***Whitstable Health Centre Relocation into Zone D of Whitstable Harbour. A concept paper***

***Introduction***

Whitstable Health Centre (WHC) is an NHS health centre located on the opposite side of Harbour Street to Whitstable Harbour. It was built in the early 1970’s and is generally considered to be at the end of its useful life. In particular, the roof leaks in multiple places and the internal layout it not designed for modern general practice and associated services. A further problem is the lack of adequate space to serve the needs of our ever expanding population.

There have been multiple discussions between the owner, NHS Property Services (NHS PS) and the principal tenant, Whitstable Medical Practice (WMP), about replacing this building.

Of the options considered, the one which has been agreed in principle several times over several decades with successive officers of NHS PS is a proposal to provide a new Whitstable Health Centre somewhere in Zone D of Whitstable Harbour.

***Financial Considerations***

The existing WHC is owned by NHS PS. The principal tenant is Whitstable Medical Practice (WMP) who are in receipt of notional rent (otherwise known as current market rent) for the area of this building they occupy. Subject to NHS agreement, the NR could be transferred to a new building in Zone D and would continue in perpetuity.

Again, subject to agreement between NHS PS and Canterbury City Council the land currently occupied by WHC could be “swapped” for a new footprint in Zone D for the new WHC. CCC would then be free to develop the old WHC site as they see fit ie residential with or without retail on the ground floor. Discussions have also taken place concerning the relocation of the Whitstable Youth Centre adjacent to WHC. This would free up a larger area for redevelopment. This would be helpful as the youth centre and WHC share spaces in the existing public car park.

***Design of the new Whitstable Health Centre***

The WMP area of the current WHC is approximately 1450 sq metres with 18 clinical rooms, occupied GPs, nurses and allied health professionals. There are 40 car parking bays in total serving both patients and the staff.

Further work is necessary to determine an exact size and design of a fit for purpose new Whitstable Health Centre. However, given the need to accommodate a modern expanded primary care team, and also extend the clinical and administrative personnel to serve the ever increasing local population, an increase in building size and car parking bays in the region of 30-40% would seem a reasonable projection.

***An Opportunity to Add Value to Health***

There is a national drive for the NHS to offer an expanded model of health care within communities. Concepts are evolving but include:-

* An emphasis on primary prevention, ie education and training to help populations to lead healthier lifestyles in order to increase the years of healthy life with less chance of developing the multiple illnesses which are on the rise. They include but are not limited to :
* Obesity
* Diabetes
* Hypertension
* High Cholesterol
* Cardio Vascular Disease
* Certain cancers
* Mental health issues
* Dementia

New health centres could be prepared to take on this expanded work if they are equipped with:-

* More rooms to accommodate a larger, more effective multidisciplinary team.
* An education/training room for use by any relevant provider of lifestyle advice.
* A cookery school to enable people to learn how to cook simple nutritious food thereby reducing reliance on harmful ultra processed foods.

The proximity of the Whitstable swimming pool, gym and studio is a benefit to the promotion of a healthy lifestyle for residents of all ages.

***Conclusion***

I would encourage decision makers not to miss this opportunity to improve the physical and mental health of the population of Whitstable. If a facility for providing holistic care can replace an ageing leaking building then this project will serve to increase the health and wellbeing of the population of Whitstable. It will add years to life and life to years for current and future generations.

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