

# North Somerset Council

## Report to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel

**Date of Meeting: 19 July 2021**

**Subject of Report: Weston Central (Primary Care) Estate**

**Town or Parish:**

**Member Presenting: Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly, HOSP Chairman**

**Key Decision: NO**

### Recommendations

- HOSP recognises the importance for patient outcomes of building a bespoke health centre rather than retrofitting this into an unsuitable building, but this must be balanced with accessibility.
- HOSP is unable to support the building of the health centre at Sunnyside Road (rugby club), as is currently planned, due to the inability of the site to suitably provide access to public transport which we believe will be detrimental to some patients.
- HOSP calls on the CCG and the developers to work together to reconfigure the plans for the Sunnyside Road site incorporating a suitable road to allow access to public transport that serves patients using the health centre.
- Upon reconfiguration of the plans for the site, including incorporation of the access road for public transport, HOSP will provide its full support.
- If the plans remain unchanged then HOSP calls on the CCG to consider alternative plans for the relocation of Graham Road surgery (such as an alternative location or a branch surgery in the centre of Weston-super-Mare)

### 1. Summary of Report

As part of the agenda for the Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 18th March 2021 there was discussion about the location of the new health centre in central Weston. Concerns about access were raised at the meeting, and by the public, so it was resolved that a task and finish group of councillors would look into this matter further and report back to HOSP.

This report sets out the findings of the working group and proposes a number of interim recommendations (as set out above) for consideration by the Panel at this meeting

### 2. Policy

N/A

### **3. Details**

3.1 At the point of writing this report the task and finish group have met twice (by the time of the HOSP meeting this will be three times) and the group are now in a position to provide an update.

The group focussed solely on the access concerns for the site at Weston Rugby Club and relied on various documentation and sources such as demography data, equality impact assessments, the business case, high-level feedback from the public events, experience and knowledge of Healthwatch, CCG and North Somerset Council's transport team, and details about the proposed site.

#### **What we have learnt:-**

3.2 Can a bridge, with public access, be built over the railway line?

In theory yes, but this is considered to be very very unlikely as such a bridge would cost multiple millions and would be very hard to deliver. Cllr Cronnelly represents a ward in Weston that should have had a bridge built over the railway line several decades ago (approved in 2000). It was never delivered and is now estimated to cost over £4million.

The council do have plans to enhance pedestrian and cyclist access on Hildesheim Bridge.

3.2 Could the bridge at the railway be used for public access?

The Chairman wrote to Great Western to have this discussion but at the time of writing there has been no response. It is anticipated that access will not be granted and therefore is not a viable alternative.

3.3 Can the site be served by public transport?

We've looked into the ability to serve Sunnyside Road with public transport and we have concluded that there are substantial challenges and unless the site is reconfigured public transport will not be possible. The challenge is that Sunnyside Road, by itself, is not suitable for public transport as there is no turnaround for a bus. In effect this will be a health centre marooned on the outskirts of Weston if the current plan remains in place - this is not acceptable.

However, the task and finish group has identified a way to serve the site and the health centre with public transport but this requires a new public transport access road cutting through the site. An access road would be possible at the North end of the site but that would cut across land currently earmarked for a school (although as these plans are not fully complete it's a tad academic to say that it's currently earmarked for a school). To build this access road the site will need to be reconfigured which may mean a reduction in the number of homes and/or moving the planned school. Alternatively locating the health centre at the south of the site may be better.

Both options require the developer to change their current plans.

The CCG has been asked by the group to discuss with the developer reconfiguring the site and update the group on their response.

The Chairman has written to First Bus to ask them to comment on the impact of incorporating the site into an existing bus route. At the time of writing no response has been received.

### 3.4 What are the prospects for a branch surgery?

The group did ask for a branch surgery to be considered in central Weston to mitigate some of the impact but has been advised that this is unlikely due to financial implications. There are however plans to consider whether some outreach work may be possible to support certain groups - such as methadone users who currently rely on getting their prescriptions from Graham Road.

### 3.5 Can transport support be put in place?

We know surgeries such as Mendip Vale use electric cars to help reach people who can't access the site. We also know that voluntary services such as Weston Wheels can pick up patients and drop them to their surgery if they have issues getting there.

However, the reliance on a voluntary service isn't sustainable and shouldn't be considered as a replacement for appropriate infrastructure.

## Conclusions

3.6 The task and finish group agree that a new, and bespoke built, health centre is preferable to a health centre that is retrofitted into an existing space, however, this has to be balanced with being accessible for patients.

There is an opportunity to make the site accessible but it will require the developer agreeing to reconfigure the site, which may mean relocating/reducing the number of houses and/or the school. Should the developer agree to this then it will resolve some of the considerable access challenges.

## 4. Consultation

N/A

## 5. Financial Implications

N/A

## Cost

N/A

## Funding

N/A

## 6. Legal Powers and Implications

N/A

## 7. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

N/A

## 8. Risk Management

N/A

**9. Equality Implications**

N/A

**10. Corporate Implications**

N/A

**11. Options Considered**

N/A

**Author:**

Councillor Ciaran Cronnelly, Chairman Health Overview and Scrutiny Panel