

29 March 2006

Former Ledbury Hospital to be developed for the community

A former cottage hospital in Ledbury, Herefordshire is to be given a new lease of life under the Hospital Sites Programme led by national regeneration agency, English Partnerships.

English Partnerships, Ledbury & Area Development Trust and Advantage West Midlands have entered into a collaborative agreement. This will fund a £1 million public-private sector redevelopment programme to enable the conversion of the former hospital building into a scheme of six affordable, shared equity apartments, together with managed workspace targeted at local, young entrepreneurs working in the creative industries. A development brief is currently being drawn up with the aim of offering Registered Social Landlords the opportunity to submit tenders to develop the scheme, in the late spring.

Paul Spooner, English Partnerships' Regional Director for the North West and West Midlands, said, "English Partnerships has worked closely with our partners to ensure that the scheme not only brings the site back into active use but also that it makes a positive contribution to the local economy and community.

"In line with our Hospital Sites Programme, the scheme will tackle issues such as affordable housing in an innovative way, while preserving a building of local and historic interest."

Advantage West Midlands supported Ledbury through its Market Towns Initiative between 2002-2005. When the funding came to an end the people involved in the initiative decided they wanted to carry on the good work and the Ledbury & Area Development Trust was born. Advantage West Midlands is contributing nearly £200,000 towards the new commercial floorspace.

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Nigel Hudson, Team Leader for Development, Shropshire, Herefordshire and Worcestershire at Advantage West Midlands said, "I am delighted that the excellent work of the market towns initiative is being carried on through the Ledbury & Area Development Trust and this extremely important project.

"There is both a shortage of work space for small businesses and affordable housing in this area and I am pleased that this project addresses both of these issues whilst also bringing a historical building back into productive use."

Roger A Payne, Chief Executive of the Ledbury & Area Development Trust, commented, "We are very pleased to be able to play our part in bringing this building back into use for the benefit of the community. In particular we are looking forward to supporting local start up businesses in the workspace, where we will also be based.

"We aim to create a 'cluster' of businesses focusing on creative industries such as IT, photography and web-based initiatives."

Ledbury Cottage Hospital was funded by a local benefactor, Mr Michael Biddulph MP, to mark the coming of age of his eldest son, Mr John Michael Biddulph. It is situated in a conservation area close to the main High Street in Ledbury but has not been in use for four years

It will be the first NHS site to be developed under English Partnerships' Hospital Sites Programme in the West Midlands and the seventh nationally.

ENDS

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Note to editors:

English Partnerships is the government's national regeneration agency delivering high quality, sustainable growth in England. We do this by developing our portfolio of strategic projects and acting as the government's advisor on brownfield land. We also ensure that surplus public sector assets are used to support wider government objectives, especially those contained in the *Sustainable Communities Plan*. English Partnerships helps create communities where people can afford to live and want to live. Information on projects and programmes can be found at www.englishpartnerships.co.uk

The Hospital Sites Programme is a nationwide programme to bring a portfolio of 96 redundant hospital sites back into productive use. The sites offer a mixture of development opportunities and have the potential to create up to 14,000 new homes, half of which will be affordable.

The programme was initiated through a landmark transfer of sites between NHS Estates and the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to English Partnerships in April 2005.

For further information, log onto www.englishpartnerships.co.uk/hospitalsites

Advantage West Midlands

Advantage West Midlands is one of nine Regional Development Agencies in England whose role is to provide leadership and action to create more, better jobs and an improved quality of life for all in the West Midlands.

Ledbury & Area Development Trust Ltd

The Ledbury & Area Development Trust Ltd (LADT) was incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee on 5 January 2005 and accepted as a member of the Development Trusts Association in February 2005.

It supports continuing regeneration in and around the Herefordshire market town of Ledbury and has a particular focus on improving the prospects for the younger generation to obtain higher skilled, higher income employment allied to the availability of affordable accommodation.

It is an independent, entrepreneurial organisation and any profits it makes are used for the benefit of the community.

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Brief summary of hospital's history

On Tuesday 29 December 1891 a purpose-built cottage hospital, funded by Mr Michael Biddulph MP to mark the coming of age of his eldest son, Mr John Michael Biddulph, was officially opened in Ledbury by Lady Elizabeth Biddulph. The total cost of land and buildings was around £3,000.

Accommodation included three wards, rooms for the Matron, an operating theatre, a mortuary, laundry and a separate apartment for a parish nurse. By 1899, annual expenditure was £247 with the average cost per patient stay of 3s 7d per day. Income was made up of subscriptions, donations, income from investments, charity boxes, church offertories and patient payments.

The building was extended in the 1920s and again in the 1930s. On 27th March 1948 the 74th - and final - Report was presented by the Hospital's Chairman, Mr Charles Masefield, at the Annual Meeting. From 1948 the Hospital continued to operate under the NHS until it was replaced by a new facility in 2002.