

A better GP surgery for the Old Town

We need your help! Our doctors are struggling in an overcrowded building, and by refusing to let them move to more suitable premises, the council may force them out of the Old Town.

Roebuck Surgery provides brilliant medical care for residents of the Old Town and the surrounding area, but the hard-pressed GPs there are finding it increasingly difficult to deliver the high standard of service that their patients expect and deserve.

For some time now the surgery building has limited the services they can deliver: the space is cramped and there is no room for expansion. Worse, patients with mobility problems would be at risk on the upper floors if there was a fire.

A NEW BEGINNING... ON ROCK-A-NORE

These problems are impossible to solve by developing the existing site, so GP Craig Namvar has put together a proposal to move the surgery to the *Ice House* at 22-24 Rock-a-Nore Road.

This building was constructed as flats and a hotel, but – despite marketing the building for several years – the owner has been unable to find a buyer for the hotel portion of the site.

Dr Namvar applied for planning permission to convert two floors of the *Ice House* into medical centre fit for the 21st century. Besides GP consulting rooms, there would be a healthy-eating restaurant, a pharmacy, an optician, and facilities to deliver physiotherapy, chiropody, and more clinical services that are not possible in the crowded Roebuck site.

Planning permission has been refused!

The reasons for refusal are threefold: the loss of hotel space; traffic congestion and lack of parking; and shortage of waste storage. The last of these can be solved by small changes

to the plans, and the other two reasons don't really add up.

Hotel space is certainly short in Hastings, but the *Ice House* has never opened as a hotel. A feasibility study suggests that this would not be an economic use for the building, and the failure to find a buyer bears this out.

Traffic congestion on Rock-a-Nore is a problem too, as every Old Town resident knows. But the highways department raised no objections, and anyway, the worst of the traffic jams occur on summer weekends, when the surgery would not be open.

Parking at Rock-a-Nore may be difficult right outside the proposed surgery, but there is a huge car park very nearby. And on weekday mornings when most patients have appointments, it's almost empty.

WORSE ALTERNATIVES

It's true that moving our GPs to Rock-a-Nore would mean a longer walk for many Old Town residents, but the alternatives are worse. Staying in the Roebuck Street building is not an option in the long term. The council accept this, but are unofficially floating the idea of moving the surgery to Clive Vale, where it would also serve a new residential development. This would mean much longer journeys for old town residents, many of whom are frail, live alone and have mobility problems.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

Craig Namvar is resubmitting his application. By signing our petition to support him, you can help keep our brilliant, dedicated doctors in the Old Town, and help them build an even better, modern service.