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## **Dover Community Hospital - Update from the Kent Local Involvement Network**

### Introduction

The Kent Local Involvement Network (LINK) has received the following update from LINK Participant, Douglas Tutton, who will be attending the meeting to give evidence on behalf of the LINK.

“Since the 30 October 2009 I have attended two meetings where the subject was on the agenda:

4 November 2009 - Dover District Council (DDC) Scrutiny Committee at which the DDC officers and council members supported the mid town site as their preferred option. They considered the flooding problems to be solvable, but how and in what time scale was not discussed or where the funding would come from. The site at Whitfield was said to have “planning problems” because this area has been designated for job creation.

30 November 2009 - Mr Reg Hansel, the Chair of Dover New Hospital Group [who organised a 32,000 plus petition sent to Downing Street], invited me to attend a meeting with Mr Tim Ingleton and Mr Mike Dawson of DDC Planning Department.

- It was stated that DDC advocated the Mid Town Site as their preferred option.
- They considered the Buckland Hospital Site (although not ideal) to be a better option than Whitfield due to the previously mentioned planning problems. It was pointed out to them that a hospital could create more jobs per square metre than any business that might be attracted to the site. But, we were told that there would be no new jobs at Whitfield as the jobs would be transferred from Buckland Hospital. However, one of the stated aims of the NHS for the new hospital is to increase patient throughput by at least three times and it is difficult to see how this could be achieved without an increase in staff. The planners were unaware of this aim.

We were informed by the planners that the Hospital Trust had an option on Plot 13 at the Business Park (Phase Two), Whitfield, but that any planning application would be a drawn out affair due to change of use. The question was asked why was B&Q, a retail unit, allowed on the development contrary to the original redevelopment plans? The answer given was that this development was the key to opening up the phase two site. It was pointed out to the planners that a new Hospital built on a suitable site for long-term expansion and with adequate car parking is the key to the long term health care for those living in DDC.

We were told that a planning application at Whitfield would most likely be called in by the Government Office of the South East, which could result in considerable delays. When asked if this was likely to happen we were informed that the planners did not know as they had received no application. I reported that I had been told by a Ms Gilks of the Government Office for the South East (GOSE 01483-882255), that because of the flood issues in mid town it was unlikely that the Government Office would put forward any objections to the Hospital being built at Whitfield.

There appeared to have been a lack of communication between the various interested bodies and Mr Hansell asked the DDC planners to arrange a meeting between them, the East Kent Hospitals University NHS Foundation Trust, Primary Care Trust, Environment Agency and GOSE in order to agree a site suitable for the long term health needs of DDC's area including the rural and town populations of Sandwich and Deal as well as the town itself. The planners gave assurances that they would endeavour to arrange such a meeting.

Since these two meetings it is interesting to note that the railway bridge over the main access road to the Buckland site was closed for a considerable time. It was struck by a lorry causing considerable damage, not a unique experience! The low bridge was the reason why several companies rejected or left the industrial site at the top of Coombe Valley Road.

Doug Tutton  
2 January 2010"