



Our Ref: DB/GJ/am

30 July 2012

Shaping the Future Team  
FREEPOST RSYL-KEKG-URGC  
NHS Berkshire  
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Dear Sir or Madam

This response has been prepared by Bracknell Forest Council, through the Executive, Scrutiny and Officers. The Council would like to make some general points about the content of the pre-consultation and raise some concerns that are not addressed in the documentation.

The vision document is entitled "Shaping the Future in East Berkshire" and yet there is scant mention of Frimley Park Hospital or the Royal Berkshire, which we understand from the PCT's own figures are the major acute hospitals serving the population of Bracknell Forest. It also fails to mention the role of independent hospitals which we understand patients can choose to secure their treatment from. Certainly the Council can provide evidence through its own Adult Social Care, Health and Housing department of how patient flows have impacted on the running and focus of the department in responding to hospital discharge.

Prior to the launch of the consultation, the PCT and HWPT declared that all sites were in effect safe. The Council is interested to learn if there was a mandate determined elsewhere for this position being established ahead of the consultation and from whom this mandate came. In doing this the Council believes this has served to fashion the consultation in a particular way and to this Council, it seems that this is about the future of Heatherwood and Wexham Park Trust and not about healthcare in East Berkshire. It is also known that the Heatherwood and Wexham Park Trust has begun the costly process of disposing of part of the Heatherwood site with the establishing of a project board to remodel the Heatherwood site and at its first meeting declared that Heatherwood would remain even though a consultation is still outstanding.

The document talks about the lack of capital and yet proposes to keep all current hospital sites open. This we believe cannot make economic sense in the climate we are in and given all of the advances in healthcare. The fact that there is already an NHS facility which has been purchased at considerable expense to the tax payer at Brants Bridge is not mentioned in any significant way in the document. Surely the use of this facility must be maximised given its location to the population prior to other investments being considered.

**ADULT SOCIAL CARE, HEALTH AND HOUSING**

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The Council has experience of taking difficult decisions in relation to building based services and responding to care and economic arguments. Much in the consultation hinges on the sale of surplus land on the Heatherwood site. The Council is aware how complex land sales can be and the associated planning arrangements. This can be a lengthy process. It would be helpful to know that the planning authority will be able to support the proposals and its views of the likely timescale and that the likely sale value will meet the contribution required to support the HWPT rescue package. The Council is aware of the arrangements that NHS property should be handled by a new organisation "PropCo" The Council believes the consultation should be clear about the role of PropCo particularly as any land matters will not be determined prior to April 2013.

The Council feels that the development of Urgent Care in Bracknell Forest should not be formally considered as part of this consultation. It has already been the subject of a consultation and Health Service Commissioners agreed the case for 'Healthspace' in Bracknell Forest. However, this has not been delivered to the detriment of the local population. We note that on p1 the PCT has placed HealthSpace on the map, presumably in recognition of the fact that is not part of the consultation.

If there is a decision on the MIU that should be a separate one, it is misleading in its current form and could leave people thinking that all Urgent Care Services could be at Heatherwood. The Council urges the PCT to ensure that the Healthspace proceeds at pace now that it should be at Brants Bridge and is happy to assist in that objective.

Finally, the Council is anxious that the development of the proposals may significantly disadvantage the Bracknell Forest and Ascot Clinical Commissioning Group. It is essential that the contracts are constructed in such a way to reflect patient flows. Anything other than this would put the CCG under financial pressure as it is clear that patients are exercising their right to choose which acute healthcare provider they want. This comment is in line we believe with the four key 'tests' set out by the Secretary of State for service change. If contracts are tied up to promote H&WP Trust sustainability then we are not convinced that the test in relation to 'consistency with current and prospective patient choice' will be met.

It must be recognised that HWPT is no longer the preferred service provider in Bracknell Forest and that any attempts to manipulate the local market and inhibit patient choice or place the CCG in financial difficulty will be resisted at the highest possible level.

Turning to the questions set out in the consultation document.

In the light of the general comments made earlier.

**1) What do you think about our idea to develop a modern surgical hospital at Heatherwood?**

The Council looks forward to examining the business case and a comparison with costs if other providers were to undertake this activity. It is assumed that there would be a natural limit to the activity given that ICU facilities would not be part of this service. We remain concerned about the extent of activity on all of the sites, within the proposals.

In addition to this, there is no clarity on how the funding streams will be organised to deliver this ambition. We are sceptical that the assumptions of land value at the site can be realised.

**2) What are your views on our plans for a new Urgent Care Centre in Bracknell with enhanced services to replace services provided at the Heatherwood Minor Injuries Unit?**

The Urgent Care Centre must be separated from the consultation. The Council believes the PCT is already mandated to develop this and has failed to do so. It would be helpful to have a clear timeline from the PCT on when work will begin to establish the Healthspace.

The only questions that remains in our view is, should MIU remain at Heatherwood and more strategically the links between that MIU in Maidenhead and the Walk In Centre in Slough and the A&E service in Wexham, including Urgent Care.

Given the proximity of the population, the MIU should be moved to the Healthspace.

**3) What are your views on our ideas for the rehabilitation services and related inpatients beds?**

The Council supports the principle of this proposal and urges the PCT to consider more innovative approaches to rehabilitation similar to that agreed between the CCG and the Council, to improve efficiency and outcomes for individuals. There needs to be more clarity about the relationship between these services and acute rehabilitation. The document is silent on plans for other rehabilitation services in the other sites.

**4) Do you think we are offering the right choices for women in terms of where they give birth?**

The Council supports the proposals if the choices are real, Members have expressed concern about whether these are possible. The financial analysis will be helpful in this regard.

**5) What is important to you about where outpatient services are delivered from?**

- Access
- Transport
- Parking
- Other (please explain)

It makes economic sense to have outpatient clinics in population centres that will generate the demand.

**6) We will fully evaluate all proposals against best clinical evidence, quality outcomes, patient choice, patient experience, patient access, sign-up from doctors and other clinicians and financial viability. Do we need to take anything else into account?**

The extent to which NHS providers can collaborate to deliver the commissioning vision and provide best outcomes. There are serious questions about the viability of healthcare in its current configuration and we believe there is further to go than is set out in the document. The investment at Brants Bridge as 'healthcare/taxpayers' money must be fully utilized to maximise the value of the asset to deliver improved services before incurring additional expenditure as we have already set out.

The Council is happy for its response to be published and would ask that due notification is given prior to that occurring. Likewise, if the Council needs to publish comments in relation to the consultation, we would notify the PCT.

If you require any points of clarification, please do not hesitate to contact me or my Director of Adult Social Care, Health and Housing.

Yours sincerely



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