

Consultation on Planning Application LU/118/14/PL

Economic Development would not be able to support this application in its current form. This objection is based on the loss of commercial space and the lack of mitigation for this.

The applicant's Social and Economic Benefits Statement comments on the potential number of jobs that could be lost and draws the conclusion that "the proposed healthcare facility is at least as conducive to job creation as the equivalent floor space in the Enterprise Hub".

The accepted level of job creation within the current planning permission (LU/271/11) is 270 jobs based on 3634 square feet – the entire Hub. This works out at 13.45 sq.m. per job. Using the same calculation, the loss of 954 sq. m. to a GP surgery amounts to the loss of 70 jobs. This leaves a balance of 200 jobs.

We cannot agree the calculation used by the applicant since it refers to a ratio of between 17.6 workers per sq.m. (office) and 37.5 workers per sq.m.(light industrial). The current permission is only for B1 use and therefore light industrial would not be permitted. Since the existing permission was agreed on the basis of a ratio between serviced office and office accommodation it seems logical to use that calculation.

We would expect some 25% of the jobs provided within the Hub to be displaced from elsewhere which leaves a balance of 150 jobs.

The application states that the GP surgery has the potential to employ 40 staff with 20 of these being relocated from elsewhere in the district. The application also makes mention of the re-letting of the East Street premises as a replacement for jobs. However, since we cannot be certain when or if that will happen we have not been able to take account of it in our calculations.

If this application were to be permitted the nett loss of jobs would be 110. Taking an average salary of £25,000 per annum that is a loss of some £2,750,000 per annum to the local economy.

Whilst we are not looking for that sum to mitigate the loss of commercial floor space we cannot accept that "the proposed healthcare facility is at least as conducive to job creation as the equivalent floor space in the Enterprise Hub". In our opinion this application presents a significant and demonstrable harm to the local economy through loss of suitable available employment space.

It is disappointing that we are losing around a third of what we thought was going to be an Enterprise Hub. This type of space is in short supply locally and we expect there to be high demand from businesses that have the potential to grow and provide continuous growth in the economy. Whilst the Health Centre will provide an excellent new provision for the community, it does not produce the same economic growth opportunities. We would be keen to talk with the applicants about ways in which this loss of high quality employment space can be mitigated.

