

PRESS RELEASE

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New Community Land Trust continues to pressurise decision makers on the Emsworth Cottage Hospital site

Emsworth Community Land Trust (EmsworthCLT) was one of the organisations invited to joint local MP, Alan Mak, who chaired a meeting of local community organisations, the NHS, the local surgery and representatives from Havant Borough Council including the Emsworth Councillors, to discuss the future of the Cottage Hospital site.

The Community Land Trust's Chair, Dwynwen Stepien said: 'The MP's private meeting in early September was a vital follow-up to the public meeting in Emsworth in August. At the earlier public meeting more than 300 local residents signed up on the spot to join the Emsworth CLT. That shows the strength of concern about the site expressed in the town. People want to see the Cottage Hospital building used for health-related community purposes. Everyone hopes the doctors will consider this location for a new surgery and modern health centre, but if that fails the Emsworth CLT can work with a housing association to come up with plans to develop the site with a mixture of truly affordable apartments and, importantly, community space on the ground floor that will be at least partly related to health and well-being. MP Alan Mak's involvement and his meeting in September should help drive an outcome that is in the interest of the community.'

The fact is that the original Emsworth Victoria Cottage Hospital was built in 1897 only because local people raised the money for the building and running of the hospital. It was taken over by the NHS in 1948 and then gradually closed in recent years. About five years ago it was transferred to the NHS Property Company so that they could sell it off. It would be wholly against the on-going community views if the building were sold at a massive price then expensive flats were built. That would be regarded as an insult to the history of the building and to local residents who regard the site as the property of Emsworth people.

Chairman of Emsworth Business Association, Giles Babb said: "It is in the interest of all Emsworth that the hospital site is kept for community health. If we lose the doctors and the hospital site becomes the site of expensive flats or second homes, it will mean that the High Street will become less and less viable for vibrant businesses. We lost the banks, but we should fight for the site of the hospital to become preferably the surgery or if not a health-related community building. That will help bring people in to the town centre regularly and keep it working."

Dwynwen Stepien, Chair of the Emsworth Community Land Trust added: "We shall continue to work flat out to ensure that the very best use of this site is achieved. We have worked with all the other local organisations and achieved a small measure of success in getting the NHS to take our Hospital site off the market. Now we need to keep the pressure on the decision-makers to ensure that this vital site is never snatched from the local community by a profit-hungry developer."

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