



'No plans' to consult on new Whipps Cross hospital designs'



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Whipps Cross bosses provoked outrage this week by revealing they do not plan to formally consult on designs for the new hospital.

The exact size and contents of the hospital is still subject to ongoing debate between Barts Health NHS Trust – which runs Whipps Cross – and the government.

The trust, which has held “hundreds” of informal engagement meetings with residents, insists consulting will not be necessary because there are “no plans for a significant service change”.

At a joint committee set up to let neighbouring councils scrutinise the project, Redbridge councillors insisted a consultation must take place, to rounds of applause from watching health campaigners.



At the meeting on December 6, Redbridge councillor Beverly Brewer cited regulations which state councils must be consulted on any “substantial variations” to the health service.

She told NHS bosses: “I was elected to represent residents and I am absolutely going to make sure that I do that. You don’t have the choice, it is a must, I read out those regulations to you, it’s not for you to interpret at the end of the day.

“You, and we, know there are substantial changes to services, be it palliative or renal services, so this formal consultation must take place.

These regulations exist to ensure that our residents are protected in these circumstances, I remain very, very concerned with your response.”



Incoming chief executive at Whipps Cross, Ralph Coulbeck, responded that plans had not “entered the territory where we would consider it being a substantial change, because it would be the same provision in the future”.

He added that informal public engagement has been “significant” and that there have been “hundreds” of meetings with members of the public.

To applause from campaigners, Redbridge councillor Judith Garfield called this answer unacceptable given the “huge” changes expected.

Widespread concerns have been raised over whether the number of beds in the new hospital will meet demand and whether dedicated services for end-of-life care, the elderly or mentally ill will be kept on-site.

The committee chairman, Waltham Forest councillor Richard Sweden, warned Whipps: “If you end up having to do a consultation, it’s better doing one sooner rather than later, because we don’t want one to delay the new hospital.”

Last month, Waltham Forest Council’s planning committee approved “outline” plans to sell more than half the hospital site for development into 1,500 homes.

Although an £870 million “business case” for the new hospital has been passed to the Government, limited detail about the proposal is publicly available.