Answers to your questions

23 September 2024

Proposed new health centre facility for Thornbury

NHS Bristol North Somerset and South Gloucestershire ICB and South Gloucestershire Council are working in partnership to develop a brand-new health centre in Thornbury, located on the former Thornbury Hospital site.

The project will provide a new home for both Severn View Family Practice and Streamside Surgery, as well as consulting rooms for community-based health services delivered by Sirona care & health.

The plans and detailed designs have been prepared in partnership with staff at the two surgeries to best support the needs of doctors and patients. the plans have also been shared with patient groups and other local people to capture their feedback.

This document seeks to provide more information about the proposals and answer questions the project team has been asked.

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The design process

How have the designs been developed – who has been involved?

The new occupants of the health centre - the Severn View Family Practice and Streamside surgeries – have been closely involved in the design process and the drawings have been

informed by their requirements. We are grateful to patients and others who have taken the time to provide further feedback, which has helped further shape these designs.

The engagement process

What did we want to find out through the early engagement?

A key part of the planning process is to understand local people's views about new developments. The new occupants of the health centre - the Severn View Family Practice and Streamside surgeries – have been closely involved in the design process and the drawings presented in the pre-planning engagement have been informed by their requirements.

South Gloucestershire Council collected feedback from Thornbury residents, patient groups and other stakeholders about the designs for the centre at an engagement event and through a short survey.

Are the designs shown in the pre-planning application engagement final?

No, these are indicative designs, showing the footprint of the build and how the facilities requested by the doctors can be accommodated within the building. These designs allow us to progress the project to seek necessary planning consents. Materials shown on the draft designs are typical of what might be used on a project like this to deliver a building which meets the strict environmental stipulations as defined by the NHS Net Zero Carbon and BREEAM Excellent standards, however, the final designs may differ. More detailed plans will be available as the project progresses.

Where and when will I be able to see - and comment on - the final designs?

As both the Local Planning Authority and applicant for this development, South Gloucestershire Council is keen to ensure local people have every opportunity to share their feedback on the proposals for the Thornbury Health Centre.

Early engagement activity has allowed us to capture initial feedback on the draft designs ahead of the planning application. The Council will then follow our Statement of Community Involvement to allow local people to view and comment on the proposals.

All documents and plans submitted with the full planning application will be available to view on the South Gloucestershire Council website. Additionally, taking on board feedback from the engagement, we will go beyond what is required and also make hard copies available in the library and surgery. Comments can be submitted via the website or by post.

The formal consultation period is the LPA's responsibility and will last for 21 days once the application has been publicised. If the planning application goes to Committee, local people will be able to attend and speak. Anyone who has made written representations will be notified of the committee date and how they can get involved.

The building and facilities

What facilities will be delivered within the health centre?

NHS Bristol North Somerset and South Gloucestershire ICB and South Gloucestershire Council are working in partnership to develop a brand-new health centre in Thornbury, located on the former Thornbury Hospital site.

The project will provide a new home for both Severn View Family Practice and Streamside Surgery.

The plans and detailed designs have been prepared in partnership with staff at the two surgeries to best support the needs of doctors and patients.

The health centre would provide a total of 24 consulting rooms, three treatment rooms, two phlebotomy rooms (spaces where blood samples can be taken) and a virtual consultation room for the two surgeries. It would include a joint reception and waiting area and appropriate WC/baby changing facilities.

The plans for the site also incorporate new consulting rooms to support community-based health services delivered by Sirona care & health.

It will be a two-storey building with all consulting and treatment rooms located on the ground floor to enable easy access for all users. The building has been designed to Net Zero Carbon and BREEAM Excellent standards, which will reduce the cost of heating and running the facilities and improve its environmental impact.

The site includes comprehensive parking provision, including dedicated disabled parking spaces, places allocated for electric vehicle charging and an area to lock up bikes. There will be some landscaping of the area around the building and car park to provide screening and improve the aesthetics of the space and to further support our environmental priorities.

What will the second floor be used for?

The upstairs floor of the health centre will be for use by surgery staff and patients will not need access. Space has been allocated for offices, storage and facilities and IT infrastructure as well as all the facilities you would expect in a modern place of work, including WC, showers, changing rooms and dining areas.

Will the new facilities be fully accessible for disabled users?

Absolutely, this is a primary factor in the design of GP surgeries. The designs meet all requirements stipulated through Building Regulations and the Disability Discrimination Act. There will be dedicated disabled parking spaces, and all internal areas to be used by patients will be fully accessible for wheelchair and scooter users, including accessible WC

facilities. All consulting and treatment rooms will be located on the ground floor to further improve accessibility for patients.

Staff areas will also be fully accessible, with a lift providing access to the upper floor.

What provision has been made in the designs for people with hearing issues?

An audio frequency induction loop system will be installed to the reception desk. Additional portable sets will be provided as required.

What provision has been made for people with sight problems?

The design of the new Health Centre complies with the requirements of Building Regulations and the Disability Discrimination Act ensuring that it is accessible for all. All walls, ceilings, floors, doors and furniture has been designed to ensure it aids anyone with sight problems.

Please make at least part of the reception desk is lower than the existing desk as at the moment, staff can't see me at wheelchair level.

Designing a build from scratch allows us to incorporate these types of features into the designs. The proposals include a portion of the reception desk at a lower height on both sides to cater for use by disabled patients.

Do the access plans allow access for a large six-wheel power chair?

Yes, the main entrance door and circulation routes within the centre are all designed to current best practice to allow access for all. Furthermore, a selection of the consulting and treatment rooms include for a door and a half for larger wheelchairs or bariatric patients.

What will you be doing to design the interior in a way which creates a healing environment? For example, some photographs of local nature/landscape scenes could help to create a calm and welcoming feel to the waiting area.

Only indicative high-level designs have been developed at this stage, which are very supportive of the King's Fund recommendations, for example designing the building in a way which allows natural light to flood the spaces occupied by doctors and patients. Decisions about interior design elements would be taken on by the client (the two surgeries at a later stage).

I find sliding doors much more accessible, they are less weighty and take up less space. Please use these or double hinge doors on accessible WCs.

Building Regulations Approved Document Part M calls for accessible WC doors to be outward opening and fitted with a horizontal closing bar fixed to the inside face. This is what has been included in the proposals.

How will you design the spaces to ensure they are accessible for people who have dementia?

We will follow best practice with regards to the interior design of the centre. This will include consulting with the building users on items including dementia and autism-friendly spaces.

Please make sure the pedestrian and cycle path which gives access to both sites is not done in gravel. This makes it inaccessible to wheelchair users. Please also make sure the route to the bus stop is accessible and has good visibility and dropped kerbs.

The proposals have also been developed in conjunction with a transport consultant to ensure everyone's needs are catered for. The proposals allow for tarmac to pedestrian and cycle routes.

How much parking space will there be?

We are keen to encourage people to get to and from the surgery using active travel options wherever possible, but we also understand that some people will need to travel by car.

In response to feedback captured from doctors and patients, we have revisited the design proposals and consulted building regulations. The regulations stipulate that we can have a maximum of 72 parking spaces for this size of building, so we have updated the plans to ensure we are taking up the maximum possible parking provision. This provides more spaces than shown in the original designs and that is provided at the current site.

It includes dedicated accessible parking and electric vehicle charging spaces as required by planning stipulations.

Please ensure that proper Sheffield bike stands are fitted.

Yes, 'Sheffield' stands have been included within the proposals as these are considered best practice from a security perspective. These will be covered to encourage use in all weathers and have been spaced one metre apart to allow them to be used from both sides. Further construction detail will be confirmed at that stage.

Is there need for electric vehicle charging points in the car park?

Yes, it is a planning requirement for modern buildings to allocate a proportion of parking spaces for electric vehicles to future proof them for both current and future need. The designs include comprehensive parking provision for all types of vehicle, but in practice, if there was restricted parking space, petrol/diesel vehicles would be able to use spaces allocated for electric vehicles.

How will the parking area be lit? How would this affect nearby residents?

The exact designs are to be determined, but in line with planning requirements, they will focus on providing adequate lighting for the surgery parking area whilst preventing spillage to minimise impact on the surrounding environment.

I'd like the car parking surface to be rainwater permeable.

The plans have been designed to prevent water run off to surrounding areas. The design of the car park will form part of the Sustainable Drainage System strategy employed for the site – at this stage it hasn't been identified whether this requires use of a permeable surface.

Is there parking for mobility devices such as mobility scooters?

There isn't dedicated parking provision, but mobility scooter users would be able to use spaces allocated for cars.

Are parking spaces wide enough for modern wider cars/less mobile patients/mother and baby?

There are a mix of standard and accessible parking spaces. Dedicated mother and baby spaces have not been included, but building regulations determine the size of spaces required to allow sufficient access for people parking modern vehicles.

Would there be more patient appointments available within the new centre?

The intention is to deliver like for like facilities for the two surgeries, with the same number of consulting and treatment rooms, so we do not anticipate that there would be an increase in appointment capacity.

How will you ensure sufficient air-flow in the new building?

The building is designed to have mechanical ventilation using tempered (heated/cooled) air providing sufficient airflow to meet all required design standards.

What is intended for the central courtyard area?

The core purpose of the central courtyard is to provide additional natural light for this part of the building. The specific designs for what will be in this courtyard area will be developed in later design stages in consultation with doctors and patients, taking into account maintenance requirements.

Some people don't like technology and want to speak to someone rather than use self-service check-in. Are there facilities for them?

Yes, whilst most people find it quicker and easier to check-in for their appointment using a self-service machine, there will also be a joint reception desk area for the two surgeries. The doctors have been fully involved in the plans and requested joint rather than individual reception to improve efficiency.

I think the self-service machines are too close to the main entrance, impeding access.

The self-check-in screens have been located to be visible on entry to the lobby to encourage their use. However, we will review the need for circulation space in this area to ensure they are correctly positioned.

How will you ensure infection prevention and control measures for the self-check in terminals? Will there be hand gel dispensers next to them?

This would be a decision for the GP practices once they are operational.

Is it possible to allow for a private area to speak to receptionists/other staff?

GP practices are well set up to support patients who want to discuss matters confidentially. We are confident this will be achievable within this design.

Is it possible to create quiet spaces to support the needs of neurodivergent patients?

Yes, several measures have been incorporated into the initial designs to ensure noise and lighting support neurodivergent patients and those with similar needs.

This includes using soft closing doors, quieter ventilation systems and acoustic flooring, panelling and ceiling tiles to minimise, soften and absorb sudden noises. The designs maximise the use of natural and diffused light and walls are painted in gentle pastel colours to avoid reflection and glare. Additionally, it is possible to use and configure internal fittings and furniture to create quiet waiting spaces to support the needs of different patients.

There should be more than one waiting area. This would make it easier to sit away from other people who might be coughing and sneezing etc.

The proposals include a spacious waiting area offering a variety of seating locations to allow people adequate personal space. The waiting area will be mechanically ventilated to control the air quality.

In addition to the central waiting area, a smaller sub-waiting area has been proposed within each surgery wing. Having lots of waiting areas would reduce the efficient running of the surgeries and would occupy more space.

I would like to see a covered outdoor patient waiting area.

Unfortunately, this hasn’t been incorporated into the designs, however, as above, indoor waiting space has been well-designed to allow people personal space.

Could we have a dedicated smoking area to separate smokers and non-smokers when they are waiting outside?

A smoking area has not been prioritised by the client.

I'm pleased to see the health centre is being designed to minimise the energy requirements to heat and light the building. Will you also be using lower energy building materials in construction?

Yes, the building has been designed to reduce the cost of heating and running the facilities, but the NHS Net Zero Standard also requires designers to adopt low energy design principles and materials in the construction of new buildings.

Will building materials, fittings etc. be chosen to have a long lifespan to withstand high daily traffic?

Yes, GP surgeries have high footfall, so it is important that all materials used in the build are chosen for their durability to ensure we meet the sustainability requirements of BREEAM Excellent.

Is there a baby changing facility?

Yes, one of the WC's has been made intentionally larger to accommodate a baby changing station.

Can all the WCs be accessible or is it possible to switch the position of the accessible WC, so it is closer to the centre of the waiting area?

The proposals include four WCs for patient use off the main waiting area, including three which are wheelchair accessible. It is not possible to make them all accessible as accessible WCs occupy more space than other toilet facilities and there is insufficient space within the footprint of the building. All accessible WCs has been positioned in the waiting area, but some are away from the reception area to improve flow and access for all users.

I can't help but feel the toilets right in the middle of the waiting area feel a touch exposed!

The toilets are positioned to be as accessible as possible for all users.

Is there adequate toilet provision?

Yes.

Some of the treatment rooms don't have as much natural light – for others, there may be privacy concerns with windows directly opposite other windows in the light wells.

All windows have been sized appropriately to provide adequate daylight. Additionally, the internal light well is a generous 4.5m wide to allow even more light into the building. Windows are staggered to avoid overlooking and planting has been planned to further assist with providing privacy.

Have you allocated space for a play area for children?

No, we recognise parents might welcome play facilities for children in the waiting area, however, in discussions with the GP practices, it was decided not to provide them. A children's play area in a doctor's surgery presents a significant infection control risk and the priority is to minimise risks to the most sick and vulnerable patients.

The crossings to the health centre from the disabled parking area will force all traffic to stop. Can it be repositioned?

No. The priority is to locate the accessible parking places as close to the building as possible.

Are patients at St Mary's surgery being moved to the new premises?

No, it will offer a dedicated space for the Streamside and Severn View practices.

It would be helpful to incorporate a way to communicate wait times to patients

Only indicative high-level designs have been developed at this stage. Decisions about the practicalities of how the surgery will operate will be made by the client at a later stage.

The original plans showed the ambulance pick-up outside the red lines demarcating the extent of the development – is this right?

Thank you for flagging this – it is an error on the design, which has now been corrected.

All roofs should be pitched.

Most roof areas of the building are pitched, but there is a requirement for an area of flat roof to mount plant equipment for the building.

It might be a good idea to have space for relevant and appropriate 'prevention' focused activities, for example wellness, smoking reduction etc. as well as community classes such as relaxation classes, mindful meditation or other group classes that might be beneficial to patients.

There are 'sessional' spaces within the building which are bookable by community care services or other providers to offer additional services.

Is it possible to incorporate a room for community activities e.g. wellness, mother and baby, smoking reduction etc?

There are spaces allocated within the building, which would be available to be booked for community events.

The rooms need to have sufficient soundproofing to allow for hearing tests.

Yes, an acoustics consultant has been appointed to provide a detailed strategy to ensure that the proposals meet all relevant guidance and legislation.

Will the trees on the site be retained?

Yes, all the trees on the proposed site for the health centre are subject to a site-wide tree preservation order and the plans set out how they will be incorporated into the landscaping for the new project.

Could we plant community fruit trees, plum, apple, mulberry, fig etc in the grounds?

Yes, fruit trees have been proposed.

The area looks too small for a wildflower area. Why not stick with simple grass?

Species rich grasslands are beneficial for biodiversity and ecology. They also require less maintenance once established in comparison to standard grassed areas.

Will the beech hedge on the site boundary be retained?

Yes, it will

Is it possible to make a garden space with seating outside?

This was considered as part of the proposals. There is a balance between providing outdoor facilities which patients may welcome versus the prospect of damage to facilities and ongoing maintenance costs.

The meadow is on the north side of the building, but the site already had a substantial potential area currently a shaded meadow, why not use that?

The proposals make use of the previously tarmacked area to the north of the site for a wildflower meadow. Wildflower meadows are also proposed around the existing protected trees which are being retained.

I'm concerned about the potential for anti-social behaviour in the car park out of hours. How will the proposals prevent this?

It is not possible to secure the entire Health Centre site, including the car park, as access would be required for future development of the southern part of the site. There would be fencing around the secure area to the rear of the Health Centre building.

Will the parking areas be covered by CCTV?

No, the initial designs do not incorporate CCTV provision, but this could potentially be included if the client decided to prioritise funding for this.

How much will this project cost and who is paying for it?

Initial funding was secured from Central Government (the Department of Health and Social Care) to develop business plans for the project and to prepare designs for a planning application. If planning approval is granted, we would prepare a final business case to take to the DHSC and if they agree for the project to proceed, they would allocate £14.4m of additional capital funding to deliver the scheme.

Why aren't you reinstating facilities that the former hospital offered?

Put simply, there isn't enough money to deliver the facilities provided at the former community hospital. Hospitals are extremely expensive, both in terms of the initial investment required to deliver the buildings and facilities and the ongoing running costs. The Department of Health and Social Care has offered £14.4million in capital funding.

Partners on the Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board have worked with South Gloucestershire Council, NHS England, and NHS Property Services to identify what facilities are affordable with the available funding. The new health centre promises to deliver state-of-the-art new facilities for the two GP surgeries as well as new consulting rooms to support community-based health services delivered by Sirona Heath and Care.

Is it possible to deliver additional facilities in the future if more funding became available?

Of course, this would be dependent on future funding being secured. The internal layout of the building could be adapted to support alternative future needs, but this would need to be within the existing footprint of the building.

Construction

When might construction on the health centre start, and how long might it take?

Should planning permissions be granted and if the project is supported for funding by DHSC, we would want to start construction as soon as possible afterwards to deliver these improved facilities for the people of Thornbury. Initial estimates for are just over one year. Every effort would be taken during construction to minimise noise and disruption for people living within the area.

Can you re-use any of the materials used in the existing hospital buildings as part of construction?

Yes. A key part of reducing the environmental impact of the build is to re-use materials from the existing build. Whilst old bricks and concrete used in the old buildings may not be suitable for the main structure of a modern, energy efficient building like this one, they can be crushed and used within foundations and footings. This re-purposing makes a big difference in reducing the environmental costs of extracting and transporting building materials.

If the plans are approved, what would you do to minimise disruption during the demolition and construction process? Would there be restrictions with regards noisy activities? How will the full extended site be secured?

Some level of noise is unavoidable for a construction project like this. However, our demolition and building contractors have significant experience working on projects like

this one and will work in ways which minimise noise, dust and wider disruption for local people. These requirements, including controls on timing and activities on site, would be formalised as part of the agreement with the construction contractor.

Just one example of how modern construction processes minimise disruption is in dust suppression, where they use water sprayers to create mist which absorbs dust particles floating in the air.

The site and access

Will you be keeping the existing buildings on the former hospital site?

No. The existing buildings are not fit for modern purpose and do not meet current building standards. A new build is significantly more cost effective to deliver. Starting from scratch using modern designs, building materials and techniques allows us to deliver significant environmental improvements over existing facilities.

What else will be delivered on the site?

The former Thornbury Hospital covers a large site and South Gloucestershire Council is concurrently working on proposals to deliver an Extra Care Housing scheme alongside the health centre. Extra Care developments offer specialist housing designed for older people, where residents can live in their own homes, while surrounded by the health care and other support they need to retain their independence.

This proposal, which would involve handing over the site to a specialist provider, is currently being considered by the Council, so delivery is subject to the decision to proceed with the land transfer and appropriate planning consent being granted.

When might the Extra Care Housing be developed?

This project is at an early pre-planning stage. The next step is to appoint a development partner to plan, build and manage the scheme, which will take place this winter.

Once a development partner is selected, they will need to design the building and apply for full planning permission. It is likely that the building will not commence before early 2026 with construction expected to take around 18 months.

This will divert additional traffic up Prowse Close, which could at peak times increase on-street parking on Prowse Close. Access is required along this road for residents as well as HGVs and ambulances needing to access Beech House. Has this been assessed?

Yes, local access will be assessed within the Transport Plan which will be submitted with the Planning Application.

Please make sure the pedestrian and cycle path which gives access to both sites is not done in gravel and that the route to the bus stop is accessible and has good visibility and dropped kerbs.

Yes, having good accessibility to the surgeries is an important consideration. The Transport Plan which will be submitted with the Planning Application will show the proposals for how people travelling on foot, by car or on the bus will be supported to get to their appointments.

Why aren't you submitting the plans for the whole site (including the extra care housing development) at the same time?

South Gloucestershire Council owns the land occupied by the former Thornbury hospital and is developing two separate projects on it, the new health centre and an extra care housing development. For the health centre, we are working to an extremely tight schedule to meet stipulations required by the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC), who are funding the project. The plans will be submitted for planning in September with a view to securing the requisite approvals ahead of submitting a final business case to the DHSC for the funding to be released so that construction can proceed.

The extra care housing development is at a much earlier stage. The next step is to submit an outline planning application, which we expect to do next year. After which the council will seek to appoint a development partner to plan, build and manage the scheme.

Once a development partner is selected, they will need to design the building and apply for full planning permission. It is likely that building work will not commence before early 2026 with construction expected to take around 18 months.

When plans are more developed, the council will engage with and seek opinions from local people as required through the planning process.

Next steps

What happens next? How will my feedback be used?

We are grateful to patients and others who have taken the time to provide feedback on the initial plans. This feedback has been considered as part of the design process and we are now ready to submit the updated plans for planning approval. Assuming planning approval is granted, final documents would then be prepared to share with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) for sign off. If they approve the plans, they would release funding to deliver the project.

If the project is approved, it is hoped that construction would start shortly afterwards.

When might the new surgeries be fully operational in their new premises?

Clearly, there are a lot of steps and approvals needed before this could happen, so it is difficult to give a clear indication of timings at this stage. However, if everything were to proceed according to the project plan, the earliest move in date would be autumn 2026. Should the plans proceed, the surgeries would contact patients to advise them of timings and other practicalities when they have a clearer idea of timescales.

What would happen to the existing sites occupied by the two surgeries?

The buildings occupied by the two surgeries are owned by the NHS and should the plans proceed, they would determine any future use for the existing buildings.