

Whipps Cross Hospital development: Frustration over funding pledge

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Funding has only been approved for part of the construction

by Jess Warren, BBC News

A hospital boss has said he is "going in a bit of a circle" with the government over funding for a new hospital in north-east London.

Whipps Cross Hospital is due to be rebuilt as part of the government's promise of 40 new hospitals.

It was due to be finished in 2026, but could be delayed until at least 2028.

The government said it remained "committed to delivering a new hospital" by 2030 and would set out the next steps "in due course".

The two-stage project in Leytonstone involves building a multi-storey car park first to free up space, which is currently being used for parking, for the hospital.

Demolition of old hospital buildings including the old nurses accommodation ended in June last year. Without additional funding, no further work to prepare the site can take place.

- [No new London hospitals until at least 2027](#)
- [What's happened to the 40 new hospitals pledge?](#)

Health secretary Steve Barclay previously announced he had approved "up to £28 million" for the first stage but last week it emerged money for the second stage, the hospital, had not been approved.

Whipps Cross redevelopment director Alastair Finney said his team could "see no way" construction could begin this year.

He said the "elephant in the room" for the government was the shortage of funding for former Prime Minister Boris Johnson's flagship 2019 election pledge to build 40 new hospitals, according to the [Local Democracy Reporting Service](#) (LDRS).

At an health overview and scrutiny committee hearing, he said the health secretary had written to local MP Iain Duncan Smith saying he had approved the funding.

"Then we were told by the national hospital team that they needed to review the business case before they were able to confirm funding," he said.

"We now see no way construction of the car park can begin before Autumn 2023.

"The assumption is that the overall construction of the car park needs to be completed before the hospital can begin so it's not a positive picture."

In a [report to the Barts Health NHS Trust board](#) on Wednesday, Mr Finney said the next steps remained unclear and that construction could only start in 2025 at the earliest, completing in 2028/29.

Mr Duncan Smith, a Conservative MP, told LDRS he had personal assurances from Mr Barclay that "there should not be any doubt about the funding and end result for a new Whipps Cross Hospital".

He added he would do everything he could "to ensure the funds are released."



Former Prime Minister Boris Johnson had pledged to build 40 new hospitals

Image source, PA Media

Walthamstow Labour MP Stella Creasy tabled a parliamentary question to Mr Barclay on 11 January asking why no decision had been made on Whipps Cross. The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has not yet responded.

However in a statement, the department said final funding allocations were "only confirmed once the full business case had been reviewed and agreed, including by HM Treasury."

It added it was working with Whipps Cross "to deliver state-of-the-art new facilities for patients and staff and ensure value for money".

A spokesperson for Barts Health NHS Trust said it was "clear we're now in a period of significant delay".

"Whilst this is disappointing, we remain positive and continue to discuss next steps with the New Hospital Programme and the Department of Health and Social Care and we anticipate decisions from them in the coming months.

"This would allow us to begin realising our vision for a much-needed new hospital for the people of north-east London."

Additional reporting by Josh Mellor, Local Democracy Reporting Service.

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