall and Thelwall, Warrington, WA4 2PW

- The appeal is made under section 78 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) against a refusal to grant planning permission.
- The appeal is made by Mr Brown of Grappenhall Dental Practice against the decision of Warrington Borough Council.
- The application Ref is 2024/01496/FUL.
- The development proposed is a single storey side extension to replace existing carport/storage area.

Decision

1. The appeal is allowed, and planning permission is granted for a single storey side extension to replace existing carport/storage area, at 148 Knutsford Road, Grappenhall and Thelwall, Warrington, WA4 2PW, in accordance with the terms of the application, Ref 2024/01496/FUL, subject to the following conditions:
 - 1) The development hereby permitted shall begin not later than three years from the date of this decision.
 - 2) The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with drawing nos. GDS 4361 REV A (elevations and section), GDS 4362 REV A (floor plan) and location plan.
 - 3) The external materials of the extension hereby permitted shall match those used in the existing building.
 - 4) The extension hereby permitted shall not be brought into use until cycle parking for a minimum of four bicycles has been provided to the front of the building, and this shall remain available for the life of the development.

Main Issues

2. The proposed extension would facilitate the provision of an additional treatment room and a store within the existing well established dental practice. The main issues are i) whether the additional treatment room would result in adverse effects on highway safety and the residential amenity of local residents, due to increased parking demand; and ii) the effect of the development on bats.

Reasons

Highway safety and amenity

3. The site comprises a detached former dwelling house, located in a suburban residential area interspersed by various commercial uses. The building is set back from the road behind a brick boundary wall and soft landscaped front garden. The existing carport structure to be demolished is used for storage and as such its removal would not result in the loss of any car parking. The existing driveway,

which is only large enough to park a single car, would be retained, and although this does not appear to be used regularly, it does provide parking close to the practice for patients with mobility issues.

4. I am advised that the change of use of the ground floor of the former dwelling to a dental practice was granted in 2005, followed by the use of the first floor in 2007 and the addition of a conservatory waiting room in 2009. I have been provided with copies of the 2005 and 2007 decisions, neither of which restrict opening times, the number of staff, registered patients or treatment rooms, or require the provision or retention of any on site car or cycle parking facilities. As such, the number of staff, patients and treatment rooms could be increased by extending opening hours and rearranging the internal layout of the building, without the need for planning permission.
5. My attention has been drawn to car parking provisions shown on the originally approved plans, which was to the front and side of the main building. Aside from the fact these were not conditioned or the approved drawings enforced within the relevant timeframe, the parking provisions shown would not have been suitable for the commercial use. As well as obstructing pedestrian access to the building, the parking arrangements would have resulted in cars being blocked in, and having to reverse in and out of the site, over the pavement, to and from the busy road, which would cause a greater risk to highway and pedestrian safety than vehicles parking on the roadside in unrestricted areas. Removing the front boundary wall and levelling and paving the front garden to provide additional off-street parking would have similar consequences and would be counterproductive as the provision of a wider dropped kerb would reduce on street parking. It would also detract from the residential appearance of the site and neighbouring properties.
6. The A50, Knutsford Road, is a busy main route into and out of Warrington Town Centre. Bus stops are located along it at regular intervals. I noted that unrestricted on street parking is available nearby, on Knutsford Road and other nearby residential streets. Many of the dwellings in the area have their own off-street parking, and road markings along Knutsford Road highlight driveway entrances that need to be kept clear. There are double yellow lines along parts of Knutsford Road, which prevent parking opposite the practice and where it would obscure visibility from junctions.
7. Parking surveys submitted by the appellant indicate that there would be sufficient parking spaces to accommodate the increased demand generated by the additional treatment room, within a 2 minute/168 metre walking distance, albeit I see no reason why most staff and patients would not be willing or able to walk further than this. It should not be assumed that all staff will drive to work or will do so individually. Some may walk, cycle, car share, be dropped off and picked up or use public transport. The same applies to patients, as couples and families will often have linked appointments, particularly children and adults requiring assistance.
8. I have had regard to the concerns raised by a small number of local residents, the Parish Council, and a resident living over a mile from the site. I have also studied the parking survey and photographs provided by residents, showing cars parked over pavements, verges and driveways, damage to verges, and restricted access between parked cars for large vehicles. However, I cannot be certain that vehicles shown parked across driveways in photographs do not belong to residents or

visitors of those houses, that any of the vehicles shown belong to staff or patients of the dental practice or that any damage caused is by staff or patients. Whilst I have no doubt that some staff and patients will park their cars in local side streets, the small increase in parking generated by the additional treatment room would have a negligible impact on this. In reaching this view I am mindful of the fact that occupiers of the two dwellings immediately adjoining the appeal site on Knutsford Road are supportive of the proposal and have experienced no problems parking, accessing or exiting their driveways.

9. Concerns have been raised that patients would be arriving in a rush, with little time to drive around looking for a space and would therefore disregard safety. There is no evidence to back up this assumption. Patients tend to remain with the same dentist for long periods of time and to live relatively local. As such, those that need or choose to drive to their appointments, will have knowledge of where to park and allow adequate time to do so.
10. My visit was unaccompanied and unannounced on a Monday morning, which is referred to as a busy time that was not covered by the submitted parking survey. I appreciate that like the survey data, my observations represent only a snapshot in time. However, I had no problem finding a space to park close to the practice on Knutsford Road and I saw that there were other spaces available nearby. This was despite there being several people in the waiting room. I also saw patients arriving and leaving the practice on foot and by cars parked on Knutsford Road. No cars were parked on the driveway in front of the carport or across any nearby road markings or driveways.
11. I have not been made aware of any traffic orders that would make it unlawful to park on the pavements in this area, and whilst I appreciate that drivers are doing this to avoid obstructing traffic, it does result in damage to footpaths and verges. This form of parking also obstructs the use of pavements by pedestrians, and particularly for pushchair and wheelchair users. However, traffic on the roads affected is not particularly busy or fast flowing, and such parking already occurs, including on evenings and weekends when the dental practice is closed. No accident records in the area have been brought to my attention.
12. Although reference is made to a survey of existing patient numbers, this has not been submitted as part of the appeal. I am mindful of the fact that patients would ordinarily be seen on an appointment basis only, and whilst some appointments may overlap, there would not be large numbers of patients waiting to be seen at a time. It would also not necessarily be the case that all surgeries are in use all the time and in this respect, I am advised that there are already 4 dentists working from this practice despite there only being 3 treatment rooms. Adding a 4th treatment room does not therefore mean that staff and patient numbers would increase by a third. No changes are proposed to the opening hours of the dental practice, which are currently 9am to 5pm on weekdays only.
13. It is not uncommon for Doctor and Dentist surgeries to be located in built up residential areas, where they are easily accessible by all members of the community on foot, by bicycle, and by public transport, as well as by car. Relocating the practice elsewhere, to enable a higher provision of onsite car parking, would not align with the objectives of sustainable development and of locating development where it can be easily accessed by a range of travel modes, reducing the need to travel by car.

14. With regards to cycle parking, the details of the shelter submitted is typical of that used by families to store cycles for long periods. It would not provide convenient short stay cycle parking for staff and patients of the dental surgery, as the cycles at the rear and in the middle of the shelter would be blocked in by those in front. However, it is agreed that cycle parking could be secured by a condition. Conditions should only relate to the development to be permitted, and should not be used to address existing shortfalls. As such, I consider that a minimum of 4 cycle parking spaces would be sufficient.
15. As the front garden and driveway are not used for car parking, a cycle parking stand could be provided to the front of the building. As patient visits would be short, a large, covered storage shelter, which would detract from the residential appearance of the area, would not be necessary. The provision of a couple of steel Sheffield type stands or wheel racks, attached to the ground or a wall, would suffice to enable cycles to be easily parked and locked without causing obstruction.
16. Whilst I do not consider that the provision of a separate covered cycle parking area for staff would be necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms, given the very limited increase to the size of the existing practice, I note that space would be retained to the side of the extension, which would enable staff bicycles to be safely stored in the rear garden.
17. Based upon the survey evidence before me, and my own observations, I am satisfied that the increase in on street parking at any one time, generated by one additional treatment room, could be accommodated in the area without detriment to highway safety. The only residential amenity issue raised is that of inconsiderate parking outside of nearby dwellings. Existing measures are in place in the area to prevent dangerous parking adjacent to junctions and across driveways. If drivers are disregarding road traffic markings and signage and causing dangerous obstructions, this is a matter for the Police, Traffic/Parking Wardens or the Highway Authority to address.
18. I therefore conclude that the development would not be detrimental to highway safety or residential amenity. As such it would accord with policies INF1 and ENV8 of the Warrington Local Plan 2021/22 – 2038/39 (the local plan), which seek amongst other things to protect general levels of amenity, to ensure traffic generated by development has no adverse impact on the local community, and to locate development in sustainable and accessible locations, reducing the need to travel by car. The Parking Standards Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is intended to provide guidance only and I have not been made aware of any adopted development plan policies requiring compliance with it. I have therefore afforded this limited weight and consider that it would be unreasonable to apply the standards in the SPD to an existing established facility that pre-dates it.

Bats

19. The existing structure to be demolished is a simple lean-to carport, with a shallow sloping plywood boarded roof, covered with mineral felt, supported by timber posts, behind an up and over garage door and a brick fronted surround, with parapet wall. The sides are enclosed only by the brick buildings on either side, which are to be retained, and the rear is open. The roof of the main building on the

site would not be disturbed. The carport is used for storing general waste and recycling bins and clinical waste bins.

20. There is no evidence to suggest that anybody from the Council or the Greater Manchester Ecology Unit has viewed the structure in person or has had regard to its use, its construction or the internal and external photographs provided of it. I have not been advised of any records indicating that bats are known to be present in the area, and whilst interested parties have seen bats flying in the area, having regard to Natural England guidance, the scale and nature of the structure, and its location in a busy urban area, the carport would be highly unlikely to support bat roosts. Planning permission is not required to remove the existing carport structure, and as bats are a European protected species, in the unlikely event they were to be discovered, they are protected by law.
21. I therefore conclude that a bat survey is not necessary and the likelihood of any harm occurring to protected species as a result of the development would be negligible. Accordingly, the proposal would not conflict with policy DC4 of the local plan, which seeks to ensure development would not result in harm to any protected species.

Conditions

22. I have imposed the standard time limit condition and a condition listing the approved drawings to provide certainty on these matters. A matching materials condition is necessary to ensure the development is acceptable in terms of its appearance. As the proposal would increase staff and patient numbers, a condition to require the provision of cycle parking for a minimum of 4 bicycles, at the front of the site is reasonable and necessary to encourage and aid staff and patients to cycle. As a covered shelter would not be necessary for short stay cycle parking, I do not consider that the details need to be agreed by the Council.
23. The Council has suggested the imposition of conditions to restrict the number of dentists employed, the hours worked each day, and the number of patients registered with the practice, but have not suggested what these should be limited to or explained how such conditions would meet the relevant tests of law or policy. As the proposal relates to an existing established business, which is not currently restricted in terms of its hours of use and staff numbers, it would be unreasonable to impose such conditions in relation to a very modest extension.

Conclusion

24. For the reasons given above, the appeal is allowed.

R Bartlett

INSPECTOR