Hewitt&CarrServices

Planning Statement

Erection of single storey commercial building (B1 Light Industrial) for the production of nutraceuticals
Sub-4 Health Centre, Leek Road, Cellarhead
For Biobrade Ltd.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1. This Planning Statement has been prepared to support a planning application for the erection of a detached light industrial building for Biobrade Ltd, at the Sub-4 Health Centre, Leek Road, Cellarhead, which is to be used for the production of Nutraceuticals.

1.2. Biobrade Ltd. was established in November 2018 and currently operates from the Sub-4 Health Centre site. It has recently acquired the Sub-4 business, and continues to provide the services and facilities provided by Sub-4, and also provides advice and health supplements to patients and manufactures its own Nutraceutical products on site. Nutraceuticals are fortified food products that act as dietary supplements, and also assist in treating or preventing disease. The manufacturing process is specialised and involves the mixing of the product blend by a chemical engineer, the pressing of the tablets, and shipping of the product to the customer. The business has grown substantially over the last 18 months and the proposed development is required in order to facilitate the sustainable growth of the business.

1.3. The building will occupy a footprint of 301.9 square metres and will stand to a maximum height of 3.65 metres. The building will be located to the east of the existing Health Centre building, replacing a timber shed that currently occupies the site. It is to be constructed from red facing brickwork, with white rendered front portico, with a grass sedum roof atop. Vehicular access to the site will be via the established vehicular access serving the Health Centre which serves the existing car parking area.

1.4. Pre-application discussions have been entered into with the Local Authority (Mr. B. Haywood) where it was confirmed that the proposal would amount to an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt, but that a case of very special circumstances may exist based around the economic, health benefits of the development. It was nevertheless recommended that evidence be submitted to demonstrate why other locations within the Moorlands would not achieve similar aims. Some recommendations were also given in respect of the siting and design of the building and proposed materials palette. The comments received at pre-application stage have been addressed within the submitted proposal, and within this Planning Statement.

2.0 SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1. The application site lies comprises a parcel of land located to the east of the existing Health Centre on site, and which is partly previously developed in nature. The building is to be located to the immediate east of an Orthotics Manufacturing building that was granted consent under application SMD/2012/1002. The site is currently occupied by a timber storage building which is to be removed as a consequence of the development. The Kingsley Road (A52) encloses the southern boundary of the site, beyond which lies a

recently constructed residential development off Cherry Gardens. The existing complex of buildings associated with the Health Centre is located to its west, with the main car park located to the northwest of the site. Open land is located to the north and east of the proposed building. Vehicular access to the site is taken direct off the Leek Road (A520) which serves an extensive area of hardstanding that is used for car parking. The site as a whole lies within the North Staffordshire Green Belt.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

3.1. Paragraph 11 of the NPPF confirms that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan for this area comprises the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD (March 2014) and the following policies are of relevance to the determination of this application.

3.2. Policy SS6a of the Core Strategy confirms that the larger villages, of which Werrington & Cellarhead are one, will retain and enhance their role as rural service centres, providing for the bulk of the local housing needs of the rural areas and also for limited employment needs of a scale and type appropriate to each settlement. This will be achieved by:

- Enabling small-scale new employment development;
- Improving and intensifying the use of existing employment areas and, where appropriate, expanding them.

3.3. Policy E1 of the Core Strategy states that new employment development will be assessed according to the extent to which it supports and improves the local economy in terms of providing for the needs and skills of the existing and future local resident workforce and meeting identified business needs, having regard to the Area Strategies in SS5 and SS6. In addition, all proposals should help maintain or enhance an appropriate range of employment premises and sites across the District in terms of their scale, location and type. New business developments (use classes B1 a, b and c) should be located in existing or proposed employment areas or in or on the edge of town centres. Preference will be given to town centre locations for all developments, unless ancillary to another use or specifically allocated. Elsewhere business developments will only be permitted for the expansion of existing businesses or for small-scale developments provided they would not have an unacceptable impact on the amenities, character or appearance of the area.

3.4. Policy SS6c of the Core Strategy states that the rural areas will provide only for development which meets an essential local need, supports the rural diversification and sustainability of the rural areas, promotes sustainable tourism or enhances the countryside. The policy also states that the rural economy will be sustained by enabling the limited expansion or redevelopment of an existing authorised business for employment uses. Policy SS6c also confirms that strict

control will continue to be exercised over inappropriate development within the Green Belt allowing only for exceptions as defined by Government policy.

3.5. Policy R1 of the Core Strategy states that all development in the rural areas outside the development boundaries of the towns and villages will be assessed according to the extent to which it enhances the character, appearance and biodiversity of the countryside, promotes the sustainable diversification of the rural economy, facilitates economic activity, meets a rural community need and sustains the historic environment. Appropriate development should not harm the rural character and environmental quality of the area or any sites designated for their nature conservation, or historical interest by virtue of the scale, nature and level of activity involved and the type and amount of traffic generated or by other effects such as noise and pollution. Wherever possible development should be within suitably located buildings which are appropriate for conversion. Where new or replacement buildings are involved, development should have minimal impact on the countryside and be in close proximity to an existing settlement. Within the Green Belt, inappropriate development which is otherwise acceptable within the terms of this policy, will still need to be justified by very special circumstances.

3.6. Policy DC1 of the Core Strategy states that all development shall be well designed and reinforce local distinctiveness by positively contributing to and complementing the special character and heritage of the area in line with the Council's Design SPD. In particular, new development should (amongst others):

- be of a high quality and add value to the local area, incorporating creativity, detailing and materials appropriate to the character of the area;
- be designed to respect the site and its surroundings and promote a positive sense of place and identity through its scale, density, layout, siting, landscaping, character and appearance;
- create, where appropriate, attractive, functional, accessible and safe public and private environments which incorporate, amongst others, landscaping and designing out crime initiatives;
- protect the amenity of the area, including residential amenity, in terms of satisfactory daylight, sunlight, outlook, privacy and soft landscaping;
- promote the maintenance, enhancement, restoration and re-creation of biodiversity and geological heritage, where appropriate, in accordance with policy NE1;
- provide for safe and satisfactory access and make a contribution to meeting the parking requirement arising from necessary car use;
- ensure that existing drainage, waste water and sewerage infrastructure capacity is available, and where necessary enhanced, to enable the development to proceed;

3.7. Policy DC3 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will protect and, where possible, enhance local landscape and the setting of settlements in the Staffordshire Moorlands by:

1. Resisting development which would harm or be detrimental to the character of the local and wider landscape or the setting of a settlement and important views into and out of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment;

2. Supporting development which respects and enhances local landscape character, and which reinforces and enhances the setting of the settlement as identified in the Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment;

3. Supporting opportunities to positively manage the landscape and use sustainable building techniques and materials which are sympathetic to the landscape;

4.0 MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Planning Policy Framework (February 2019)

4.1. The National Planning Policy Framework sets out guidance in respect of development within the Green Belt. It also sets out guidance in respect of supporting the rural economy (amongst others). The content of the NPPF is a material consideration in the determination of this application and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Issues section below.

SMDC Growth Strategy (December 2018)

4.2. This document sets out a plan for the sustainable growth of the Staffordshire Moorlands District and identifies issues and opportunities in respect of business, employment growth and skills. The content of this document is a material consideration in the determination of this application and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Issues section below.

SMDC Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (2008)

4.3. This document forms part of the evidence base to the emerging Local Plan and provides a framework to guide future development and management of the landscape. The content of this document is a material consideration in the determination of this application and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Issues section below.

SMDC Physical Activity and Sport Strategy (2017)

4.4. This document confirms that the District Council and its partners are seeking to redress an increasing trend of inactivity through engagement in physical activity, and that establishing positive behaviour change and a resilient physical activity habit among those people that are inactive will only come about by providing choice, motivation and support in a co-ordinated way, across many different partners and services. The content of this document is a material consideration in the determination of this application and is discussed in more detail within the Planning Issues section below.

5.0 PLANNING ISSUES

Impact on the Green Belt

5.1. The application site lies within the Green Belt wherein there is a presumption against the erection of new buildings, unless it is for one of the exceptions listed in paragraphs 145 or 146 of the NPPF. The proposed light industrial building (B1) does not fall within any of the exceptions listed within the NPPF, and therefore constitutes an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt.

5.2. The proposed building will occupy a footprint of 301.9 square metres but will have a close physical association to the existing cluster of buildings on this site, as well as the buildings on the opposite side of the road (Cherry Gardens). In views on approach from the east along the Kingsley Road the single storey form of the building and grass roof will assimilate positively with the existing boundary hedgerow, and any views of the building will be read against the backdrop of the existing Health Centre. The development will furthermore replace an existing timber storage building that already exists on the site. Consequently, it is submitted that the overall impact of the development on the openness of the Green Belt will be limited.

5.3. Paragraph 143 of the NPPF states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Paragraph 144 goes on to state that when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. 'Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations. The case for very special circumstances will now be considered.

Economic Benefits

5.4. The Strategic Vision for the Staffordshire Moorlands, as set out within the Core Strategy, states that the economy of the Moorlands will have undergone a significant change with more diversified and higher quality employment provision, better meeting the skills and needs of its local workforce and more opportunities for business start-ups across the whole of the District. There will be a more flexible and proactive approach to employment development, raising the District's economic fortunes by exploiting its assets, raising local skill levels and opportunities and addressing deficiencies and disadvantages.

5.5. Policy E1 of the Core Strategy reflects this vision, and states that new employment development will be assessed according to the extent to which it supports and improves the local economy in terms of providing for the needs and skills of the existing and future local resident workforce and meeting identified business needs. It seeks to ensure that all proposals help to maintain or enhance an appropriate range of employment premises and sites across the District, with a focus placed on targeting development in, or on the edge of,

town centres, unless the use is ancillary to another use, or relates to the expansion of an existing business.

5.6. The provisions of policy E1 are reflected within the National Planning Policy Framework, with paragraph 80 stating that:

> *"Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. **Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development**. The approach taken should allow each area to **build on its strengths**, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential". (our emphasis)*

5.7. Paragraph 83 of the NPPF goes on to state that:

> *"planning policies and decisions should **enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business** in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings". (our emphasis)*

5.8. Biobrade Ltd. was established by managing director Clifton Bradeley in November 2018. He is an ex-international athlete who competed for both England and Great Britain and was the first athlete to run a sub-4-minute mile indoors. His career was unfortunately curtailed by injury which led him into the world of orthotics, biomechanics and now nutraceuticals. The applicant has had a long-term interest in nutraceuticals, having been an international runner. He has used natural, ethical supplements throughout his career and life, and has also recommended them to his patients for the last 25 years and seen the benefits this has derived to their health. Biobrade Ltd. has recently acquired Sub-4 Health and is able to offer its customers a wide range of complimentary health services, including:

- Podiatry
- Chiropody
- Physiotherapy
- Sports injury treatment
- Biomechanics
- Clinical Biomechanics
- Gait Analysis
- Orthotics Manufacturing
- Spa treatments
- Nutritionist Consultation
- Strength & Conditioning Sessions
- Counselling Sessions
- Nutraceuticals

5.9. The Moorlands has a reputation for tourism, relaxation, natural beauty and therefore wellbeing - including mental health. The applicant's vision is to develop a health hub that compliments the existing healthy living ethos of the area, promoting the Moorlands as a healthy lifestyle destination and promoting fitness, health eating, and education to schools and local people. The existing business already attracts world class footballers and athletes from all over the world and has clients nationwide. The new nutraceutical component of the business has attracted the financial support of one of the wealthiest families in the UK who also wish to support healthy living, family values and innovation.

5.10. The global Nutraceutical market is already worth an estimated $230 billion and is forecast to reach $340 billion by 2024 – an increase of 7.2% per annum (Source: Global Nutraceuticals Market Report). The factors driving the growth of the industry are increasing demands for a healthier diet, and substitutes for prescription and over the counter drugs, amongst others. The UK is an increasingly important player in the Nutraceutical market, and this is reflected by the rapid growth of Biobrade Ltd. since its inception in November 2018.

5.11. Strategic Objective 3 of the Core Strategy seeks to develop and diversify the District's economy in a sustainable manner and meet local employment needs in the towns and villages. The SMDC Growth Strategy reflects Strategic Objective 3 and identifies a number of issues in respect of delivering new business and employment growth within the District, including the perception of rural areas being unsuitable and unwelcoming for business growth, low wages acting as a disincentive to skills acquisition in a number of sectors. It goes on to identify a number of opportunities, including that employment growth is a key political priority and is supported by the District Deal commitment from Staffordshire County Council.

5.12. The manufacturing of nutraceuticals is a specialised manufacturing process and involves the mixing of the product blend by a chemical engineer, the pressing of the tablets, and shipping of the product to the customer. Owing to the specialised nature of nutraceuticals, staff need to have very high levels of training and experience. The company is looking to expand its facilities and invest in the physical infrastructure of the business in order to sustain the growth that they have already experienced, and to grow that further. Following the establishment of Biobrade in November 2018, and its subsequent acquisition of Sub-4 Health, the site currently employs 14 people. The applicant forecasts that this will increase to between 25 and 30 within the next three years, with a projected turnover per annum in excess of £1,500,000 by the end of 2022. The proposed development will enable the sustainable growth of the existing business and will derive additional skilled employment to the benefit of the local economy. Such benefits carry significant weight in favour of the proposed development.

5.13. SMDCs "Quantifying the Economic Impact of Growth Report" (Feb 2017) states that between 4.5% - 9% of an employee's overall weekly household spend is spent close to their place of employment, which in the Staffordshire Moorlands

equates to £1,394 per annum. The same report also identifies that people who live and work locally spend approximately 41% of their disposable income in the local area compared to average households, going on to state that:

> *"This means that business investment* ***which attracts a proportion of immigration of new working age residents*** *through re-location to the area,* ***especially higher income earners, will have a greater positive impact on the local economy****, as long as there is sufficient supply in the housing market. In Staffordshire Moorlands, this would equate to £11,182 per relocating/new employee per annum" (our emphasis)*

5.14. The proposed development will deliver a significant number of new skilled employment roles within the Moorlands, attracting new talent to the District, and/or providing new opportunities for existing residents. In turn, the development will deliver significant economic benefits associated with household expenditure by employees, to the further benefit of the local economy. Such economic benefits are considered to carry significant weight in favour of the proposed development.

5.15. The application site has been chosen for this development as it, along with the adjacent Health Centre, is already owned by Biobrade Ltd. The existing production is already based on this site and is at capacity, with a container recently brought onto site to provide immediate additional storage for some of the base ingredient products. The company needs additional space to grow and develop, and consequently it is vital to the sustainable growth of the business that a new facility is constructed on site. The nutraceutical manufacturing and associated training / education provision to be provided within this building are cohesive and complimentary to the other uses offered by Biobrade Ltd. on this site, and are all in one single business ownership (NB: at the time of the pre-application submission Biobrade Ltd. was a separate business entity). Expanding the business on this site will ensure that a cohesive and efficient business operation can be maintained.

5.16. More than half existing Health Centre is already used by Biobrade Ltd. for its nutraceutical development and production and this will remain once the new building is constructed. The new building is to help *expand operations*, not to relocate the existing operations. By locating additional manufacturing capacity elsewhere there will be an inherent need for staff to travel to different locations throughout the working day, vastly reducing the cohesiveness and efficiency of the existing business operation and dramatically increasing its carbon footprint. Such arrangements would be firmly at odds with the aims of both the Core Strategy and the National Planning Policy Framework in supporting more sustainable travel patterns.

5.17. The above notwithstanding, consideration has been given to alternative non-Green Belt sites as recommended by the Local Authority, in order to demonstrate why the proposed development is the optimal solution for this business. The sites have been identified using the Local Authority's Inward

Investment Register and the following criteria have been applied in order to determine whether any of the other sites would provide a suitable alternative to meet the applicant's reasonable business requirements:

- The site should have a minimum floor area of 1250 square metres
- The site should have a maximum floor area of 1750 square metres
- The site should be suitable in planning terms for a mixed B1 and D1 use
- The site should have good public transport connections
- The site should have appropriate / adequate off-street parking provision
- Freehold sites preferred

Former Mill, London Street, Leek

5.18. This site would likely be appropriate in planning terms for the applicant's range of uses (B1 and D1) but vastly exceeds the maximum floorspace requirements of the business and has no off-street parking provision. It is therefore discounted on this basis.

Unit 1, New Haden Industrial Estate, Cheadle

5.19. This site would fall within the identified floor area range identified above but constitutes an industrial unit on an established and noisy industrial site, which is unsuited to the applicant's operations and which would be unsuitable in planning terms for the D1 uses associated with the applicant's business. There is also no freehold opportunity. This site has therefore been discounted on this basis.

Units 22 & 23 Blythe Park Industrial Estate, Cresswell

5.20. This site would exceed the maximum floor area threshold by a considerably margin and is also located within an established industrial estate, which would be unsuitable in planning terms for the D1 uses associated with the applicant's business. It also has no freehold opportunity available and is not served by public transport. This site has therefore been discounted.

Old Bank Mill, Ball Haye Road, Leek

5.21. This site would likely be appropriate in planning terms for the applicant's range of uses (B1 and D1) but exceeds the maximum floorspace threshold and has only limited off-street parking. It has therefore been discounted on this basis.

Alexandra Mill, Queen Street, Leek

5.22. This site would be appropriate in planning terms for the applicant's range of uses (B1 and D1) and whilst it is advertised on the Local Authority's Inward Investment register as having a floorspace that falls within the identified thresholds, a large proportion of the building is already established in residential use. The commercial floorspace available on the site falls below the minimum threshold (782 square metres). The asking price for the development (£1,300,000) is also unviable for the applicant's business to consider purchase of. The site has therefore been discounted on this basis.

Cross Street Mill, Cross Street, Leek

5.23. This site would be appropriate in planning terms for the applicant's range of uses (B1 and D1) and is advertised on the Local Authority's Inward Investment register as having a floorspace of 2742 square metres, which exceeds the maximum threshold required by the applicant. On further inspection the unit appears to be broken down into numerous small cellular suites, more geared towards smaller start-up businesses, and none of the individual suites comes close to meeting the applicant's minimum floorspace threshold. The site has therefore been discounted on this basis.

Old Court House, High Street, Leek

5.24. This is an existing retail site located within on the outskirts of Leek Town Centre and would potentially be suitable for the applicant's range of uses. However, it falls below the minimum floorspace threshold, and has no off-street parking provision. The site has therefore been discounted on this basis.

5.25. Having regard to the above assessment, it is considered that retaining and expanding the existing business on its current site is the only realistic option. Existing staff members are from the Moorlands, as is the applicant, who wants to promote the District as a special healthy place to visit where people can be educated about health, especially mental health, and provided with services to help them achieve that. If this facility was forced to relocate elsewhere on account of being unable to expand on its current site, then that has implications for local employment and loss of the existing facilities. This statement is not made as a threat; rather it seeks to highlight the very real implications of permission being refused. The applicant has a strong desire to retain the business in its present location, and to enable Biobrade and the wide-ranging services it offers, to remain on the site, in close proximity to the countryside, and where it is readily accessible by clients. The provision of the proposed development on this site is therefore considered to be acceptable.

Health Benefits

5.26. Paragraph 91 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which, amongst other issues, enable and support healthy lifestyles. The SMDC Activity and Sports Strategy (2017) identifies that 33.1% of women in the Moorlands and 28.1% of men are inactive. Inactivity can lead to a number of health-related problems including obesity, osteoporosis, cancer and diabetes (amongst others).

5.27. Nutraceuticals have numerous benefits for health and well-being from metabolic, musculoskeletal and mental health. The main benefit is that they are made from all-natural ingredients that reduce the need for artificial pharmaceutically engineered chemicals that cost the NHS billions and have side effects. The Nutraceutical market and demand is growing as people try alternatives that have no side effects. It would be a great benefit for the local Moorlands area to have another specialist business in the area developing new

products and research. They promote a healthy body - longer life - improved mental health – weight loss- and less dependence of the NHS.

5.28. The manufacturing of Nutraceutical products on this site will play an important role in helping to support more healthy lifestyles, and will complement the existing services offered by Biobrade on the site, affording clients a comprehensive, one-stop shop for treatment. Such health benefits are considered to lend significant weight in favour of the proposed development, in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 91 of the NPPF.

Other Benefits

5.29. The proposed facility will derive knock-on benefits to the local economy, health and tourism, by encouraging education on the benefits of Nutraceuticals and encouraging overnight stays within the local area when clients are attending professional sessions at the site and/or attending educational courses that the applicant intends to provide. By way of example, in October 2019 the applicant ran a 'Biohacking' course at Blackshaw Moor, which had 50 delegates, many of whom stayed on site, to the benefit of the local economy.

5.30. The applicant intends to run regular educational events for both clients, prospective customers, as well as local schools and businesses, with the intention of helping to promote healthier lifestyles and further grow the business. This has the propensity to derive knock on benefits within the local economy associated with customers utilising local hotels, B&Bs, restaurants, cafes etc. The Local Authority's Tourism Economic Impact Study estimated that there were 3.35 million visitors to the Moorlands in 2009, but only 7% of those stayed overnight. The proposed development will help to encourage more overnight stays within the Moorlands to the benefit of the local economy, and such benefits lend further weight in favour of the proposed development.

5.31. The applicant also has the intention of heavily promoting the Moorlands as part of its marketing material – simply because the Moorlands is part of the business's story and why its products are so good. The intention is to employ a full-time photographer / videographer, with sites within the Moorlands featuring in marketing videos / imagery, helping to further encourage visitors to the Moorlands, to the benefit of local tourism. Such benefits also weigh in favour of the proposed development.

Environmental Benefits

5.32. The site occupies a sustainable location. It is an established business, employing people from the local area, and located within one of the defined larger villages. The site benefits from good public transport connections to the wider area, including Leek, Hanley and Uttoxeter, and these services operate half hourly and hourly (depending on route) throughout the day. Cycle parking is also available on site and employees are encouraged to use sustainable modes of transportation wherever possible. This will continue as the business grows further, with clients and employees alike having a reasonable choice in their means of transportation to access the site. This is therefore a sustainable

location for a development of this nature, and such environmental benefits lend further significant weight in favour of the proposed development.

5.33. The previously developed nature of the site also weighs in favour of the proposed development. Part of the proposed site is currently occupied by a timber storage building that is used for ancillary commercial storage. It therefore comprises, in part, previously developed land. Paragraph 118 of the NPPF states that planning decisions should:

> *"give **substantial weight** to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and **other identified needs**, and support appropriate opportunities to remediate despoiled, degraded, derelict, contaminated or unstable land" (our emphasis)*

5.34. The proposed development will reuse this parcel of previously developed land to facilitate the sustainable expansion and growth of the existing business, and consequently the provisions of paragraph 118 of the NPPF are considered to lend further weight in favour of the proposed development.

Summary

5.35. Overall, it is considered that the benefits of this proposal to the local economy, in particular helping to facilitate the sustainable growth of an existing and growing business, coupled with the delivery of additional skilled employment opportunities carries significant weight in favour of the proposed development. Further significant benefits will ensue as a consequence of helping to promote healthier lifestyles, and the attendant knock-on benefits that ensue. The development will also derive environmental benefits associated with maintaining the existing business in a location that is sustainable in nature, and which avoids the need for members of staff to travel to alternative off-site locations. The development will also derive knock-on benefits by generating opportunities to enhance local tourism and the local economy by encouraging overnight stays with local providers. The aforementioned benefits are collectively considered to amount to very special circumstances to clearly outweigh the totality of harm to the Green Belt, and the proposed development is therefore considered to be justified in the context of paragraphs 143 and 144 of the NPPF, and policies SS1, SS6b, SS6c, E1 and R1 of the Core Strategy.

<u>Design & Layout</u>

5.36. The proposed building will adopt a broadly rectangular form, with front projecting entrance portico, and will be sited along the southern boundary of the site, behind the existing hedgerow. The building is to be constructed from red facing brickwork, with a grass sedum roof. The entrance portico is to be finished in render. Both red facing brickwork and render are already used on this site, and the green sedum roof and timber infill panels will assimilate well with the natural background of the development. During pre-application discussions it was acknowledged by the Local Authority that the overall low height and shallow pitched roof of the building would help to minimise the impact of the

development on the Green Belt and ensure that the majority of the structure will be screened by the hedgerow from key public views from the Kingsley Road.

5.37. Some reservation was nevertheless expressed about the length of the building and the provision of the raised entrance feature, which was felt might appear prominent in some views on approach from the east. In such views, the proposed building will be viewed against the backdrop of the existing two storey form of the main Health Centre and will be set behind the existing boundary hedgerow. Consequently, it will not appear intrusive or unduly harmful to the character and appearance of the streetscene, despite its length. Likewise, on approach from the west, the development will appear as a subservient continuation of the existing built form on the site and will be closely visually associated with it, again sat behind the existing frontage hedgerow. The proposed development will therefore not adversely affect the character and appearance of the area in such views.

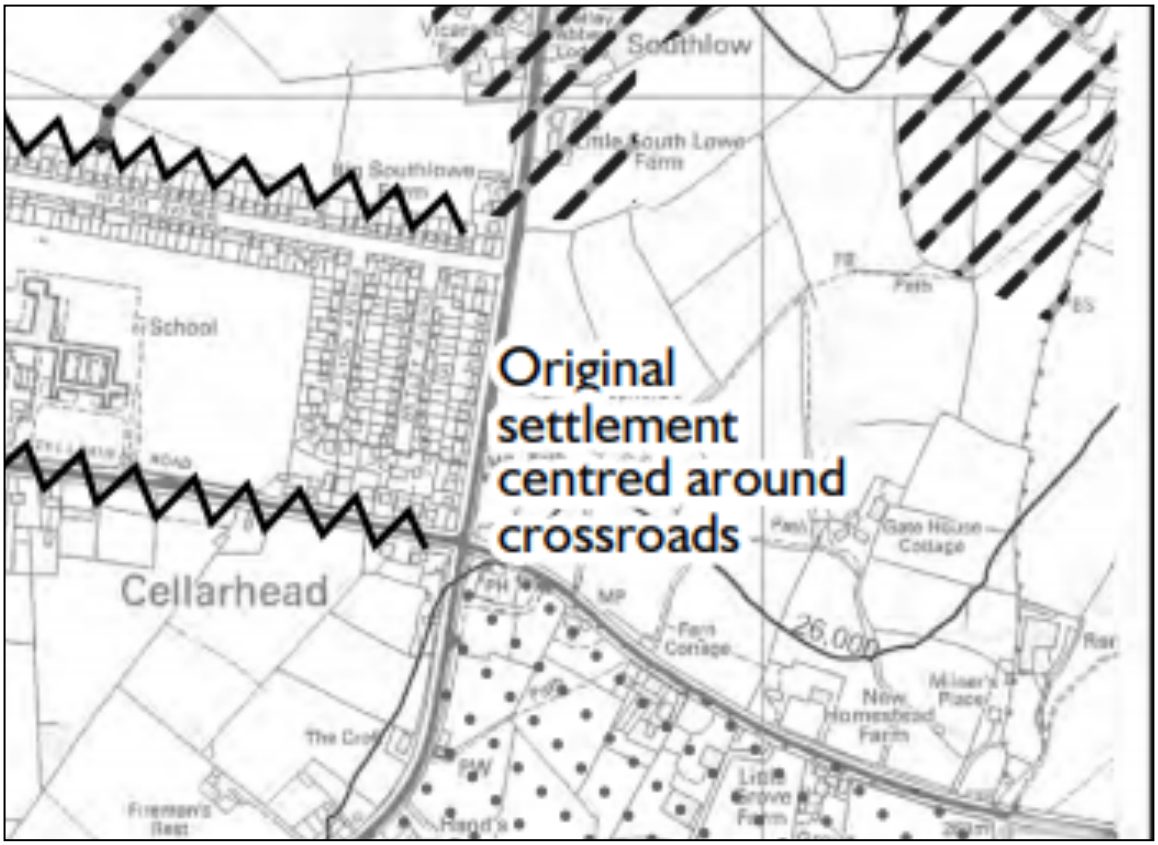
5.38. The Local Authority suggested that the massing of the building could be broken up by designing the building as an 'L-shape, with part of the building utilising brick and tile construction, and the remainder as timber with a sedum roof. The applicant's architect has explored that option, but it has been discounted on account of the fact that it would result in a building which much more visual prominence owing to the need to achieve a minimum roof pitch for a tiled roof. The applicant has nevertheless taken on board the recommendations regarding the siting of the building and has moved it closer to the existing Health Centre building to help minimise its encroachment. The delivery doors have been retained on the side elevation of the proposed building as this provides ease of access from the existing building.

5.39. Overall, it is considered that the scale, massing, design and siting of the proposed development is appropriate for this site and will not result in any significant adverse harm to the character and appearance of the area. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy in this regard.

Impact on the Landscape

5.40. The Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment (LSCA) for Werrington and Cellarhead recognises that the original village of Cellarhead comprised a small nucleated settlement focused around the junction of the A52 and A520. It acknowledges that the landscape around Cellarhead is relatively flat, with the land sloping downwards along the southern and western edges of Werrington. The document does not identify any significant visual features, landmarks or viewpoints in the vicinity of the application site, nor does it describe the application site and land to the north and east as being important to the landscape setting of the settlement. An extract of the LSCA is shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Extract of SMDC Landscape and Settlement Character Assessment



5.41. The site is located within the Ancient Slope and Valley Farmlands landscape character area as defined by the Planning For Landscape Change SPG. The key characteristic landscape features of are noted as being a strong ridge and valley landform, small dissected stream valleys, small sunken lanes, low intensity pasture farming, intact hedgerow pattern, drystone walls and stone buildings, hedgerow trees, broadleaved valley woodlands, conifer plantations, and many isolated properties. The SPG goes on to identify a number of incongruous landscape features which include an expanding urban edge, fencing, present and past quarrying and mining activities, busy roads, power lines, and localised industrial and residential expansion.

5.42. The proposed development represents modest expansion of the existing commercial premises but will not result in the loss of any characteristic landscape features, and consequently will not materially harm the character and appearance of the landscape. The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the provisions of policy DC3 of the Core Strategy.

Highway Safety

5.43. The site benefits from two existing vehicular access points onto the Leek Road, which afford good visibility in both directions on egress from the site. The submitted proposal will give rise to additional parking demand on the site, but it is noted that the site already benefits from a substantial parking area, with a capacity of at least 52 vehicles, which is more than sufficient to meet the needs of the applicant's business. For these reasons the proposed development will not give rise any severe residual adverse impacts to highway safety, and thus accords with the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework.

Residential Amenity

5.44. The proposed development is not considered to raise any substantive issues in respect of neighbouring residential amenity. The proposed building will be single storey in nature and will sit behind the existing boundary hedgerow. It will be located approximately 17.5 metres from the dwellings in Cherry Gardens opposite and consequently will not derive any material adverse impact to neighbouring occupiers in terms of outlook and loss of light.

5.45. The pressing machines that will operate within the building are quiet, and are not audible outside of the building, and consequently will not derive any loss of amenity to neighbouring occupiers by way of noise disturbance. It is noted in this regard that the press machine has operated successfully from the existing Health Centre building to date without noise disturbance being caused. The applicant furthermore proposes that hours of use will be restricted to between 09:00hrs – 17:30hrs on weekdays, with no operations at weekends. Consequently, there will be no activities taking place on site during unsociable hours, and such neighbouring residential amenity will be safeguarded. The proposed development is therefore in accordance with the relevant provisions of policy DC1 of the Core Strategy.

6.0 CONCLUSION

6.1. It is recognised that the submitted proposal amounts to an inappropriate form of development within the Green Belt but is considered to be justified on account of very special circumstances existing to clearly outweigh the totality of harm to the Green Belt. The proposed development is also of a scale, massing, design and siting that will not materially detract from the character and appearance of the area, or the surrounding landscape, and which will safeguard highway safety and neighbouring residential amenity.

6.2. The proposed development is accordingly considered to constitute a sustainable form of development that accords with the provisions of policies SS6b, SS6c, E1, R1, DC1 and DC3 of the Staffordshire Moorlands Core Strategy DPD and guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework and supplementary planning documents.

6.3. The Local Authority is therefore respectfully requested to support the sustainable growth of this existing business and grant planning permission for the proposed development.