

Rt Hon Michael Mates MP

House of Commons

London

SW1A 0AA

www.michaelmates.org.uk/

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Conservatives raise concerns over possible threat to GPs' dispensaries

Michael Mates MP and prospective East Hampshire Conservative parliamentary candidate Damian Hinds have raised concerns about the impact of the Government's pharmacy White Paper on some local GP surgeries' dispensing services.

Under the plans announced in the White Paper, the government would allow dispensing practices to sell over-the-counter medicines, rectifying the anomaly that some medicines could be bought at newsagents but not from the GP surgery. But the White Paper also proposes changing the distance requirements for the establishment of dispensing practices. Currently, it is the distance from a patient's house to the surgery; in future, it would be the distance from the surgery to the nearest community pharmacy. This could result in the loss of many dispensing practices that provide a vital service in rural communities.

Damian Hinds said: "Conservatives are supportive of an expanded role for community pharmacists. But this White Paper could also spell the end for many doctors' dispensaries. That would be bad news indeed for patients in rural areas."

Mr Mates commented: "Already, patients receiving a prescription from a dispensing GP can have it supplied at a local pharmacy if they prefer. It is not at all clear to me what would be the benefit of restricting their choice. Under these proposals, there is a risk that many patients could lose access to the service most convenient for them".

The Department of Health consultation on the issue runs until 20 November on the 'live consultations' section of www.dh.gov.uk and Mr Mates and Mr Hinds urged people to respond to this consultation.

ENDS.