

Cllr Nick Vineall
Chairman, Dulwich Community Council
Members' Room, Southwark Town Hall
London SE5 8UB

Chris Bull Esq
Chief Executive
Southwark PCT
6th Floor, Mabel Goldwin House
London SE1 3DY

5 July 2006

Dear Mr Bull,

I am writing as Chair of the Dulwich Community Council in relation to the development of the East Dulwich Hospital site. The purpose of this letter is threefold:

- (a) to inform you of the outcome of the discussion at the Dulwich Community Council on Monday 3 July, and of the resolution made there
- (b) in the light of (a), to urge the PCT to postpone demolition of the towers supporting the onion domes on the north end of the site
- (c) to invite you to share with the community Council more information on the PCT's plans for the site as a whole, and to attend the September meeting of the DCC.

The central theme of this letter is simple.

There is widespread support for modern healthcare facilities on the East Dulwich Hospital site.

There is also widespread local support for retaining, so far as practicable the key heritage features of the site including the ogee domes ("the onion domes") and the central chateau block.

There is strong local feeling, which I have been asked to communicate to you, that there should be no demolition of the onion domes (or other key heritage features) until such time as full and proper consideration has been given as to whether those two objectives can *both* be

achieved. Any demolition of the key heritage features in advance of such full consideration would clearly contravene the spirit of the planning brief.

BACKGROUND

I want to begin by setting out my understanding of the present position in relation to the site, and the PCT's position, so that, if I have misunderstood the position, you have an opportunity to correct it.

- (1) None of the buildings on the site is listed. The site is not in a conservation area. Accordingly planning permission is not required for demolition.
- (2) The Council's planning brief produced in July 2005 recognises in section 7.5 the attractive and impressive façade that the hospital provides to East Dulwich Grove and supports the sensitive conversion of the main hospital building, where feasible. The planning brief also states that the central entrance and four Victorian wings should be retained unless it is demonstrated to be impracticable for the required use as a community hospital. The brief encourages the sensitive adaptation of these buildings for other acceptable ancillary buildings.
- (3) The present intention of the PCT for the eastern part of the site is shown in indicative plans for community health facilities which have been published in the PCT's newsletter. Planning permission has not yet been granted for that proposed development. I understand that the towers and onion domes on the front of the site do not fall within the building footprint for the proposed development. There are, at present, no published plans for the chateau block, or the western part of the site.
- (4) At a meeting with Village Ward Councillors on June 5, 2006:
 - (a) You were asked whether the brief given to the PCT's architects specifically instructed them to consider whether the key heritage features of the building could be incorporated in the PCT's designs for new healthcare provision on site, and if so whether their instructions to that effect could be made available.

You said you were not sure whether the PCT would wish to make those instructions available, if they existed. You are yet to respond formally on this point.
 - (b) You were asked to what extent the PCT had obtained advice as to the feasibility of maintaining some or all of the towers and onion domes either as a temporary measure or by incorporation into new building.

You said you would revert on that point, but are yet to do so.

(5) The PCT intends shortly to demolish buildings on the eastern end of the site, including the 8 tower block and onion domes, 4 to the front of the site and 4 to the rear.

I now turn to my three main points.

(a) To inform you of the outcome of the discussion at last night's Dulwich Community Council, and of the resolution made there

As I am sure you know, there is strong local feeling, reflected in the wording of the planning brief, that there are key heritage features of the hospital building, most notably the distinctive onion domes and towers, and the central chateau block, that should, if feasible, be retained. The proposed imminent demolition will obviously prevent any prospect of maintaining the overall effect of the frontage (since half the towers will be demolished). Strong concerns were raised that and that is not appropriate for that irreversible step to be taken unless and until there has been a thorough investigation, publicly demonstrated, that it is not feasible to provide the health care facilities which the PCT plans to develop at the same time as maintaining those features.

I attach a copy of the resolution passed at last night's meeting.

(b) To urge the PCT to postpone demolition of the towers supporting the onion domes on the north end of the site

You will see that at point (5) of the resolution the Community Council calls on the PCT to undertake not to demolish or weaken the chateau block or the towers on which the ogee onion dome rest until the determination of any planning application for development of the site.

I hope that you will be able to do that.

I understand that Councillor Crookshank Hilton is urgently seeking a meeting at which Ian McInnes of the Dulwich Society (and a distinguished architect) can present to you outline proposals for how the towers could be incorporated into a viable building.

(c) To invite you to share with the Community Council more information on the PCT's plans for the site as a whole, and to attend the September meeting of the DCC

I have noted a widely held view that the PCT has inadequately kept the public informed of its intentions for the site. I am not at the moment so much concerned as to whether that

perception is accurate, as with trying to ensure that the perception can be overcome in the future.

I therefore invite you to set out as best you are able the PCT's present plans for developing the site as a whole, dealing in particular with:

- (a) plans for that part of the site where the central chateau block stands, saying what use, if any is presently anticipated for that block, and how, and by whom, any such proposed change of use, or development, is likely to be achieved;
- (b) the same issues in relation to the western wing (including the towers and domes)

I have been asked to make this letter, together with any reply to it, available on the Community Council pages of the Southwark Council website.

I would also like to invite you to attend the next meeting of the DCC, which is on Monday 25 September, or, failing that, the next but one meeting which is on Monday 6 November. I anticipate that there will be great interest in hearing directly from the PCT about your plans for this site.

I am sorry this is such a long letter. I want to stress that it is intended to assist the task of progressing these issues in a constructive way. I feel sure there must be a solution which can meet the PCT's aims – shared by all - for high quality local health services, without unnecessarily jettisoning all the features of this building which make it such a popular local landmark. Premature demolition would prevent the chance of such a solution being found.

Yours sincerely,

Councillor Nick Vineall

Chair, Dulwich Community Council

Attachment: DCC resolution of 3 July 2006

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Councillor Robin Crookshank Hilton
Councillor Toby Eckersley
Councillor Nick Vineall
Councillor Kim Humphreys
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7th July 2006

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Dear Councillor

Dulwich Community Hospital

I am writing further to our meeting on June 5th to let you know the outcome of the discussions we had.

As agreed at the meeting I commissioned architects to consider further whether it was possible to retain the domes either within a new design or independently.

The architect's report also offers a further assessment of the refurbishment option whereby the new community hospital facilities would be provided within the shell of the existing buildings. The conclusion on this is clear and consistent with previous advice which we have received. This is that the development of the new community hospital within the current building would both result in a less suitable building and be significantly more expensive.

In relation to the domes the position remains that they cannot be preserved in their current locations whilst the rest of the building is being demolished. It is the intention of the PCT to continue with the demolition but to ask the demolition contractors to assess whether or not the domes themselves can be removed without being dismantled. If that is possible they can be stored and possibly used in some way in the future. However it should be emphasised that there can be no guarantee that it will be possible to preserve the domes in this way.

I should emphasise that the demolition which is currently underway only affects the eastern end of the site which will be required for the new community hospital development. No decision has yet been taken with regard to the buildings on the western end of the site. The PCT has, however, consistently made it clear that we will, providing a suitable use can be found for it, seek to preserve the main entrance building at the centre of the hospital.

I trust that this letter clarifies the position and demonstrates the PCT's commitment to both operate within the planning brief and to develop a 21st century community hospital in Dulwich.

I am of course happy to give you access to the architect's report should you find that helpful.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'ce. B.', with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Chris Bull
Chief Executive, Southwark Primary Care Trust

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7 September 2006

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Dear Councillor Vineall

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Please accept my apologies for the delay in responding to your letter of July 5th. As you are aware, Mee Ling Ng has offered to meet with those Councillors who have expressed concerns about the development and has suggested 6pm on Wednesday 13 September. I will also be present at that meeting. Additionally I will of course be happy to attend the Dulwich Community Council meeting on 25 September.

Given your request for a response to your letter in advance of the meeting, this is to advise you of action taken in respect of the concerns raised by yourself and other Councillors about the plan to demolish the domes of the eastern wing of the hospital.

As you are aware we had previously considered this and discarded the option on both cost and utility grounds. Nevertheless, as you and your ward colleagues, and others, have continued to raise the question of whether or not it would be possible to retain as much as possible of the heritage features, in particular the 'onion domes' which top the towers at the front of the building, we agreed to explore firstly whether or not, from a technical point of view, the towers and the domes could be preserved at a reasonable cost and secondly whether our plan to demolish is consistent with the planning brief agreed by the Council's Planning Committee. In order to answer these questions we have commissioned independent engineering and planning consultants.

We have received the report from our independent planning consultants who indicate that, in their view, the PCT has acted in accordance with the planning brief for the site. As far as the engineer's report is concerned we are yet to receive the final version of this. However indications are that it is likely to indicate that the towers can only be retained at high cost. Additionally we would have to factor in the additional costs of building a Community Hospital which integrated these Victorian features. I would hope that we will have received this report before our meeting next week.

I trust that this letter is helpful in bringing you up to date.

Yours sincerely

Chris Bull
Chief Executive
Southwark Primary Care Trust