

High Trees Shuffle

Many thanks to all of those who turned out in early July for a Protest Walk that we organised as part of the campaign against the proposed move of the High Trees surgery to a new site off Rowallan Way in west Chellaston. Plans have been drawn up since 2006 and it now looks as if the Primary Care Trust (PCT) are close to a decision to approve the proposals by the practice to develop the new site, which is next to the new One-Stop shop. The CRA thinks that the surgery should find a site which is in the centre of Chellaston where most residents can get to it. This view is backed by a survey, carried out by the CRA, which shows that 85% of those who responded did not want the surgery to move away from the centre of Chellaston. Such an overwhelming result suggests to us that, far from being an unrepresentative group*, the CRA actually mirrors accurately what people in Chellaston really think. We are therefore somewhat surprised that, despite this opposition, the practice has ploughed on with its plans to re-locate, with, no doubt, the backing of the PCT, especially as the PCT is required, under the provision of the NHS Act 2006, to consult with the patients who will be affected by the move. We would have expected all patients of the practice to have been consulted due to the significance of the move, but this has not happened. So, we thought it was time to draw attention to what is happening and we thought that the best way to do this was to organise a walk from the present surgery in Manor Road to the new site. This happened on Saturday July 3, the weather was kind to us and we had a very good turnout. We took the opportunity to measure accurately the walking distance, using a measuring wheel kindly obtained by Councillor Phil Ingall. The surgery confidently states that the distance from the present surgery is "less than half-a-mile"*, but we found that by using the shortest walking route via Parkway which is currently the only one available, the distance was three-quarters of a mile. There were several kerbs for those on mobility scooters to negotiate and it is difficult to imagine how the journey could be made in the depths of winter when ice and snow create hazards. We realise that our opposition to the relocation could mean that west Chellaston does not get a doctors' practice and we regret that as a possible outcome. We do feel however that we have to consider the impact of the move on the majority of our residents, many of whom have been used to a doctor in the centre of Chellaston for all of their lives. Also, we would say that Chellaston is now big enough to support three practices as I am sure there are higher numbers of GPs per unit of population in other parts of Derby, so, if the relocation does go ahead, let's have a new doctor as well to be located somewhere in the centre. There is also a risk that the PCT's funding could be withdrawn altogether. This is obviously not a desirable outcome, but we see no valid reason why the money cannot be banked while negotiations are carried out for an alternative site. We do not accept the "use-it-or-lose-it" line that the surgery is promulgating in their attempt to make us accept a second-best option. At the time of writing, we have not heard the final outcome of any discussions or deliberations between the PCT and the practice but when we do, we will certainly have something to say about it. In the meantime, keep sending your views to the web-site. And, don't forget, you do have a choice about which doctor you are registered with.

* Comment by High Trees Practice on their web-site.