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29.2.2024

Response on behalf of Healthwatch Richmond as an Interested Party

Healthwatch Richmond (HWR) offers the following representation to NHSE Market Entry as an Interested Party to:

Application offering Unforeseen Benefits at 29 Tangley Park Road, Hampton, Middlesex, TW12 3YH by VR Pharma Limited. Ref: CAS-261646-R3T2P9. 23rd January 2024

Healthwatch Richmond provides the following response in support of the application on the site of a former Boots pharmacy that closed in late 2023.

This statement is based on two separate sources of evidence:

- Our published Hampton Pharmacy Closures review which concerns the impact of pharmacy closures on the residents served by this application
- Discussions with key stakeholders to this application (GPs, Health & Wellbeing Board, Public Health and front line staff within the remaining pharmacies)

Hampton Pharmacy Closures review

In late 2023, we collected experiences of the impact of pharmacy closures from c700 residents of Hampton and visited 5 locations within the area including community centres, GP practices, Boots Station Approach Pharmacy and Boots Bear Road Pharmacy in Hanworth. The full findings of this are published in this report:

https://www.healthwatchrichmond.co.uk/sites/healthwatchrichmond.co.uk/files/Hampton%20Pharmacy%20report_0.pdf

Our work identified extreme levels of demand on the remaining pharmacies in Hampton. The impacts of this pressure included:

- c200 people reporting having to queue outside of a pharmacy due to demand

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- over 1 in 3 respondents reported waiting times of 30–60 minutes (confirmed by our observations)
- people experiencing delays to accessing medication due to errors and stock issues.

We note with particular reference to this application that the provision of enhanced services in the area is limited at the remaining pharmacies by both staff capacity and the premises. The inclusion of extensive enhanced services within this application are therefore welcomed.

Stakeholder Engagement

The Health & Wellbeing Board agreed a Supplementary Statement to the Richmond Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment 2023–2026 following the closure. We agreed this statement as a member of the Health & Wellbeing Board and continue to support it.

We have had occasion to have extensive discussions with clinicians in GPs and pharmacies, community organisations, the MP and ward Councillors in the surrounding area. The feedback from all of these supports the need for further pharmacy provision within Hampton.

Hampton North is an area of relative deprivation with 2 LSOAs in the 20% most deprived areas of the country. It is also geographic isolated as it is encircled by a large A road/motorway and both the Thames and Longford rivers. In some areas, the nearest pharmacy is a mile by foot.

This, combined with limited public transport options, significantly limits access for residents to services outside of the immediate area.

The proximity of the proposed new pharmacy to the local community hub (shortly to become a Family Hub), free parking and that it would be located in a densely populated area of deprivation not currently served by Community Pharmacy strongly support the case for this application.

As a result we agree with Richmond Health & Wellbeing Board's position that this application will significantly improve the accessibility of pharmaceutical services for

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residents, including those with greater need. Pressure on local GP surgeries may also be relieved, as well as for the remaining two closest pharmacies which are currently struggling to cope with increased service demand.

We recognise that VR Pharma was formed in August 2023 and therefore does not have a trading history or accounts on which we can form a view of the provider. NHSE should therefore ensure that due diligence is undertaken and that they are confident that VR Pharma can deliver the services that it has applied for and that it will be financially sustainable as we cannot comment on this.

Given the strong support for a new provider at this site, and the need for enhanced as well as essential services, we support this application. We do however note that the premises are not secured, the provider does not have a track record that we can see and that the previous pharmacy at this site closed. With that in mind, we encourage decision makers to consider the importance of ensuring that the geography has a sustainable services in place at the earliest opportunity.

We would be pleased to provide further evidence in support of our submission should that be helpful and ask that our published report and the response from the previous provider be considered within the decision making process on its own merits.

Yours sincerely,

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