

## **Submission to strategic planning committee - new Berwick hospital**

The planning application you are considering today will transform healthcare provision in the Berwick area and have a positive impact on the lives of thousands of people living in the town and surrounding communities.

It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to revolutionise the way we care for people of all ages, embrace the latest technology to bring further benefits for patients and give residents the new, purpose-built hospital they have so desperately needed for many years.

Whilst staff working in the existing Berwick Infirmary, which was originally built in 1874, do an amazing job and deliver the highest quality of care, they are constrained by the poor physical condition and functionality of the building. What is more, patients have inadequate privacy and dignity and, put simply, the hospital is no longer suitable for the efficient delivery of modern-day healthcare.

Our new hospital will re-provide all the existing services with the addition of an accredited endoscopy suite to ensure as much care as possible is delivered closer to home, while harnessing technology to further improve patient care. The last thing we want is for our patients to have to travel unnecessarily for routine appointments and treatment when they should not need to and we are committed to reducing the number of miles travelled, and offering appointments at Berwick first for local people, as long as it is clinically the right thing to do.

Having the GP practice Well Close Medical Group within the hospital will also foster greater integration between primary and secondary care teams which will lead to more benefits for patients by delivering further joined-up care.

We have not reached this point alone. It has been so important for us to involve our staff every step of the way, with clinical teams having a major input into the new hospital's design to ensure it supports an improved experience for patients and is fit for the future.

We've also extensively engaged with the local community and have held a series of public drop-in sessions in the town which have been well attended. Latterly, due to Covid-19, we sought feedback on the plans before you today online, with 95 per cent backing the need for a new integrated healthcare facility and almost three-quarters supporting this scheme.

Our hospital also represents a major investment in the town. At a time of economic turmoil, it is credit to our strong financial management that we will spend £25million on this facility to benefit our patients and staff. We would like to assure members that this funding is ringfenced for this development and has not been affected by the coronavirus pandemic. This investment will in turn create 295 full-time equivalent jobs per year during the construction and operational phases, and generate £8.5m in direct gross value added and £8.9m in indirect gross value added during the construction phase.

Our project team has worked extensively with the council and their statutory consultees over the past 12 months in order to ensure our application meets all of the relevant planning and technical requirements. In particular, this has involved the scoping and preparation of a comprehensive Environmental Impact Assessment assessing the effects of the proposed hospital upon a wide range of planning considerations, including townscape, heritage, transport, noise, air quality, ecology and flood risk.

Since the submission of the application, work has continued to address comments received during the determination process; including daylight and sunlight analysis in respect of those closest residential properties on Low Greens. These matters are all described in more detail in your officer's report, culminating in their recommendation that the application be approved today.

We have never shied away from the fact that it will be challenging to build a new hospital at the same time as keeping the existing one operational to ensure services are uninterrupted. However, every one of our team is committed to doing just that and making sure we continue to keep our staff safe and deliver high quality care for our patients at all times.

This new hospital is vital for the long-term health of people in Berwick and surrounding areas and is a key strategic priority for our trust as we strive to improve the wellbeing of our local communities. We therefore urge you to support the officer's recommendation and approve this development and play a part in building a better healthcare future for north Northumberland.