

## **Annex 2.1g: Submission from the Letchworth Heritage Foundation: Commentary on Current Status of GP Surgeries in Letchworth Garden City**

There are currently four GP surgeries: Nevells Road, Birchwood, Garden City and Sollershott East. Between them they serve the present population of Letchworth of some 34,000 people. This will rise to at least 38,000 when the Local Plan comes to fruition.

**Sollershott East Surgery**, a practice with 6500 patients, has been under a private sector management contract since the end of 2016 when the last two partners retired. The service has been provided by locums and there is no continuity of care for patients, many of whom have sought to transfer to other practices in the town. The private sector group handed back the contract to the CCG earlier this year and it has now been given to 12 Practice group, a consortium of local GPs in North Herts. Whether this is successful or not will depend on a better overall primary care system being created for the town.

**Nevells Road Surgery** (on a lease from the Foundation) has seen their numbers increase by some 12% in the past two years, from 9000 to 10,200. The average patient has 5 consultations a year so these extra patients generate a need to resource a **further 5,757** consultations per year. In an attempt to service additional need, they have expanded into the waiting room with the result that there is now no longer room for all patients to have a seat when waiting.

The practice is literally at bursting point in terms of staff resources and space. They have one of the lowest satisfaction rates in North and East Herts – 46% - as there are not enough appointments for the number of patients nor the space to provide for them.

Their building is also old and decaying – they have roof leaks almost every winter and have also had leaks from underfloor pipes. In order to provide an additional clinical room they had to remove asbestos from the ceiling in the Reception area. All of this has meant that parts of the building have had to be closed over periods during the past year, adding further to the burden of inadequate appointment availability. By any standards now it is almost unfit for its present purpose.

**Birchwood Surgery** occupies part of a building at the bottom of Nevells Road. Their lease expires in 4.5 years and they have been working with Nevells Road surgery for a number of years to find ways in which both practices could move together to better facilities. This practice has been closed to new patients for 18 months (except for births /uni students returning and nursing homes – they cover two such homes whilst the other practices have one each) because of insufficient doctors. The number of partners in this practice has **decreased from 9 to 5 doctors** in that same period. They have had to spend hugely on locums and the senior partner believes that they will be in serious crisis by April/May next year.

**Garden City Surgery** is a two-handed practice in Station Road. The second partner is on the brink of retirement and this will put the viability of the practice under serious strain as single partner practices are no longer considered practical or indeed safe.