



FOREST
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP
Delivering a thriving economy

Forest of Dean District Hospital: Initial Considerations

Forest Economic Partnership Infrastructure Subgroup FEP2050

FEP recognises that time is short to submit to the Hospital Consultation. Hospital provision is vital to the infrastructure of the area covered by the Forest of Dean District Council. Unfortunately FEP has only recently been convened amongst those who live, work and play in the area to provide an agreed economic plan so that in 2050 the District is an attractive, vibrant and dynamic destination to live, work and do business. We are only able at this stage to share some initial thoughts.

Considerations:

The location of the new hospital is something that must be geographically carefully considered in terms of accessibility from the cited 3 main towns of the Forest. It is unwise to exclude Newent from these considerations as anecdotal evidence suggests that the Dilke is the first port of call for many of its inhabitants and visitors.

Early discussions of the Infrastructure and Cross-border FEP sub-groups flag up significant changes in:

- population size from new housing developments currently at Lydney and Newent, but potentially elsewhere with the new economic plans being developed; and
- type of individuals such as an influx of Bristol workers and families seeking rural housing with the removal of the Severn Crossing tolls or proposed South Wales-West of England Powerhouse.
- Combined with a currently demographically ageing population.

FEP recognises that the unification of the 2 current hospitals creates opportunities for technological advancement, jobs, space and facilitation to make healthcare provision appropriate for most of the District's needs as long as those needs are fully understood.

There is a current lack of clarity as to the type of hospital that might be built as there is no clear description of what might be intended. We are unsure as to what is meant by a community hospital and what a community hospital might look like in 2050. We are aware that an up-to-date community hospital might be better sited in a different location to a leading edge provision serving emergency and non-emergency needs.

Some Key Questions

We must ask ourselves, exactly how advanced do we want our hospital to be; and what type will it be?

1. Are we going to keep it traditional but pre-dated. Or are we going to lead by example and develop a carbon neutral structure that operates as eco-friendly and green as possible. And will it have cutting edge technology and ground-breaking medicines and methods of healing modalities?
2. The Forest of Dean shouldn't only be precious for its land, but also precious for its advancements and revolutionary methods.

3. Lydney and Dilke hospital buildings – old buildings with challenging problems when it comes to integrating of modern or innovative technology. Inefficient buildings that have not kept pace with modern life.
4. Focussing on patient centred care, community hospitals appear more trustworthy and friendly in much the same way a local car mechanic does when compared to a main dealer.
5. When assessing the situation, you are right to consider the additional services over and above what is available now. If this is happening, then do we integrate state of the art tech, teaching hospital etc.?
6. The hospital location must also consider the wider health benefits brought about by association with the natural environment and the positive effect this can have on patient health, mental wellbeing and recovery. The location needs to provide options for both views into and direct access to the un-spoilt natural environment of the Forest of Dean, along with complementary services to encourage a range of contact with nature as part of treatment. DEFRA's own research¹ has found that particularly strong links are found in relation to: mental health and wellbeing; development and maintenance of a healthy immune system and reduction of inflammatory-based diseases; and in relation to variation between social and demographic groups.

What considerations are there around all types of accessibility?

1. Families in the Forest have strong links with their local hospital – many generations born in the same place due to residents not moving away.
2. Gloucestershire in general has an aging population, so coupling this with the new entrants expected means the hospital needs to cater for the elderly as well as young families with young children.
3. To make sure there is as little “talent drain” as possible, the hospital should also make sure it links in with teaching establishments like the University of Gloucestershire and UWE to make sure it gets placements for nurses, OT's etc.
4. On the flip side of having one hospital, if we are expecting an inflow of new residents following the building of new houses, then it stands to reason that with people living longer, the hospital of today may not cope with the demands of tomorrow – do we actually need 2 hospitals not one? It is important that any provision retains or increases bed numbers, particularly in light of the bed blocking issues in the current acute hospital provision.
5. Current poor public transport is a major issue It is easier for some Forest residents to go to Gloucester than it is to a Forest hospital. Accessibility via better road networks and public transport enhancements will be required. Forest of Dean Community Transport Partnership (which is the not for profit providers - BVCS, Lydcare and Newent and Lydney Dial a Ride cover the whole Forest of Dean district) is integral to the plans for locating the new hospital and should be included in any future strategy. The Partners understand the challenges for transporting patients, the sick and vulnerable in rurally isolated areas, however their capacity must also be considered as part of ongoing planning.

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http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Document.aspx?Document=14042_EvidenceStatementonnaturalenvironmentsandhealth.pdf

As a Partnership, we recognise the need to get more young people involved in our partnership. The same applies here in this consultation. What steps are being taken to engage them? 17/18 yr old college students will need to have a say since it will be them that are using the services also. In terms of tech, this generation will need to be reached by social media – they will have had or have an opinion on the required services.

Comments on Various Locations

Whilst we have offered the below considerations, the FEP is not in any way expressing a preference for one or other of the three towns to which the consultation is restricted.

FOD Central

When it comes to the centre point between Lydney, Coleford & Cinderford, Speech House Road is about as central as we can possibly get. It will take a maximum of 10 minutes to reach the 'hospital' from within the 3 major towns in case of an emergency. If FEP also increases public transport accessibility between the 3 towns, they might also fall on this route. But much of this area is Statutory Forest and cannot be considered for development with the exception of the existing Dilke at one end.

Cellular reception is a major downfall in this area and is something that will need to be addressed subsequently or even regardless, to if this location is selected for the new hospital.

Lydney Bypass

Despite Lydney bypass being a 15-minute commute from the 2 other main towns within the Forest end of the District. It is also one of the least congested, quick moving sections of the A48, in the case of an emergency. It is also located near Lydney train station, as well as the harbour. This is an area that has been highlighted for a possible 3rd bridge crossing the River Severn and potentially connected to the M5.

Accessibility here is not bad. Land here is also already considerably flat and sustainable for the hospitals foundations. Cellular reception is also considerably strong at this location.

Coleford Old Campus

The old college campus in 5 Acres could make an exceptional location for the new hospital. Albeit there may be plans for a significant extension of the leisure centre, but this can complement the exercise referral scheme and its tangibility quite significantly.

Cinderford New Campus

Cinderford has a number of derelict and under-used buildings and potential building sites.

The old Ensors meat processing complex in Valley Road has been run-down since they left for their new premises on the industrial estate. This could make an ideal place for a new high-rise hospital given it is a 3 storey building. Part of this site is already proposed for a new Primary Care Centre to provide purpose built space for the two GP practises currently and health care professionals located in the town centre and is subject to planning approval. This Valley Road site is close to the Gloucestershire College's new campus. The hospital could therefore establish clear links to the college itself. The college could have the opportunity to offer medical courses whether those are intensive, foundation or degree level, creating a mixture of college and uni students.

Comments on areas excluded from this stage of the consultation

Bream

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Bream is perhaps overlooked for its potential to host some really beneficial and iconic businesses that promote community engagement and welfare. From Bream, you can reach both Lydney & Coleford in less than 10 minutes. The only stretch being to Cinderford, that can take up to 20 minutes on a bad day.

Newent

Newent has been excluded from the consultation papers with proposals only adjacent to what are typified as 3 major towns being considered. However accessibility from Newent to the new location should be made less difficult where possible. Residents do currently use the Dilke, often for end of life, rehabilitation and long standing illnesses. The Dilke is given as an option for various health/medical procedures by the NHS. The chosen site for a hospital should factor in and benefit the needs of residents North of the Forest.

Tidenham Parish

As well as considering the concerns of the North of the District there particular differences to the South around Tidenham. These include significant local housing development (current and future planned housing i.e. Beachley Barracks) with specifically demand for homes for families and working age population. This is coupled with significant movement of working age population from Bristol to the area. Local families like the access to the Minor Injuries unit at Lydney and it is certainly a factor that is valued when selecting Chepstow/Tidenham border area for relocation. In summary the consideration of the growing population of Tidenham, and the opportunity to attract a younger working age population should be taken on board especially in the context of providing economic value to the area.