

Didcot Primary Care Network – Clinical
Direction
Dr Alex Hart
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**Councillor David Rouane
Leader of the Council**

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30 March 2023

Dear Sirs

HEALTH SERVICES IN DIDCOT AND SURROUNDING AREA

Following approval of a motion to a meeting of our Council on 14 March 2023, I am writing to raise the council's concerns about the increase in demand for health services in Didcot and surrounding areas, particularly in relation to:

- a health centre and GP hub for Great Western Park in Didcot
- a well-resourced Minor Injuries Unit or similar (which could be based at Didcot Community Hospital)
- more NHS dental facilities for Didcot and the villages
- increased resources to support mental health

Didcot is a designated Garden Town and is growing fast, with nearly 13,000 additional homes completed since 2011, or still to be built, when looking at the South Oxfordshire and Vale of White Horse district sides of Didcot in the round. There is significant growth of some 16,445 homes, still to come to 2035, only a fraction of allocated growth at Didcot has been completed, the majority is still in the pipeline with delivery projected to reach its peak in the years 2027-2029.

The growth to date has already resulted in huge demand on resources such as schools and education, pre-school and nursery provision, GP services, transport pressures, leisure, recreation, and retail facilities.

Most resources such as schools, pre-school and nursery provision, leisure and retail have kept up and indeed benefited from this increased demand in services. However, our members, officers and residents are receiving complaints that there is severe pressure in accessing minor injury services, GP's, mental health services and NHS dental services.

¹ Data from 2021 JSNA for Didcot

Health Centre at Great Western Park

In 2021 Oxfordshire Clinical Commission Group provided evidence from Archus (healthcare infrastructure specialists) that the existing primary care premises were insufficient to accommodate the housing growth in Didcot.

Along with the Vale of White Horse District Council, we have offered considerable officer support working with the local GP practice and officers from the Integrated Care Board to bring the site at Great Western Park forward and seek your further support and commitment to bring these new facilities to fruition as soon as possible in line with the section 106 agreement.

The Vale of White Horse District Council, as the local planning authority, has managed to secure two land parcels specifically for GP provision: 646 square metres (with potential growth to 950 square metres) at Great Western Park and an option of some 766 square metres at Valley Park in Harwell.

The Archus report referred to above states that even with the successful provision at Great Western Park of 950 square metres of extra space this will not meet the needs of our residents beyond 2036 and that the additional provision of 766 square metres at Valley Park will undoubtedly be required. Whilst the district councils have worked together to secure the land through the planning process, we need a commitment that the ICB will enable these facilities to be provided to meet the needs of the additional population growth in Didcot and the surrounding areas of some 16,445 new homes.

Minor Injuries Unit

The nearest access to a minor injuries unit is at Marcham Road in Abingdon some five miles away.

The Index of Access to Health Assets and Hazards, measures how 'healthy' neighbourhoods are and highlights Didcot as being well below the English average particularly in relation to access to A&E Hospitals.

The average travel time from Didcot to a hospital is 51 minutes, this is higher than the English average of 39 minutes¹.

Dental Services

There is a desperate need for NHS dentists in Didcot. There are currently four dental practices none of which are taking NHS patients.

Mental Health Services

Residents are finding it difficult to access mental health services locally. Telephone services such as the NHS talking therapies service is only available if you are registered with a GP, the lack of GP access means our residents are unable to use this service.

¹ Data from 2021 JSNA for Didcot

The results of both the lack of GP services, NHS dental services, mental health services and access to A&E Hospitals is putting a huge strain on our residents. The level of depression reported in the JSNA is higher than the English average.

At the Health and Wellbeing Board held on 16 March 2023 a suggestion was made of a workshop to discuss bringing forward new primary care facilities across Oxfordshire with planning officers. I would like to show my support to do this as soon as possible but point out that securing the land through planning for services is only one part of the issue, the other key one is procedural support, resources, funding and expertise that only the Integrated Care Board can provide.

The lack of these services in a growing town such as Didcot is not acceptable, and provision for our residents needs to be provided urgently.

Yours sincerely



Cllr David Rouane
Leader of South Oxfordshire District Council

¹ Data from 2021 JSNA for Didcot