

**Highparks Medical Practice  
Application for Higham Branch Closure  
Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)**

**Q1. Why are you looking to close one of your branch sites?**

**A.** Providing services across four locations is becoming financially unsustainable for the practice especially due to the running costs and maintenance of four buildings. Highparks needs to take steps to stabilise the practice's financial position to be sustainable going forward and therefore needs to close one of its branch sites. Funding over the last decade has become more challenging year on year. We do not receive additional funding for being one practice operating across four sites.

**Q2. Which of the four sites are you planning to close?**

**A.** We had an independent assessment carried out on all of our sites to understand staff allocation, the clinics and services offered, and an overall look at the finances. After reviewing the outcomes of this report, the site closure that would have the least impact on patients is Hermitage Road, Higham. We are now inviting all of our patients to tell us about how the proposed closure might affect them.

**Q3. If you close Higham, will I have to register at another GP Practice?**

**A.** No, you do not need to re-register. If you normally attend the Higham branch you are registered with Highparks Medical Practice and can already access services across all sites. The overall practice boundary will remain the same.

**Q4. What if I don't want to remain as a patient as a result of Higham being closed?**

**A.** If you did not want to remain a patient of Highparks Medical Practice, you can choose to register at another local practice that is taking on patients. You can find information about other practices in the area at [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Q5. Will I be able to see the same doctor, nurse or other clinician that I have been seeing for my medical problems?**

**A.** Yes. Continuity will be unaffected where patients can continue to see the clinician of their choice, dependant on availability. They will be available to care for you as they have done previously, it may just be at one of the other three locations in Cliffe Woods, Cliffe or Wainscott.

**Q6. Will you still be doing home visits?**

**A.** Housebound patients who are eligible to receive home visits will continue to do so, this includes receiving flu and Covid vaccinations at home.

## B. Q7. What are the benefits for patients if Higham was to close?

A. Benefits for patients would include:

- Service provision offered unaffected – appointment numbers will remain the same
- Increased services at other sites i.e. three sites with regular services rather than four with limited services
- Continuity of care with consistent staffing at fewer sites
- Future sustainability of the Highparks Medical Practice

## Q8. How far from Higham is it to the other sites?

A. The three other site locations are:

**Higham to Cliffe Woods (Main Site):**

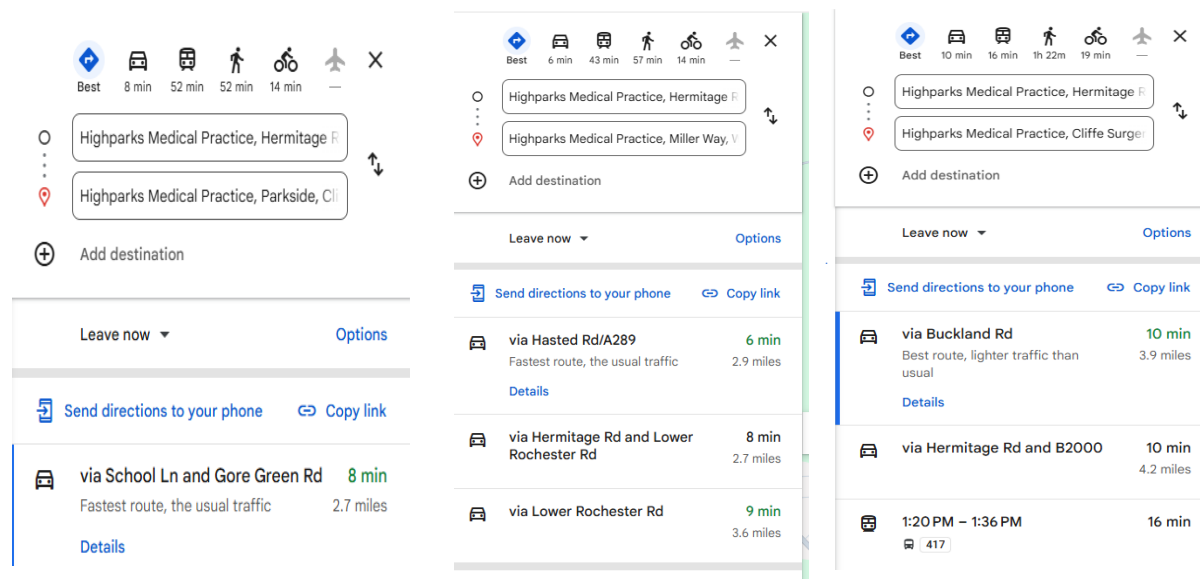
**2.7 miles (8 minutes by car)**

**Higham to Wainscott (Branch Site):**

**2.9 miles (6 minutes by car)**

**Higham to Cliffe (Branch Site):**

**3.9 miles (10 minutes by car)**



## Q9. Is there public transport to the other practice site locations?

A. Yes. Bus timetables are available from Medway council. [www.medway.gov.uk](http://www.medway.gov.uk)

[Parking Roads and Travel](#). Attached is a timetable and a link below for more information on Bus routes and timetables

[https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200161/travel/516/bus\\_timetables/1](https://www.medway.gov.uk/info/200161/travel/516/bus_timetables/1)

**Q10. My local branch is Higham. I am unable to travel by public transport, is there transport support if I have a face to face appointment**

**A.** Yes, there are volunteer services particularly for people with mobility issues where getting public transport is difficult. Most of these services are cheaper than a taxi and runs with the help of local volunteers. A mileage rate may be charged to cover the driver's expenses, plus a small administration charge. Please see details below and attached

[Hands Transport Services | Volunteer Centre Rochester](http://www.medwayvolunteercentre.org.uk/page-hands_direct_services.html)  
[www.medwayvolunteercentre.org.uk/page-hands\\_direct\\_services.html](http://www.medwayvolunteercentre.org.uk/page-hands_direct_services.html)

Please contact our Reception team if you require any more information

**Q11. Will there be any reduction in staff?**

**A.** There is no plan to reduce workforce levels as part of the closure, this is about using our workforce as effectively as possible. The application for closure is an attempt to become financially stable.

**Q12. What is the population of Higham?**

The population of registered patients from Higham postcodes at Highparks Medical Practice is 2,831.

**Q13. How many patients are registered at each site?**

Patients are not registered to individual sites but are instead registered to Highparks Medical Practice as a whole.

**Q14. Why are the sites not open every day, all day—except Cliffe Woods?**

Cliffe Woods is our main site, and the remaining three are branch sites. Contractually, we are required to have Cliffe Woods open, whereas the branch sites have different operating requirements.

**Q15. Why has the Higham branch site been chosen for closure?**

The decision to close Higham was not made lightly and reflects a position we deeply regret. Various factors were considered, including:

- Each building's capacity.
- Maintenance requirements for each individual site.
- The financial impact of closures of each site on existing income.
- Existing long terms leases and contractual obligations associated with other branch sites.

Ultimately, the practice is in a situation where, without action, the future sustainability of Highparks Medical Practice could be at risk.

**Q16. What did the 18 months of discussion involve?**

The 18-month discussion process included:

- An independent financial review.
- Reviews with our accountants.
- A future sustainability review among partners to consider all other viable options.
- Multiple enquiries to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) to explore other funding streams.

Please note that much of this data is sensitive and will not be published.

**Q17. Who has made the decision to apply for closure?**

At Highparks Medical Practice, the partners have made the difficult decision to apply for the closure of the Higham branch. This decision reflects the significant personal and financial risks involved in running a practice. If the practice as a whole becomes financially unviable, it could jeopardize the future of the entire service.

GP practices across the UK are generally privately owned but operate within the NHS framework. This means they are typically managed by GPs or partners as independent businesses while holding contracts with the NHS to deliver primary care services to the public.

**Q18. Why are there no drop-ins in a time that I can attend?**

Drop-in sessions will be held throughout the 10-week engagement process. Additional times, including evenings and weekends, will be added in due course to accommodate a wider range of schedules.

**Q19. Does each site generate its own stream of income?**

No. At Highparks Medical Practice, all patients are registered to the practice as a whole, regardless of where they live, so income is not attributed to individual sites. The exception to this is our Cliffe & Wainscott site. Cliffe generates some income through our in-house dispensary and Wainscott generate income through part of the premises which is leased.

However, each site incurs its own running costs, including maintenance, utilities, cleaning, registrations and licensing, and health & safety compliance. Operating four sites means these costs are multiplied four times compared to a practice with a similar patient count but only one site.

**Q20. Why can't you downgrade to a smaller building and remain in Higham?**

Downgrading to a smaller building in Higham has been considered but is not a viable solution. Several factors make this option unfeasible, including:

- **Availability:** Suitable smaller buildings may not be readily available or fit for purpose.
- **Costs:** Relocating involves significant financial costs, including finding, renovating, and equipping a new building to meet healthcare regulations and standards.
- **Operational Efficiency:** Even in a smaller building, maintaining a separate site would still incur ongoing costs for utilities, cleaning, licensing, and compliance, which collectively contribute to financial strain.

Ultimately, the decision to apply for closure reflects the need to ensure the overall sustainability of Highparks Medical Practice and to continue delivering high-quality care across our remaining sites.

### **Q21. Why can't another GP surgery take on the practice?**

Transferring the practice to another GP surgery is not a straightforward solution. Several factors make this option unlikely:

- **Capacity:** Nearby GP practices may not have the resources or space to absorb additional patients or operate an additional site.
- **Financial Viability:** The challenges that have led to the closure application—such as the financial strain of maintaining multiple sites—would likely also affect any other practice taking over the site.
- **Wider Challenges:** GP practices across the UK are already facing a challenging time due to funding constraints and difficulties with recruiting and retaining clinical and non-clinical staff. This broader context makes it even harder for another practice to take on the site. In fact, there are examples of multi-site practices across the country exploring similar options due to challenging times for general practice.

The decision to apply for closure has been made after careful consideration of all alternatives, with the aim of ensuring the long-term sustainability of Highparks Medical Practice.

### **Q22. What will happen to the building if the application is made and is successful?**

If the application for closure is made and is successful, the intention would be to sell the building allowing us to financially stabilise Highparks Medical practice. We will keep patients informed of any updates as the process unfolds.

### **Q23. Can you clarify what the patient group is and how do they help the patients?**

The Patient Group works with Highparks Practice to help to keep patients up to date with practice changes, to raise patients' awareness of priorities and current issues and to help increase patient knowledge on health matters. They attend a meeting with the practice quarterly and work to improve the service for patients.

**Q24. If the Higham application is approved and the site closes, will this make the other locations busier?**

- Many patients already use multiple sites based on appointment availability, so the impact may be minimal.
- The remaining sites have available capacity, allowing for more frequent openings and a more consistent service.
- There will be no reduction in staff numbers, ensuring that service provision remains stable, just redistributed across the other locations.