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To all London Mayoral Candidates

We are writing to you regarding future provision of health services in North East London, particularly proposals for a new Whipps Cross hospital in Waltham Forest. Whilst plans for a new hospital at Whipps Cross are to be welcomed, there are four concerns that could inhibit the building of a new hospital that is truly fit for purpose for the increasing needs of the local area.

Firstly, designs for the new Whipps Cross hospital propose that the facility will have 51 fewer beds, despite statistics from Waltham Forest Council predicting the local population will increase by 19%, from 277,100 residents in 2020 to 329,200 in 2050.

Secondly there are concerns that facilities & services at the new hospital will be less comprehensive than pre-pandemic. In particular, the scope of surgical provision may not support the range of surgical emergencies that could present via a Blue-light A&E. In fact, Alastair Finney, Director of the Whipps Cross Redevelopment, implied at a public engagement meeting, that aside from Maternity and A&E, there will be a limited range of surgical provision at the new Whipps Cross. This is concerning, as an article in the Health Service Journal on the 18th December 2020, reported Whipps Cross had to turn ambulances away; the article emphasises that Whipps Cross hospital is currently much smaller than neighbouring hospitals and at the height of the crisis, neighbouring hospitals were unable to help out.

Thirdly, Barts Health NHS Trust have said proposals for the new hospital at Whipps Cross will follow an Integrated Care Systems (ICSs) model. Proposals for ICSs are contained in the new NHS White Paper, however, should community and Primary Care facilities not be available, the ICSs model could bring in the private sector to run inadequate local services. This could complicate provision of comprehensive, health care and restrict access when demand is on the increase. ICSs also utilise a 'single pot' limited budget, with 'system control' totals that will compel healthcare provision with each ICS 'footprint' to stay within budget. The new Whipps Cross has been designed, despite a £400 million shortfall in Government funding.

Fourthly, there is concern the Margaret Centre for Specialist Palliative Care Unit will not be included in plans for Whipps Cross Hospital. For 34 years The Margaret Centre has provided outstanding care for people who are dying and support for those close to them. No comparable service exists in Waltham Forest and much of Redbridge. The Margaret Centre provides holistic care with a multi-disciplinary team working across the community and inpatient setting. Care is therefore seamless. If someone does need admission to the unit for end of life care, they are amongst staff who know them and the family, in surroundings that are more calm and homely than clinical, but with the highest clinical expertise.

Therefore, we request that you urge Barts Health NHS Trust to agree the following points:

1. Reinstate 51 beds in new Whipps Cross hospital designs to ensure capacity for growing population.

2. Ensure A&E services retain sufficient facilities and clinical expertise for elective and emergency surgery at Whipps Cross to avoid undue pressure on emergency services in other hospitals across North East London and most importantly to avoid patients being turned away due to under-capacity.
3. Keep Margaret Centre for Specialist Palliative Care Unit at new Whipps Cross hospital.
4. Secure funding for new hospital to address £400 million shortfall and avoid capped budgets.

Thank you for taking the time to consider our concerns.

Waltham Forest Save Our NHS