

New Planning System

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Planning rules should be used to ensure that new developments complement rather than detract from the street scene. Retain and convert should be the watchwords rather than complete redevelopment.

Public participation through local organisations

All local authorities are being required by Central Government to consult with their local communities to a far greater extent than previously. They have to produce a Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) showing how they intend to do this. In the initial draft of Havant Borough Council's SCI, Community Boards were to provide the main public facility for community consultation. After representations from the ERA and others, Residents' Associations have now been included as they already have the necessary expertise and experience in planning matters.

When will community groups be consulted?

If a development is deemed to be 'significant' which Havant's SCI defines as more than 50 houses, or the equivalent commercial size, it will automatically be referred to pre-planning consultation. Smaller developments will only be referred if they are considered to have a 'potentially significant effect' on the community. The ERA, in its submission on the SCI, maintains this is far too lenient and that community groups should be informed and consulted about much smaller developments at the pre-planning stage, say ten or more houses, which would coincide with the government definition of a 'major' development. The city of Portsmouth, with a far greater proportion of really large developments, has accepted this lower threshold for consultation in its SCI, so why can't Havant?

Just the beginning but vigilance is required

The consultations planned under the SCI are only the beginning of Government proposals for 'empowerment' of communities. A Government White Paper to be published this summer will set out greatly expanded ways in which communities of less than 10,000 people will be able to have a direct say in the way local authorities run their services, including the planning system.

Meantime, it is up to communities to take the initiative by observing where potential development sites are, whether the existing buildings on them are of value, architecturally or as part of the street scene and reporting these to the ERA. Requesting 'Tree Preservation Orders' (see front page) are important here especially on belts of trees as they can be excluded from the 'developable area' of a site and therefore reduce the permitted overall building density.

We need to act early – before a property is sold, the trees disappear and detailed planning permission is sought. It is better to report a suspicion, which turns out to be a false alarm, than to wait until you are sure and then it's too late; so keep your eyes open and ears to the ground and let the ERA have those emails, phone calls or letters.

NHS reorganisation

Peter Allen

Government proposals to restructure the Health Service under a plan called 'Ensuring a Patient-Led NHS', have been going through the consultation process with the affected bodies since December last year. The consultation period finished on 22 March and the results of these consultations are now being reviewed.

The configuration of the Strategic Health Authorities, Primary Care Trusts and Ambulance Trusts in Hampshire and the Isle of Wight are all under review.

Strategic Health Authorities (SHA's)

The proposal is for either one authority covering the whole of the South East region or for two authorities, one for the Thames Valley and Hampshire and the other consisting of Kent, Surrey, Sussex and Medway.

Primary Care Trusts (PCT's)

The proposal is for a Portsmouth City Trust and a Southampton City Trust. There are also two possible options for the County of Hampshire, i.e. a single PCT, co-terminus with the Hampshire County Council or three PCT's within this same boundary, replacing the current seven PCT's.

Ambulance Trusts

Finally, there has been a proposal for a much enlarged NHS Ambulance Trust covering the Counties of Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hampshire and Oxfordshire.

Isle of Wight

In view of the special circumstances of the Isle of Wight, it is proposed to create a single organisation for the commissioning and management of all the National Health Services on the Island.

The findings will be submitted to the Secretary of State for Health on 12 April and the establishment of the new Trusts should be completed by 1 April 2007.

Community Health Steering Group progress report

Tony Lowes

The County Council Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) resolved at its meeting on 27 September 2005 that the steering group, established prior to the closure of inpatient beds at Emsworth Victoria Cottage Hospital (EVCH) should continue to monitor "in patient" and community care. I represent our community on this steering group, together with Councillor Virginia Wilson-Smith and Doctor Peter Allen.

HOSC resolved that further information should be sought about the proposed development of the new hospital at Oak Park (Havant) and the cost of providing community nursing and care services to supplement the closure of EVCH.

The steering group meets on the third Tuesday of each month under the chairmanship of Jan Gough, Age Concern (Tel: 02392 472452).

Oak Park Hospital

Originally the building of Oak Park Hospital was intended to be a 120-bed facility replacing poor and out of date accommodation in other hospitals in the area. It was also envisaged that it would complement the acute sector whilst development took place at St. Mary's and Queen Alexandra hospitals.

The Primary Care Trust (PCT) reduced bed numbers at Oak Park to 90 in 2004 and subsequently suspended design work. The latest proposal is for provision of 25 inpatient beds with facilities for minor injury, x-ray and an elderly assessment unit. We earnestly hope that this hospital will be built within the next 2 or 3 years.

Community care update

As from December 2005, an improved nursing and care service has been introduced in our community. It is reported that approximately 40 additional daily visits are now being made. Additional weekend cover is being provided by the District Nursing Service and a walk-in clinic has been opened at Havant War Memorial Hospital. There are still delays in admissions to the acute hospitals and on occasions it seems that acute patients are being admitted to Havant Hospital on a temporary basis.

Monitoring and Feedback

We really do need more comments from patients, relatives and friends who are using the health services in the Portsmouth and Chichester area. Please telephone (in confidence) to Doctor Peter Allen on 01243 372752 who is monitoring and coordinating this on behalf of the ERA.

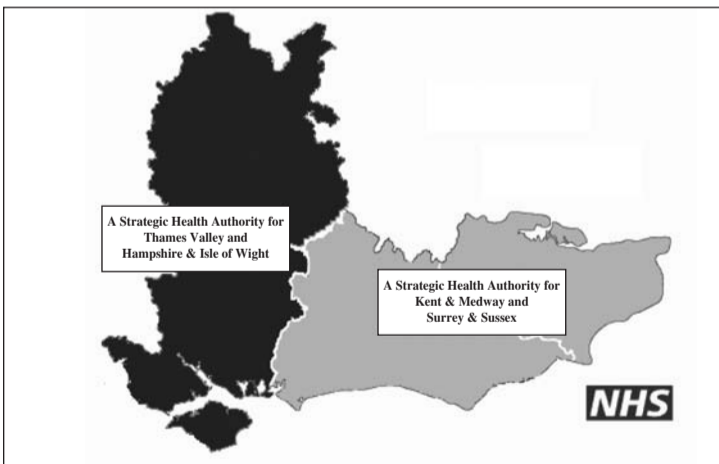
Emsworth House Nursing Home

This was originally intended to be a 60-bed facility, but has now been reduced to 48, and is due for completion in the next few months. A temporary move by the residential home occupants into the nursing home is planned while their accommodation is refurbished. Final commissioning of the nursing home extension is intended for the beginning of 2007 with approximately 24 beds for people with dementia and the rest for general nursing care. Emsworth House has always provided good care in the community and we welcome the improvements that the extension will bring.

Transport

Patients are still experiencing difficulties travelling between hospitals by bus and train and this has caused some to miss appointments. Travelling to Havant Hospital by public transport still involves a relatively long walk which is beyond many elderly and infirm people. In April, all people over 60 will be entitled to free travel, full details available from Havant Borough Council.

In summary, the ERA is concerned about the future provision of health care in Emsworth and we will continue to monitor the situation. We would appreciate any comments regarding the items mentioned above.



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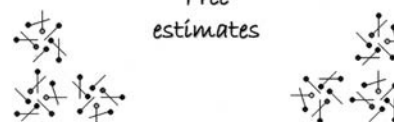
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