

1 May 2007

Mrs P Raymond
Sedlescombe Parish Council
Woodland Cottage
SEDLSCOMBE
TN33 0QX

Dear Mrs Raymond

As you may be aware, in March of this year the Boards of the two East Sussex Primary Care Trusts (East Sussex Downs and Weald PCT and Hastings and Rother PCT) decided to consult with the public on the future development of health services in this area. Specifically the PCTs wanted to consult on the future of maternity, special baby care and gynaecology services.

The PCTs' public consultation document (previously circulated and available on our website <http://www.southeastcoastff.nhs.uk/Home/East-Sussex.aspx>) makes clear that in addition to the options proposed by the NHS the PCTs would also "welcome alternative proposals" and would be keen to see, "if there are any realistic, cost-effective and preferred alternatives to those outlined in this document."

To date we have received one new proposal, a joint proposal from the *Save the DGH* and the *Hands Off the Conquest* campaigns that is generally referred to as 'Option 5'.

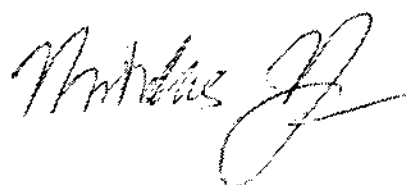
We have agreed with the campaigners that this proposal should be assessed by a New Options Assessment Panel comprising representatives from the campaign groups and representatives from the PCTs. The panel will be chaired by an independent chair and we will use the same process to assess any other proposals that emerge during the consultation.

The local campaigners who submitted the Option Five proposal have also made it clear that they need to do further work on the financial implications of their proposals. The New Options Assessment Panel and the PCTs will need to address questions such as whether the new proposal would deliver safe services; whether it would be affordable; and whether it would be consistent with consultants maintaining their specialist skills.

At the end of the consultation period the PCTs will undertake a full comparative assessment of every realistic, safe and cost-effective option that has been proposed to determine which offers the best service for the people of East Sussex.

In the meantime - in the interests of openness and transparency - I am pleased to enclose herewith a copy of the 'Option 5' paper to inform the consultation process, and to allow people to form their own judgements on its content.

Yours sincerely



Nick Yeo
Chief Executive