

**EMBARGO UNTIL 9am 13.11.03**

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## **NEWS RELEASE!**

# **COMMUNITY SET TO BID FOR WAR MEMORIAL HOSPITAL SITE – BUT IS THERE STILL TIME?**



**Concerned Melton residents are forming a committee to bid for the War Memorial Hospital site which is to be vacated by MRH Primary Care Trust in 2005. But announcement of a January deadline may scupper their ambitions before they begin.**

Following a public meeting held recently by the PCT to discuss the disposal, concerned residents have come together and formed MELTON FIRST, in an attempt to bid for the site in the interests of the local population. But the PCT's imminent deadline may be too much for the newly-formed organisation.

"We are not being given a level playing field. Even the March 2004 deadline suggested at the public meeting would have been tight", says Melton First committee member, Mitch de Faria. "This matter was only brought to public attention within the past couple of weeks, and despite the PCT's protestations that it will look favourably at community bids, by setting such an early deadline the Trust is effectively precluding offers from organisations that have to raise purchase monies through grant funding."

Melton First views the WMH disposal as an opportunity for the town to secure the site for continuing use by the community, and as a means to develop a new local facility that will increase the overall attraction of the town and enhance its economic prosperity. "No-one wants the site simply to be turned into a massive housing development", says Mitch.

"We haven't yet had time to bring in all the necessary experts, and a thorough site evaluation and financial assessment is required before Melton First commits itself to one specific plan of action", Mitch explains. "We have several ideas but none can be progressed until the limitations of the site, planning permissions and financial support have been established. And all these things take time – far longer than we've been given by the PCT."

The PCT has announced its intention to evaluate offers not on price but according to 'best value'. What that might mean in practice has still to be established. The Trust has also indicated that some of the site's flood plain, clearly unsuitable for housing, may be transferred to the Town Estate for their continued management.

*1 / 2: Continued over page...*

*2 / 2: Community set to bid for War Memorial Hospital site, continued ...*

“Undoubtedly many conversations will have taken place between the PCT and interested parties, and the community may stand to gain through such agreements,” admits Mitch. “But we won’t know the extent to which it may gain until it’s too late to present an alternative, and in reality we’d also like to ensure the future of at least one of the few remaining hunting lodges that are so much a part of the history of the area.”

While Melton First appeals against the PCT’s sale closure date, it is also seeking financial backers. “If anyone would like to help us, or send ideas for the future use of the land and buildings, every letter and message will be kept on file for future use. We’re also taking the opportunity to collect reminiscences about the site and the hospital and hope to raise funding to put together an oral history in due course.”

As well as ideas for the WMH site’s future use, Melton First invites potential co-developers to get in contact. “We may not be in a position to take on the development of the entire site, and all possibilities have to be considered,” confesses Mitch.

“When Col Dalglish bequeathed the land for a new hospital, his intention was considered pioneering. Melton now has a modern, state-funded hospital facility where care can be provided to a far higher standard than is possible in the old hospital. Melton First would now like to take Col Dalglish’s legacy and develop his site to create an equally innovative, modern alternative that maintains the parkland environment and benefits our community for the foreseeable future.”

Contact MELTON FIRST on Tel 01664 561700 or email [meltonfirst@theeventmakers.com](mailto:meltonfirst@theeventmakers.com)  
Write with ideas or reminiscences to Melton First, Steans Yard, 12 Burton Road, Melton Mowbray LE13 1DJ.

## **ENDS**

### **Editor’s Notes:**

The War Memorial Hospital site was bequeathed by Col Dalglish to the people of Melton for the provision of health care and passed into the hands of the newly-formed NHS in 1946. The PCT now has a brand new site to build new, improved health care facilities and no longer needs the Ankle Hill site which was advertised for sale last week.

### **For further MELTON FIRST information contact:**

**Mitch de Faria at The Event Makers**

**Tel 01664 561700 / [meltonfirst@theeventmakers.com](mailto:meltonfirst@theeventmakers.com)**

**NOTE: Cllr Peter Roffey is available for comment on MELTON FIRST.**

**Tel 01664 567278, today, Weds, 2-4pm only.**