



Former St. Margaret's Hospital

Homes Plan Gets The Go Ahead

AROUND 180 homes will be built on the former St Margaret's Hospital site in Stratton St Margaret. Members of Swindon Council's planning committee approved the scheme last night. The four-hectare site bordered by Highworth Road, Delamere Drive, Godwin Road and the A419 dual carriageway, will be developed into 176 new houses, a pharmacy and community centre. The houses built by McLean Homes South West will be a mix of one and two storey, detached, semi-detached, terraced and flats. A total of 36 will be "affordable" in other words targeted at low-income families. St Margaret's Hospital closed two years ago after more than 50 years of caring. It started as a workhouse for Swindon's poor, converted to the general hospital for Swindon and then became a care centre for elderly people when Princess Margaret Hospital was opened. When the proposal to develop the land was first mooted, it attracted protests from people living in the area. Stratton Village Residents' Association and Highworth Road Residents' Association joined forces to oppose the development, describing the meadow at the heart of the site as Stratton's "only green lung." Bernard Baker, who was then chairman of the Stratton Village group, voiced his anger at the loss of the green space, and the fact existing shopkeepers could lose their trade. "We want the council to adopt it as common land and keep it in perpetuity for the residents of Stratton," he said at the time. But now he is a Conservative borough councillor for St Margaret ward, and at last night's meeting welcomed the decision to build on the land. "The officers and developers have worked very hard together to produce a proposal that should be to the benefit of Stratton," he said. But opposition did come from a representative of Merchiston Surgery on Highworth Road, against the single access to the site from that street. "It will be totally inadequate and dangerous for the volume of traffic. Doctors from the surgery responding to emergency calls may be unduly delayed if there is no other access."

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