

## **STATEMENT NUMBER 1 - Statement to Bristol Health & Well Being Board, Wednesday 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024**

From: Cherington Road Neighbourhood Watch (residents' group), BS10 5BH - Neil Goldsmith (Chair) and Frances Robertson (Secretary)

**Re: Proposal for a new (replacement) pharmacy at the old Boots' local pharmacy site, Southmead Road NHS PCSE Reference: CAS-264729-J7D3V2**

We are writing to ask the Bristol Health & Well Being Board to support the application that we understand you have received from NHS England from PCSE Darlington, reference CAS-264729-J7D3V2, for a new pharmacy contract at the shopping parade at the junction of Southmead Road and Wellington Hill West. This will replace and improve upon the service provided by the Boots that has just been closed.

In January 2024, the local independent pharmacist who owns the Greenway Pharmacy which is based in a unit at the Greenway Community Practice building, put in an application to the NHS PCSE Darlington for a pharmacy contract for this location at the shopping parade at the junction of Southmead Road and Wellington Hill West. We understand that this application is described as an application "offering unforeseen benefits ..." because at the time that the PNA was drawn up there was no expectation that the neighbourhood would lose their local pharmacy.

The BNSSG ICB has advised us that the Bristol Health & Well Being Board has been consulted by letter dated 17<sup>th</sup> January 2024 and responses need to be sent to PCSE Darlington by this Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2024.

We would ask that you write to them in support of this application. It is important that this application is approved as soon as possible in order for the new pharmacy to be in place quickly in order to provide the service that the patients need and are currently lacking.

### **Background**

In late 2023 Boots announced a number of further store closures across Bristol. One of these was their branch at 37 Southmead Road, BS10 5DW (currently in Southmead ward, previously in Henleaze/WoT). There has been a pharmacy at this site since the 1980s.

Despite our petition Boots went ahead with the closure and this has left our locality with no pharmacy. The nearest pharmacy is not local, and is already extremely busy and is, quite simply, not coping with the additional prescriptions it is handling. There are regularly long queues extending around the shop, long waits and nowhere in the queue to sit down. They clearly do not have the capacity to meet the needs of the patients who formerly used Boots on Southmead Road.

We are urging you to support this application for what would effectively be a replacement local pharmacy for our neighbourhood, as the pharmacy that closed was well used, particularly by many of the older residents and young parents with small children, for whom a local pharmacy they could walk to was important and very valuable.

We note that the new application would include Saturday and Sunday morning opening. We would support this, particularly since we used to have Saturday morning opening at the pharmacy as part of their standard hours before the pandemic, but Boots failed to re-open on Saturdays after the pandemic subsided, which was a loss to the community.

Cherington Road residents set up an online petition to Boots to ask them not to close it and we have had nearly 900 individuals / households sign the petition with many comments explaining just what the closure of Boots meant to them and what difficulties they would experience if it closed. The petition is still online because it is a means for us to communicate directly through updates on our petition site about the pharmacy provision, so that everyone who signed the petition gets notified of the current situation.

Our petition was promoted through the local neighbourhood Facebook groups and received nearly 900 signatures which represent not only individuals but households too.

The wording of the petition is in on the next page of this statement and explains the pharmacy's importance to local residents. This was sent to the CEO of Boots Pharmacy but Boots declined to halt the closure of this local pharmacy.

The petition and the comments can be found here: <https://www.change.org/p/save-our-boots-branch-at-37-southmead-road-bristol>

***“Save our Boots Pharmacy Branch at 37 Southmead Road***

***Petition to Save Boots Pharmacy at 37 Southmead Road, Bristol, BS10 5DW***

***To: Sebastian James, President and Managing Director Boots***

***Dear Mr James***

*Please do not close our local pharmacy down!*

*Boots’ Pharmacy at 37 Southmead Road, Bristol, BS10 5DW is listed for closure in January 2024.*

*There has been a pharmacy operating on this site for a very long time, serving the local community.*

*Boots took the shop over some years ago and it is a very busy, well used and well-loved local pharmacy.*

*The local community has not been consulted about this closure and the news has come as a real blow to us.*

*The Branch serves a wide community across several neighbourhoods in North Bristol, parts of Horfield, Henleaze, Southmead and Westbury on Trym and is always full of customers, particularly accessing the pharmacy as well as buying the retail staples ranging from shampoo to vitamins.*

*The Branch is particularly important for those in the local community who have no means of transport and a significant proportion of the customers walk to the Branch as it is surrounded by residential streets. The Henleaze Branch to which customers are being signposted is already very busy, with itself having long queues. Given both Boots branches are always busy, with queues, there is clearly no capacity for customers from the Southmead Road Branch to be accommodated by the Henleaze Road Branch, if it were a realistic option, which we do not believe it to be.*

*The staff provide a trusted and welcoming service. The Pharmacist and their colleagues are welcoming and provide a service to the community that surrounds them. They know their customers by name and for the elderly customers in particular, of which there are many, they provide assistance which cannot be accessed by this group who do not have ready access to technology for a number of reasons. Older people in particular, with their complex medicines regimes, as well as families with young children - rely upon the advice and expertise of the pharmacist.*

*Customers also use the Branch to buy over the counter remedies, relying upon the expertise and advice of the Pharmacist. This is in line with the national government and NHS advice to practice greater self-care and self-help to meet our own health and well-being needs. This relies upon the community having access to a trained and qualified Pharmacist, who are not available, for example, in non-pharmacy shops, such as supermarkets.*

*The pharmacy at this Boots branch therefore not only dispenses large numbers of vital prescriptions for patients / customers who will be unable to access other branches or alternatives, but also provides over the counter remedies.*

*Boots Branch at 37 Southmead Road, Bristol provides a key service to our community and we are calling upon you and your company to rethink your plans for closure and not to take away our local pharmacy.”*