David Nimmo Smith
Henley County Councillor
Statement made to HSOC on 2 July

"I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about something which is of great concern to the residents of Henley and the surrounding Parishes. If I were sitting where you are sitting, having read the report before you, I would probably think that the CCG have carried out a wide-ranging, comprehensive and robust consultation. That will no doubt be reiterated when the CCG come to the table.

I attended a number of meetings during the consultation period. At the start of this period, the model was for EMUs, and suddenly RACUs were introduced. There was a drip feed of information during the consultation, and a number of questions raised by likely users of the Townlands facilities remain unanswered. I accept that if too much detail is presented, the CCG would be accused of consulting on a fait accompli. Too little, of having no plan. The public perception is the latter.

Madam Chairman, your Committee is scrutinising the process as you do not make decisions. But what the Community seeks is a reassurance that their medical needs will be fully addressed in the model being proposed by the CCG. The consultation did not give that. Neither of the heads of the 2 Henley medical practices have endorsed the CCG model. The community concerns, volubly expressed at the meetings I attended, have been pushed aside in the report. They think that the consultation was incomplete and flawed, and that the rush to get the building filled as soon as it has been completed is at the expense of a robust plan and appropriate consultation.

Having said that, there is much that is good and welcomed in the facilities to be provided. MIU, more consultants, day care etc. An increasing outreach from the Royal Berks in Reading.

The model of care being proposed may be the correct direction of travel, but the Henley and District community - those who will use the facilities being offered - have not bought into it. Whatever the CCG claim. I hope you ask them searching questions about why the questions were structured to make it easy to agree with everything they are proposing, why information gradually trickled out which changed the consultation and why they have put to one side the comments made at the public meetings and in the Henley press."

David Nimmo Smith