



Case Study – Luton and Dunstable University Hospital Site Redevelopment Projects

Submission to the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence 2021

Project Background

Major site redevelopment projects at the Luton and Dunstable University Hospital, including clinical buildings, Travel Hub, Energy Centre, emergency department extension and improved main entrance.

The Partial Redevelopment of the Luton and Dunstable University Hospital is a major project which is taking place on a busy, operational hospital campus. Granted planning permission in March 2020, the main Redevelopment Project includes the demolition of some existing hospital buildings, to allow for the construction of an Acute Services Block at the centre of the Hospital Site, providing new Maternity, Critical Care, Baby Care (NICU and SCBU) and Theatres. A new Ward Block forms part of the new build, along with a link building. In addition, the Redevelopment includes a new Travel Hub close to the Hospital Entrance, including secure cycle parking and changing facilities for staff, alongside a new multi-storey visitor car park. The Travel Hub is now fully open and operational, whilst demolition work on the Hospital Site is now underway to facilitate the construction of the new clinical buildings. At the same time, a new Energy Centre is currently being erected to serve the Hospital's needs for essential energy, heating and cooling from a centralised building. Facilitating these major investment projects, a number of enabling schemes have also been implemented, including obtaining temporary planning permission for two off-site staff car parks and an on-site office block. Alongside the Partial Redevelopment, the Trust is extending the Hospital's urgent and emergency care department and redeveloping the main Hospital entrance on Lewsey Road. Granted planning permission in March 2021, the scheme creates new waiting and circulation areas internally, whilst externally creating an improved environment with new entrances, better drop-off arrangements and enhanced access.

Outcomes for People and Communities

The Luton and Dunstable University Hospital is situated on a constrained site, land-locked within a residential area. Many of the buildings have become outdated, at a time when demand for services has grown significantly. Whilst some healthcare services have been restructured to reduce the number of patients attending the Hospital Site to receive their care, some patients require services only found within an acute hospital facility. The Partial Redevelopment will deliver major improvements to the Hospital, with the new clinical buildings facilitating excellence in healthcare delivery whilst the new Travel Hub allows safe car parking, reducing traffic impacts on local roads, and encourages staff to cycle to work. The emergency department extension and main entrance project will vastly improve the patient and visitor experience on arrival at the Hospital. It will also provide adequate waiting space and a new paediatric (children's) emergency department.

Planning Contribution

The Trust and their Team have worked closely with Luton Borough Council's Planning Department throughout the development of the scheme. The Trust entered into a Planning Performance Agreement (PPA) to establish and underpin the partnership working required to deliver this complex project. Regular meetings were held throughout all stages of the various applications. Planning permission for the Partial Redevelopment of the Hospital was granted in March 2020, a month ahead of programme, at the first 'hybrid' Planning Committee of the Covid-19 Pandemic. Amendments to the consent were required to accommodate minor design changes to respond to the functional requirements of the Hospital. Through a strong working relationship, these changes were



subject to ongoing discussion and pre-app advice was obtained through virtual meetings between the Trust's Team and the Planning Officer, Graham Dore. A Section 73 application was therefore submitted in late 2020 and approved in February 2021. A shared vision and partnership approach between the Trust's Planning Team (led by Barton Willmore) and the Borough Council has been fundamental to enabling a timely and effective planning strategy.

Outcomes for climate action

The new Energy Centre will provide a centralised energy facility to meet the current and future needs of the Hospital. The new plant will replace over 70 gas boilers on the site, and will deliver a 30% reduction in carbon consumption on the site. This is a key step on the Trust's journey towards Net Zero Carbon on the site. The new clinical buildings, emergency department extension and improved Hospital entrance will be of high quality construction specification, with improved environmental performance and energy efficiency.

Outcomes for sustainable development

The Bedfordshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust maintains open and constructive working relationships with the local authority, local stakeholders and the wider community. The Trust conducted an extensive programme of community engagement in 2015, in advance of submitting their original application for the partial redevelopment of the Hospital. This included distributing leaflets to members of the public and staff; holding a week-long exhibition; broadcasting on TV and radio; advertising in local newspapers; and presenting to a number of community groups. Pre-application consultation with Planning Officers and other statutory consultees was also undertaken. Whilst consent was achieved in 2016, it was not possible for the original planning permission to be implemented due to a lack of funding. However, the information formed an evidence base for the Partial Redevelopment Project, helping evolve the scheme until a new round of funding became available to LDUH in August 2019. This enabled the Trust to revisit their programme and recommence a strategy of major site redevelopment. Discussions were reopened with Planning Officers at Luton Borough Council, with monthly pre-application meetings from September 2019 to January 2020 under a PPA approach. Other Council Departments were also consulted, including the Highway Authority, Lead Local Flood Authority and Environmental Protection. In addition to the Trust's ongoing public communications via magazine, website, radio, social media and quarterly meetings, a specific consultation event was undertaken in November 2019; this included a leaflet drop to around 1,000 homes, posters in the Hospital and a drop-in exhibition and formal presentation of the scheme. The Trust established a regular forum with local residents in 2015, and has maintained the engagement with this group throughout. In addition to external consultation, the Redevelopment Team within the Trust engages in a continual process of consultation with internal stakeholders; this includes members of staff, General Managers, the Council of Governors and the Clinical Directors Forum. The Partial Redevelopment has therefore been subject to significant internal consultation, scrutiny and approval, to ensure that the scheme will deliver the wide-reaching improvements required to meet the Trust's strategic objectives and vision.

Leading Practice

Construction projects within the healthcare sector are subject to considerable complexities in relation to funding streams, internal governance and constantly evolving guidance. Hence, the Design and Planning stages are required to be fast paced, ensuring that funding is secured and development can progress in line with clinical strategies. Ensuring that both internal and external approvals are obtained in a timely and efficient manner is essential to delivering successful healthcare development projects. Through adopting a collaborative, partnership approach with the Trust, Luton Borough Council's Planning Department has shared the vision for the LDUH Site Redevelopment. Regular and open communication with the Hospital's designated Planning Officer (Graham Dore) has included constructive feedback at all stages of the



various applications, from pre-app advice through to discharge of conditions. This has enabled efficiencies and certainty, with clear timescales being set and targets achieved. Where the clinical strategy or practical factors have resulted in design changes, there has been a need to revisit the planning approvals for some of the projects. Again, this has been dealt with in a professional and timely manner to ensure certainty for the scheme delivery.

Does the scheme or project have particular significance to the region?

The Luton and Dunstable University Hospital is a medium-sized district general hospital, serving a catchment of over 320,000 people and providing a range of essential healthcare for Luton, Bedfordshire and North Herts. This includes Accident & Emergency, maternity services, inpatient and outpatient services, surgery, theatres and therapy areas. The LDUH was granted university teaching hospital status in 2011 and, in addition to general hospital services, it provides a number of clinical specialties of regional significance. These include its Level 3 Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (NICU) which, following the completion of the Partial Redevelopment, will be accommodated within the new Acute Services Block. This scheme is the building block for a on-going programme of redevelopment at both Bedford hospital and the Luton & Dunstable hospital, and supports the strategy of the Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes Integrated Care System to deliver a step change in the improvement of health services across the footprint.