

LITTLE WALTHAM AND GREAT NOTLEY SURGERIES Patient Participation Group

We have been increasingly concerned over the level of local housing development being supported by adequate healthcare provision, so to this end we held a workshop on 24th September 2024 which was attended by members of two Patient Participation Groups, and four local Parish Councils together with four GP/Partners from the Great Notley and Little Waltham Practice.

Presentations were given by Karen Short (Chelmsford City Council Principal Planning Officer) Dan Doherty (Mid & South Essex Integrated Care Board – ICB) and Cath Bicknell (Senior Planning Policy Manager, ICB Estates) also attended by Michelle Phillips (Chelmsford and Maldon District Alliance Delivery and Engagement Lead)

Karen Short showed us a map of the area, showing the area bounded by White Hart Lane, Essex Regiment Way and Beaulieu Park. The planning for Beaulieu Park is now complete, The Channels development has 750 houses either occupied or in the advanced stage of construction, and there are 3 further developments under discussion. A Master Plan prepared in December 2022 sets out who delivers roads, education and other facilities, Legal agreements are made with developers who have submitted detailed applications for structure, and in principle applications for houses Then detailed approval for the houses. Current proposals are to build a Garden Community- 4 villages, each with its own centre, infrastructure and services. The focus is on 50% green infrastructure, walking and cycling through well-lit ways, and all within 15 minutes walk of the centre. Car use will be discouraged, and buses given access by “bus gates”. The new railway station will open in 2025. It is anticipated there will be up to 6250 homes, and 9 hectares of industry/business. There will be 4 new schools, and 17 hectares of sports land. It will be bounded on the North East by the bypass which will be extended to Great Leighs, and be surrounded by a large Country Park.

Beaulieu Park is now mainly completed as to residential use, with further business park to be provided. There will be veterinary and dental provision, and a new Health Centre will open soon. 2 village centres will include health provision.

Dan Doherty explained that NHS estates make provision for accommodation for NHS services, including GPs; GPs do not work for, NHS but provide a service to the NHS, and actually own most of the “estate”. NHS pay a rent to the GPs, at a rate fixed by the District Valuer.,

Historically, provision of surgeries has been in former private houses. Many of these are no longer suitable for the purpose. NHS is overseen by the Department of Health, which provides the funds to NHS to pay the GP. In this

area (South and Mid-Essex) there are about 200 separate buildings. Mid- Essex covers about 410,000 patients, and eg the number in Great Notley has risen from 16,000 to 21,000 in about 5 years.

A typical new surgery is built from scratch, and would cater for 10,000 to 15,000 patients and cost £3 million --£5 million to build. It would be built to a high standard and meet Green requirements as well as zero carbon emissions.

New surgeries may be built by developers/builders and then leased, or even given, to the community/NHS in lieu of a monetary payment under section 106, or the development levy. The rent sought by a builder may often exceed that paid by NHS. The money provided by NHS will also depend upon the number of houses built, so that a small development will not generate enough money for a new surgery, however, the building of the new Garden Communities should provide a good opportunity to put in more money and build new premises

Problems arise because NHS will only provide money once there are enough patients actually living there. Then expressions of interest would be sought from surrounding surgeries, and a selection process would take place. This must also ensure that it does not destabilise existing practices or affect the provision at the local A & E at Broomfield Hospital (which is bound to be affected by an influx of a further 20,000 patients) Consideration will also have to be given to where emergency ambulances are based.

Cath Bicknell explained the NHS Primary Care estate covers all existing surgeries in both Chelmsford and Braintree, and potentially 4 new surgeries- Beaulieu Park, the Garden Communities, Great Leighs and Woodhouse Lane, Broomfield. In addition, the Braintree local plan provides for a possible 1750 to 2000 new homes to the east of Great Notley, though no application has yet been made.

In response to questions, it was stressed the claim for the specific sums of money is based upon a national formula, including floor space, and the patients must be there first to demonstrate the need meaning that a surgery cannot be built in advance of the houses.

Sometimes a developer will just hand over a building without requiring further rent. Sometimes, there may be a lease from the developer, or alternatively GPs may borrow money themselves on a commercial basis to purchase the premises Section 106 money must be used for a specific development, so the money from smaller developments cannot be aggregated together. The money must also be spent in a time frame or handed back. The site set aside for a surgery/health centre, may not be available for developing until all the houses are built. An example is Beaulieu where the health centre was approved in 2014 but is only now being built.

Dan Doherty stressed that Primary Care is the only part of the NHS NOT to have overspent its budget in the last few years, while offering more care than it did before the pandemic. He referenced the recent report from Lord Darzi

“Independent Investigation of the National Health Service in England
(publishing.service.gov.uk)

As a PPG we are now investigating how we might be proactive in helping to bring about changes to the system to ensure healthcare provision is given greater priority within housing development.

On another note, the surgery’s new website is now up and running which we hope everyone is finding more accessible.

We wish everyone a Happy Christmas and a Peaceful New Year.