
Canterbury District Local Plan (Regulation 19) consultation - Response from Dr J M Ribchester MBE on behalf of Whitstable Medical Practice

From KEMP, Teresa (WHITSTABLE MEDICAL PRACTICE - G82071) [REDACTED]

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To Consultations <Consultations@canterbury.gov.uk>

Cc RIBCHESTER, John (WHITSTABLE MEDICAL PRACTICE - G82071) [REDACTED]

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Dear Sir/Madam,

Please see below my response on behalf of Whitstable Medical Practice. I would be grateful of your confirmation of receipt of this email.

Please see below for your comments. The deadline for submission is 18th May, although I need to send this off before I go away on 11th May, returning on 20th May.

FYI – this is the final draft plan for the period from now up to 2042/43. Once the consultation is over and any additions put in the plan, it goes to the SoS who appoints a Planning Inspector whose job it is to approve/modify/reject the plan. Once approved it becomes set. Hence the importance of doing this submission.

“I am Dr John Ribchester, GP Director of Strategy for the Whitstable Medical Practice (WMP) which is the sole provider of NHS GMS (GP) services to the locality of Whitstable. We provide healthcare services from 4 buildings –

1. Whitstable Health Centre, within the Whitstable Harbour location. CT5 1BZ (WHC)
2. Chestfield Medical Centre, in Reeves Way, Chestfield. CT5 3QU (CMC)
3. Estuary View Medical Centre, Estuary View Business Park. CT5 3SE (EVMC)
4. Estuary House, Estuary View Business Park. CT5 3SE (EH) The WMP management hub, and the location of the East Kent Hospitals University Foundation Trust (EKHUFT) coastal outpatient department.

In addition to the provision of NHS GP services, EVMC is home to many community healthcare services available to all people from East Kent and beyond. These services include:

An Urgent Treatment Centre open 8-8, 365 days

A range of diagnostics including X-ray, ultrasound, echocardiography, hysteroscopy, cystoscopy and point of care blood tests.

A range of outpatient clinics

Day surgery including for cataracts, skin surgery and more.

Musculoskeletal services including physiotherapy.

EVMC is mentioned in “Fit for the Future: a 10 Year Health Plan for England” published in July 2025 as an exemplar Neighbourhood Health Centre. It has long been considered a best practice example of community healthcare. WMP has 23 GP partners, and over 200 staff who look after a registered list of over 45,000

patients, and also offers the services listed above to residents throughout East Kent, and the many visitors to our locality.

My comments are specifically about the sections of the plan concerning Whitstable, W1 to W11, although it can be seen that EVMC is also an important provider of NHS services to the wider locality.

General comment.

W1 to W11 mentions a significant number of new homes, approximately 2000, together with new schools and recreational facilities. Using a multiplier of 2.6 people per home this amounts to 5,200 more people who will become patients of WMP. This total will be in addition to our list size increase of up to 1000 patients per annum. We have no spare clinical or non clinical rooms at present, and yet the draft plan alone will require estate for an extra 3 GPs, 3 nursing staff and the necessary non clinical back up staff.

The draft plan for Whitstable contains NO specific provision for new healthcare estate for the necessary extra GPs and staff, nor any provision for expansion of our community healthcare services, which will clearly attract more demand. There is only a mention of Estuary View being a secondary focus for the main town centre including health infrastructure.

W1. Town centre.

The town centre strategy states there will be a separate SPD (supplementary planning document) for a Whitstable Harbour Strategic Plan.

W2. Whitstable Harbour.

I note that the plan shows the Whitstable Health Centre to be within this area. This is important because "Mixed use development" is mentioned, but nothing about the future of WHC which is generally accepted to be an old flat roofed building with significant structural problems. For over 2 decades WMP has been speaking to Canterbury City Council about demolishing WHC and providing a new, fit for purpose medical centre within the Whitstable harbour redevelopment. At a minimum, the WHC should not be replaced by a "mixed use development." 13,000 patients are registered there. Our preference would be for a new WHC to be included in the Harbour SPD.

W3. Whitstable urban.

This is the area destined to have the majority of new housing. Our nearest medical centres are CMC and EVMC, so we anticipate the majority of new residents will register at one or the other for GP services, and also access our community healthcare services at EVMC. As previously mentioned the estate at both sites is already maximally occupied. We will require expansion at both site in order to provide NHS healthcare to these new patients. This could take the form of an extra storey for both CMC and EVMC, as there is no space for building on.

Currently there is mention of "health facility provision will be supported to meet the needs of the community." Whereas this statement is welcome, it is vague and does not describe the significant estate developments which will be vital for the population. We would suggest that the draft plan specifically supports the cost of extra healthcare estate, probably in the form of an extra store for both CMC and EVMC.

W4-11. Carried forward policies from the 2017 plan.

These contain details of extra dwellings which will further add to the demands for local GP and community healthcare services.

In conclusion.

The locality of Whitstable is becoming more densely populated every year, as shown by the patient list growth at WMP of up to 1000 people each year. This draft Canterbury District Local Plan will add a further 5200 patients to our list.

In order to provide the necessary healthcare for this expansion we would urge that the plan is modified to include :

1. Preservation, but preferably reprovision of the Whitstable Health Centre.
2. Significant funding for an extra storey for Chestfield Medical Centre
3. Significant funding for an extra storey on Estuary View Medical Centre.
- 4.

I hope you will agree to these worthwhile changes, and I thank you in anticipation of your support for the healthcare of our local community.

Many thanks

Dr John M Ribchester MBE.
GP Director of Strategy, Whitstable Medical Practice.

Teresa Kemp
Senior Clinical Services Administrator &
Ophthalmology Admin Lead
Whitstable Medical Practice

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