

Dear Ms Wilkinson,

I am writing to you regarding planning application **2018/3956/P**.

I feel very strongly about this planning application and the need for a Breast cancer support centre, which has been proposed for Birkenhead Street, Kings Cross.

Breast cancer is the most commonly diagnosed cancer in women in the UK.

Each year in the UK 57,000 women and 360 men are diagnosed with breast cancer; one woman is diagnosed every 10 minutes.

I am a Specialist Breast Cancer Nurse and I consult with patients on a daily basis, who receive cancer diagnoses.

A cancer diagnosis is a difficult and life changing situation for anyone. Going through cancer treatments, whether they are weekly visits for chemotherapy or taking medications, is strenuous on a person's body. Nausea, tiredness and weakness are all signs that can be associated with the treatments and with the disease itself and can be ongoing for numerous months or even years after treatment has been completed.

The entire Breast Cancer journey is filled with fear and trepidation for patients and to have a support centre away from the busy clinical environment, where patients and their loved ones can just sit and ask some very pertinent questions is a definite necessity.

In a very busy NHS clinic, time is limited, patients feel they may not have enough opportunity to ask their clinical team all the questions, or address non-clinical concerns such as hair loss, body image, relationships and family impact.

I often ask patients where they find the strength and support to face the hardships caused by cancer. Their responses have given me a greater appreciation for the challenges faced throughout cancer and how imperative it is to have support centres available.

Listening to patients has increased my understanding of the breadth and amount, of lifelong support cancer survivors need and how we, as clinicians, need to put greater efforts into advocating adequate support centres.

People living with cancer often benefit from the practical help and advice they receive from others who have lived through similar situations. The provision of support groups would bring people together and provide a safe forum for exchanging perspectives, sharing concerns, and gaining confidence to face the future. Peer support can help patients and family caregivers navigate the complex process of managing a life-altering illness such as cancer.

Learning about someone else's difficult experience may make others feel like they are not alone in their journey. Hearing that you are not alone can inspire patients and even provide more confidence to overcome a difficult symptom or side effect.

The emotional aspect of cancer treatment is stressful, and the emotional pressures can be ongoing for a long time. Psychological support and some strategies to help handle emotions such as anxiety, anger and fear for patient and family would be very beneficial. Having a safe environment, such as Future Dreams House, outside of the clinic to chat, explore concerns and fear and just to meet another patient for support is always helpful.

The feedback to date from patients who are currently using the services of the Haven is always overwhelmingly positive and widening their reach can only be more beneficial for patients and their loved ones.

Therefore, I welcome the application for this new centre and hope it can reach fruition, so that breast cancer patients and their loved ones throughout London can freely access the support they need.

Yours sincerely,

Bernadette Phelan

Clinical Nurse Manager

Platinum Breast Unit, Wellington Hospital



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HCA Hospitals
World-Class Healthcare

The Wellington Hospital, Wellington Place, St Johns Wood, London, NW8 9LE
Main: +44 (0)20 7586 5959 | Website: www.thewellingtonhospital.com