ITEM NO:

Location:	**Springwood Preston Road Gosmore Hitchin Hertfordshire SG4 7QR**
Applicant:	**Dermal Laboratories Ltd**
Proposal:	**Erection of two storey linked office block**
Ref. No:	18/00338/FP
Officer:	**Kate Poyser**

Date of expiry of statutory period : 29.03.2018

Reason for delay

The application has been delayed due to the need to follow up some consultation advice.

Reason for referral to committee

The application is required to be considered by committee as the site exceeds 1 hectare and the building exceeds 500 sq metres in floorspace.

1.0 **Site History**

1.1 11/01392/1 Planning permission was granted for a change of use from a residential dwelling (Class C) to offices (Class B1).

1.2 12/00360/1 Planning permission granted for the demolition of the existing dwelling and construction of a two storey office building (Class B1(a)) together with ancillary parking.

2.0 **Policies**

2.1 **North Hertfordshire District Local Plan No. 2 with Alterations (Saved Policies)**
Policy 6 – Rural Area beyond the Green Belt
Policy 14 – Nature conservation
Policy 36 – Employment provision
Policy 37 – Business Use (B1 Use Class)
Policy 55 – Car parking standards

2.2 **National Planning Policy Framework**
Core planning principles
Section 1 – Building a strong, competitive economy
Section 3 – Supporting a prosperous rural economy
Section 4 – Promoting sustainable transport
Section 7 – Requiring good design
Section 11 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

2.3 **Submitted Local Plan 2011 – 2031 (carries some weight)**
Policy CGB1 – Rural Areas beyond the Green Belt
Policy T1 – Assessment of transport matters
Policy T2 – Parking
Policy D1 – Sustainable design
Policy D3 – Protecting living conditions
Policy NE2 – Green infrastructure

3.0 **Representations**

3.1 Hertfordshire Highways – raises no objections to the proposal and no conditions are considered necessary.

3.2 Hertfordshire Ecology – "…the conclusions reached, that bats are not present in The existing building, appears reasonable…No further survey work or mitigation is required…"
Further consultation is taking place with regard to the possibility of Roman snails on the site. Members will be up-date orally at the Meeting

3.3 Waste Services – has no comment to make.

3.4 St Ippolyts Parish Council – have no objections.

3.5 Local Residents - 3 letters of objection have been received, 2 from 'Gosmore Hill' and 1 from 'Gosmore Hill Cottage'. The occupiers of 'Gosmore Hill Cottage' object to the increase in traffic to the local highway network and the occupiers of 'Gosmore Hill' object on the following summarised grounds.

- Would cause a loss of privacy to their property
- Would have an adverse effect on local wildlife, including protected species
- There is no need for additional staff to be located on this particular site
- Staff could desk share and work from home
- There are Roman snails on the site.

4.0 **Planning Considerations**

4.1 **Site and Surroundings**

4.1.2 The applicant, Dermal Laboratories Ltd, occupy Tatmore Place, which is a grade II Listed Building. Over the 48 years that the applicant has been here, the pharmaceutical business as grown, leading to new buildings being erected in the grounds of the listed building. The adjacent site at Springwood became part of the site approximately 7 years ago when the original bungalow was occupied as offices. Since then the bungalow has been replaced with purpose built offices. The warehouse and manufacturing side of the business is located outside the district.

4.1.3 Springwood lies in the Rural Area beyond the Green Belt, although it does abut the Green Belt boundary. The site is 300 metres from Preston Road at the closest point and is well screened by mature trees. Vehicular access is gained from Preston Road through Tatmore Place. There is a scattering of residential properties near this site entrance and Gosmore Hill lies 220 metres to the east in very large grounds that abut the site.

4.2 **Proposal**

4.2.1 The proposal is to extend the existing office building at Springwood. It would be a linked two storey wing, almost doubling the size of the existing offices, with 528 sq metres of floorspace. It would be in a similar contemporary architectural style as the existing and arranged into an angled L-shape. It would provide for an additional 12 full-time (or equivalent) office staff. The existing car park would be extended to provide an additional 15 spaces. The scheme involves the felling of one tree. A Design and Access Statement and Nocturnal Emergence Bat Survey form part of the application.

4.3 **Key Issues**

4.3.1 The key planning considerations relate to:

- The principle of the development in the rural area
- Sustainability
- Neighbouring residential amenities
- Highway matters
- The natural environment

4.3.2 Principle of the development in the rural area

Policy 6 of the NHDLP No.2 (Rural Areas beyond the Green belt) makes no provision for allowing new buildings for business use in the countryside other than in relation to agriculture and forestry. However, the NPPF supports economic growth in rural areas in order to create jobs and prosperity. It favours a positive approach to the –

"sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business and enterprise in rural areas, both through conversion of existing buildings and well designed new buildings."

Therefore, providing the development is sustainable there can be no objection in principle to the development.

4.3.3 Sustainability

There are three strands of sustainability, economic, social and environmental. The purpose of the building is to accommodate additional staff and to support the growing pharmaceutical business. It is, therefore, economically sustainable.

4.3.4 The development would not play a strong social role. The building is specifically designed with environmental sustainability in mind. The applicant advises that the building would "*incorporate many innovative solutions for demonstrably improving the holistic, energy performance, water management, environmental and waste control, performance etc., as the original building*." On the negative side it would generate more vehicular movements with the additional staff. It is noted that there is a nearby bus stop with buses travelling to and from Hitchin.

4.3.5 Overall, and on balance, I consider the scheme would be sufficiently sustainable to satisfy Section 3 of the NPPF.

4.3.6 Neighbouring residential amenity

Due to the distance of the proposed development from any residential property it would not result in a significant loss of sunlight, daylight or privacy to justify withholding permission.

4.3.7 Gosmore Hill Cottage is one of several dwellings that gain vehicular access from the entrance drive into Tatmore Place and Springwood. Concern from the occupier of this

property has been expressed about the disturbance that would be caused by the additional traffic that would be generated. The entrance to Gosmore Hill Cottage is located on a smaller driveway leading off the main driveway. The house lies approximately 55 metres away from the main drive. I consider that the living conditions of the occupier would not be significantly affected by the small increase in traffic.

4.3.8 Highway matters

The existing vehicular access arrangements onto Preston Road would remain unchanged. The highway authority considers the development would not generate a significant increase in traffic. The existing vehicular access is satisfactory and no objections are raised.

4.3.9 The natural environment

A nocturnal bat survey has been carried out on this site. Two species were recorded, common pipistrelle and soprano pipistrelle. Commuting and foraging activity was noted around the woodland edge. No bats were recorded coming from the building. No bat roosts were identified. No objections are raised by Hertfordshire Ecology to the development, but it is recommended that lighting should be kept low level.

4.3.10 A local resident has advised that there are Roman snails on site, which are a protected species. I am currently consulting Hertfordshire Ecology on this matter and shall report their advice orally at the meeting.

4.4 **Conclusion**

4.4.1 There are no sustainable planning objections to raise to the proposal and permission should be granted.

5.0 **Legal Implications**

5.1 In making decisions on applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning legislation, the Council is required to have regard to the provisions of the development plan and to any other material considerations. The decision must be in accordance with the plan unless the material considerations indicate otherwise. Where the decision is to refuse or restrictive conditions are attached, the applicant has a right of appeal against the decision.

6.0 **Recommendation**

6.1 That planning permission be **GRANTED** subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of 3 years from the date of this permission.

   Reason: To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out wholly in accordance with the details specified in the application and supporting approved documents and plans

listed above.

Reason:To ensure the development is carried out in accordance with details which form the basis of this grant of permission.

3. Prior to the commencement of any work on site, a landscaping scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority and shall include the following:

* Existing trees to be removed;
* Location, species and planting size of any proposed trees or plants;
* Proposed maintenance to establish the trees and plants;
* Any fences, hedges, walls or other boundary treatment;
* Location and materials of all hard surfaces.

The landscaping scheme shall be implemented as approved.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the completed scheme.

4. The approved details of landscaping shall be carried out before the end of the first planting season following either the first occupation of any of the buildings or the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner; and any trees or plants which, within a period of 5 years from the completion of the development, die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased, shall be replaced during the next planting season with others of similar size and species, unless the Local Planning Authority agrees in writing to vary or dispense with this requirement.

Reason:To safeguard and enhance the appearance of the completed development and the visual amenity of the locality.

5. None of the trees to be retained on the application site shall be felled, lopped, topped, uprooted, removed or otherwise destroyed or killed without the prior written agreement of the Local Planning Authority.

Reason:To safeguard and enhance the appearance of the completed development and the visual amenity of the locality.

6. Any tree felled, lopped, topped, uprooted, removed or otherwise destroyed or killed contrary to the provisions of the tree retention condition above shall be replaced during the same or next planting season with another tree of a size and species as agreed in writing with the Local Planning Authority, unless the Authority agrees in writing to dispense with this requirement.

Reason:To safeguard and enhance the appearance of the completed development and the visual amenity of the locality.

7. Before the commencement of any other works on the site, trees to be retained shall be protected by the erection of temporary chestnut paling or chain link fencing of a minimum height of 1.2 metres on a scaffolding framework, located at the appropriate minimum distance from the tree trunk in accordance with Section 4.6 of BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - Recommendations, unless in any particular case the Local Planning Authority agrees to dispense with this requirement. The fencing shall be maintained intact for the duration of all engineering and building works. No building materials shall be stacked or mixed within 10 metres

of the tree. No fires shall be lit where flames could extend to within 5 metres of the foliage, and no notices shall be attached to trees.

Reason:To prevent damage to or destruction of trees to be retained on the site in the interests of the appearance of the completed development and the visual amenity of the locality.

8. The development shall be finished in external materials to match those of the existing building, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Reason: In the interests of the appearance of the completed development.

9. There shall be no external lighting on the application site, without the details first being submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority, and shall then be implemented as approved.

Reason: In the interests of protecting the environment and habitat of protected species, specifically bats and in the interests of the appearance of the development within the rural area.

Proactive Statement:

Planning permission has been granted for this proposal. Discussion with the applicant to seek an acceptable solution was not necessary in this instance. The Council has therefore acted proactively in line with the requirements of the Framework (paragraphs 186 and 187) and in accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015.