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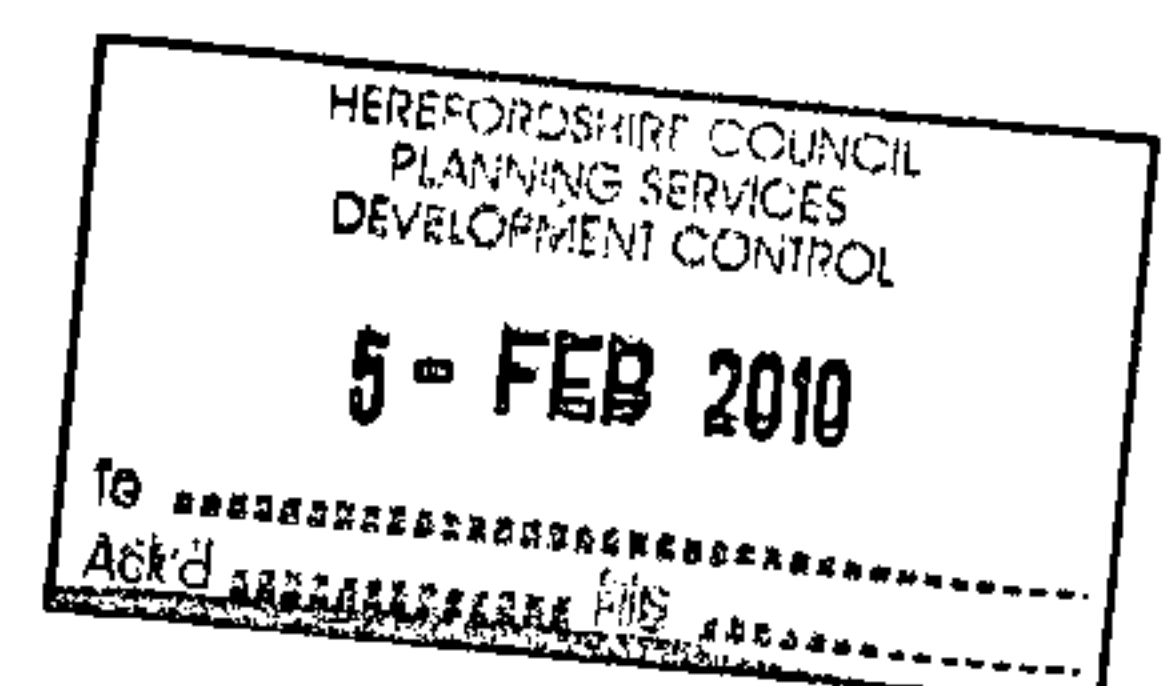
PLANNING STATEMENT

on behalf of

Kington Medical Practice

Land Opposite Arrow Plant, Eardisley Road, Kington

Proposed New Medical Centre



February 2009

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Appendices

1. Site Plan
2. Medical Centre Catchment Area
3. Analysis of Alternative Sites

SECTION ONE – INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The following statement is submitted in support of a planning application for relocation of the medical centre at Kington to land opposite Arrow Plant, to the south of Kington.
- 1.2 The current premises at The Meads cannot accommodate all members of staff and is therefore insufficient to cater for patients' needs.
- 1.3 Various options for the relocation of the medical centre have previously been considered, however none of these have proved either suitable or available. These alternative sites are identified in Appendix 3.
- 1.4 The need for the relocation of the medical centre is highlighted in Section Three, which shows that new premises would bring increased benefits to patients and staff.
- 1.5 The new premises will provide sufficient space to accommodate the larger number of GPs and practice nurses who are already needed and facilitate the return of the attached staff (dietician, health visitors and district nurses) who are currently operating beyond the premises due to space shortages.
- 1.6 The new practice building will enable minor surgery services to be provided as well as providing generic clinical expansion space which the practice hopes to develop into an additional outpatients/investigation/therapy area.
- 1.7 The increased availability of accommodation and range of services provided by new premises will allow the Kington practice to meet local access targets and respond more quickly to clinical requirements, enhancing services and NHS changes.
- 1.8 Part of the proposed medical centre building will also include a new dental surgery to serve the Kington area.



SECTION TWO – SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The site is located to the south of Kington, opposite Arrow Plant and adjacent to the Headbrook area of the town. A site plan is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The site comprises an area of 0.82 hectares and is currently in use for agricultural purposes. The site lies below the adjacent carriageway and is generally flat.
- 2.3 The site lies directly opposite the existing Arrow Plant and Tool Hire premises. This comprises commercial premises consisting of a building and open storage. Planning permission has recently been granted for a domestic recycling centre on land adjacent to the Arrow Plant premises. A new housing development comprising 46 dwellings is currently taking place on land in Eardisley road about 200m. to the north of the site.
- 2.4 In general terms, the site lies on the edge of Kington and has an affinity with the built-up area.



SECTION THREE – NEED FOR MEDICAL CENTRE

3.1 The Kington Medical Practice is a rural practice located in The Meads. No other surgeries exist in the town. The practice provides medical services to an area of 600 square miles of rural population on the border of Herefordshire and Powys, Mid Wales. Appendix 2 provides a plan of the practice catchment area.

3.2 The practice population is 8,500, with approximately 6,000 of these living outside of Kington. The practice also has two branch surgeries at Eardisley and Pembridge.

3.3 Current Premises

3.3.1 The current premises at The Meads total 310sqm. The practice cannot accommodate all current members of the primary care team adequately; support staff do not have designated workstations resulting in the sharing of work space and causes delays in administration duties. This pressure on work space has some effect on morale and makes recruiting staff a problem. Office provision is also lacking and storage facilities are inadequate.

3.3.2 The surgery has six consulting rooms, a main reception, dispensary and toilets on the ground floor. All the consulting rooms are in constant use from 9am to 6pm. Upstairs is a communal office area and kitchenette, toilet, dispensary with desk and staff room. The surgery currently has no meeting room for educational/training purposes.

3.3.3 General working conditions are cramped, with inadequate storage and a number of rooms fall below the minimum size requirements that NHS guidelines require.

3.3.4 Disabled access in the building is inadequate as there is no lift; there is very limited parking with no designated disabled parking and only three parking places for patients. This means that the premises are not Disability Discrimination Act compliant, and that most staff and patients have to park on the road some distance away and walk.



3.4 Staffing

- 3.4.1 The practice currently has 7.75 full time equivalents GPs and employs 3 practice nurses, 1 healthcare assistant, 3 dispensers, 6 practice administration staff and 11 reception staff.
- 3.4.2 The practice has identified a need for additional practice nurses and anticipates providing placement and training for Foundation Level Medical Graduates in due course.
- 3.4.3 Attached staff comprising of District Nurses, Dietician and Health Visitors are now working outside the premises due to lack of consulting room space. Visiting consultant psychiatrist, counsellor and midwives however do use rooms in the surgery.

3.5 Medical Services

- 3.5.1 The practice currently provides a full range of traditional GP services to patients as well as specialised services such as diabetic care, antenatal care, anticoagulant monitoring and therapy and vaccination campaigns.

3.6 Expansion of Services

- 3.6.1 When GP commissioning becomes more clearly established new members of the team, including physiotherapist and diagnostic clinicians will be employed on a sessional basis. With the increased space of a new medical centre, the practice intend to provide accommodation for these members of the team and also provide accommodation for PCT staff comprising a visiting Consultant Psychiatrist, Health Visitors, Midwives, Dietician and Counsellor.
- 3.6.2 These extra staff will provide for an increased number of services available to patients that are currently not available within the existing cramped surgery building.



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- 3.6.3 In order to accommodate these extra staff and the expansion of services available to the patients a suitable site for relocation of the medical practice, as a 'hub' to serve the practice population is required.

3.7 Dental Surgery

- 3.7.1 There is currently no permanent dental surgery located in the town. Local residents currently need to travel to Leominster (14 miles) or Ludlow (21 miles) to gain access to such services.
- 3.7.2 The new medical centre building has been purposely designed to accommodate an NHS dental surgery with an independent reception area and consulting rooms.
- 3.7.3 Clearly the provision of the dental surgery as part of the development will minimise the need for local residents to travel in accordance with sustainability objectives.



SECTION FOUR – POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1 The Herefordshire Unitary Development Plan was Adopted in March 2007. The Council are currently working on their Local Development Framework. A Development Options consultation was undertaken in the summer 2008 and work is now ongoing to further the Core Strategy and produce a set of final options. The next round of public consultation is anticipated during 2010. This will include development options for Hereford, the market towns and housing distribution in the rural areas. The current timetable anticipates the Core Strategy will reach submission by June 2010 and adoption March 2011.
- 4.2 Within the Adopted UDP Kington is identified as a market town. It is highlighted that the relatively small size of the settlement limits its potential to accept significant new development although it is expected to grow at similar levels to that experienced in the past.
- 4.3 Policies S3 and H2 of the UDP set out housing allocations for Herefordshire for the Plan period of 1996-2011, which includes a site at Kington (land west of Old Eardisley Road) with anticipated capacity for 40 dwellings. Planning permission has been granted for 46 dwellings on the site. That planning permission is now being implemented.
- 4.4 The 'Community Facilities and Services' chapter highlights the importance of meeting health, social and educational needs, and underlines the significance of improving access to such services in the rural areas, which are often deprived as a result of poor current levels of services. Part 1 Policy S11 includes the statement that the needs of the community for services will be addressed by:
- "3. making provision for the retention of existing community facilities, particularly where there is under provision, and for the further development of social, health, education and community care facilities which are located close to the community they serve."***



4.5 Further guidance on the issues to be considered in relation to proposals for new community facilities, including healthcare services, is provided within Policy CF5, which states:

“The provision of accessible new facilities will be supported as long as they do not impact upon the surrounding area:

Proposals which would result in the provision of new or improved community facilities or the enhanced use of existing facilities will be permitted where they:

- 1. are appropriate in scale to the needs of the local community and reflect the character of the location;***
- 2. are located within or around the settlement or the area they serve;***
- 3. would not significantly impact upon the amenity of neighbouring residents; and***
- 4. incorporate safe and convenient pedestrian access together with appropriate provision of car and cycle parking and operational space “***

4.6 The above policies express clear support for community facilities.

4.7 The proposed medical centre building will accord with such policies on the basis that:

- (i) the proposal provides for significantly improved healthcare facilities and includes a dental surgery that is currently lacking in the town;
- (ii) the medical centre serves a wide rural catchment and therefore needs to be accessible to patients by whatever means of transport they use;
- (iii) the development is in scale with what is required by the community in terms of improved healthcare facilities;
- (iv) the proposal is located on the edge of Kington which is the main settlement serving the catchment area;



- (v) The design of the building has been undertaken with care to ensure that design details, use of materials and landscaping are compatible with the area; and
- (vi) provision is made for a pedestrian crossing and the access has been designed to achieve safe access for all users of the proposed medical centre.



SECTION FIVE – PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 The preceding overview of relevant policy guidance indicates that development of a new purpose built medical centre building to serve the local community is in accord with policy.

5.2 Within the Adopted UDP there is clear policy support for new healthcare facilities that will serve the existing needs of the communities in which they will be located. Policy CF5 specifies four issues needing to be addressed in order for new community facilities to be considered acceptable. Each of these matters is addressed in turn below.

5.3 Need for new medical centre in Kington

5.3.1 The need for a new medical centre results from a number of factors relating to the existing circumstances of the existing practice accommodation. The current premises are wholly inadequate for a modern medical practice and therefore require updating and expansion with the development of a new purpose-built facility.

5.3.2 The current premises offer just 310sqm. of floor space and is wholly insufficient to meet the modern needs of a medical practice. The current space restrictions have significant implications for the effective functioning of the practice in terms of accommodating all members of the primary care team. Some attached staff have no option but to operate off-site, whilst workspace at the surgery is cramped, and workstations are commonly shared. There is a lack of storage, administration and meeting space, in addition to poor accessibility for disabled patients and inadequate car parking.

5.3.3 The proposed new purpose built medical centre would address these problems, whilst also providing further opportunities for expansion through space for additional GPs, practice nurses and other PCT staff, resulting in a wider range of services available to patients. These additional staff are already needed and funded within the practice budget.



- 5.3.4 The proposed development also makes provision for a dental surgery. Currently no such facility exists in Kington.

5.4 Location relative to catchment area

- 5.4.1 The existing Kington medical practice serves a catchment that extends well beyond the settlement of Kington itself. In fact the surgery provides services to a large rural area of around 600 square miles, straddling the border between Herefordshire and Powys, Mid Wales.
- 5.4.2 The patient catchment area plan, included as Appendix 2, emphasises the extensive nature of the area served by the surgery, as well as its rural character. It also demonstrates the focal point for such services represented by the market town of Kington, and its location at the centre of this catchment area.
- 5.4.3 In terms of general location, the proposed medical centre is appropriately positioned to serve its catchment population, being located at the principal market town at the centre of its rural hinterland. The proposal would therefore accord with policies in the UDP.
- 5.4.4 A significant number of alternative sites have been considered. However, the alternative sites have all been dismissed either as being not suitable or unavailable. The application site allows for the new facility to be constructed close to the existing community as well as providing further accessibility benefits for patients.

5.5 Impact on surroundings

- 5.5.1 The site is located to the south of Kington on greenfield land. Built development on this location would not conflict with environmental or other site constraints and would not be harmful to the landscape setting of Kington. The application is accompanied by a Landscape Appraisal and Ecological Appraisal. These indicate that through appropriate landscaping how the effects of the proposed building may be mitigated.



- 5.5.2 A medical centre building would have no adverse impacts on residential amenity. At the same time, it must also be considered that a new medical centre would have positive impacts on the quality of life for residents within the catchment area of the surgery through access to improved healthcare services.

5.6 Pedestrian access, car parking and operational space

- 5.6.1 The proposal is the subject of a full application.
- 5.6.2 The application is accompanied by a range of documents including a Transport Assessment that identifies provision for a pelican crossing to serve the proposed site and a right turn lane within the existing carriageway. These facilities will assist safe access to the site for pedestrians as well as vehicles.
- 5.6.3 These facilities are included within the application plans. The plans also show that a medical centre of appropriate size could be accommodated on the site along with ample staff, public and designated disabled car parking and attractive landscaping. This would meet the functional needs of the practice, whilst meeting NHS guidelines. In addition, the proposal provides specific disabled access and car parking which are wholly absent from the current premises.

5.7 Overview

- 5.7.1 The proposed location of the new medical centre would be in accord with policy since it lies on the edge of Kington and also addresses the acknowledged need for improved healthcare facilities within the town.
- 5.7.2 The planning application is supported by a range of appraisal documents relating to ecology, landscape and transport. All indicate that the site is capable of satisfactorily accommodating a new healthcare facility that remains accessible to all modes of transport.
- 5.7.3 In overall terms, the application represents a positive form of development since it will significantly improve healthcare facilities in the town.



SECTION SIX – CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The planning application seeks planning permission for a new medical centre to include a dental surgery.
- 7.2 The existing medical centre building is too small to meet expanding healthcare needs whilst a dental surgery does not currently exist in Kington.
- 7.3 The proposed building has been the subject of public exhibition and also follows an extensive site search of alternative locations within and around Kington. The only site that is both suitable and available is that forming the application site.
- 7.4 The application site lies on the edge of the town but remains within walking distance of the town centre. In addition, the existing surgery causes parking issues within residential streets and the relocation to the new site will not impact on residential amenity.
- 7.5 The landscape appraisal indicates that the site is open to localised views but retains an affinity with the built-up area and commercial premises opposite. The site is not in a remote rural location.
- 7.6 The need for the medical centre is clear and the application represents a positive form of development that will provide improved healthcare facilities for the town.

