

15 March 2024

**West Berkshire District Council
Council Offices
Market Street
Newbury
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Our Ref: HT-01

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Dear Sir / Madam,

Re: Hampshire Together Consultation

Further to your consultation on the options for the redevelopment of the Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospitals, West Berkshire Council would like to submit the following comments.

Travel Time

Although West Berkshire falls under the Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire and Berkshire West Integrated Care Board and therefore the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust, a significant number of West Berkshire residents choose to use the existing hospital at Basingstoke, since it is nearer or has shorter travel time for large parts of the district. This is particularly the case for maternity services.

Travel times will be a key issue for West Berkshire residents. The proposed site for the new acute hospital would be to the south-west of Basingstoke, near Junction 7 of the M3. This would lead to longer physical journeys and longer travel times for patients and visitors travelling from the north and east, including those travelling from West Berkshire.

The catchment for the existing Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital extends into West Berkshire. It is difficult to tell the settlements that fall within this due to a lack of clear labelling on the maps, but it appears to extend as far as Newbury, Thatcham, Aldermaston, Mortimer and potentially parts of Burghfield Common and Theale.

A summary of the travel time implications of each of the options is shown in the Travel Times Fact Sheet that accompanies the consultation. This suggests that the impacts will be a mixed bag for West Berkshire. Some rural areas towards the west of the district appear to benefit from shorter off-peak travel times under Options 2 and 3 – presumably this is because access would be via the A34 and M3. However, most of the communities in West Berkshire appear to be disadvantaged by these Options with longer travel times in both peak and off-peak periods.

It is not clear whether these changes would impact on hospital catchments, and if it would be quicker for residents to be taken to an alternative hospital. This information should be provided to allow the impacts to be fully evaluated. A further unknown is how West Berkshire would be affected if the Royal Berkshire Hospital relocated to a different site.

It is difficult to work out how significant the proposals would be for West Berkshire residents, since there is no patient flow data for individual settlements or for the district as a whole.

There is currently a direct bus service from Newbury to the existing Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospital site. This takes around 40 minutes to travel to the existing site. The Travel Times fact sheet focuses on bus travel times for lower-risk planned surgery. This shows that patients from West Berkshire travelling to Winchester would have a journey time of at least 90 minutes, with many parts of the district having a travel time of 2 hours or more. These journeys are likely to be significantly more costly as well as taking longer. Most people would be deterred from making such a journey by public transport and the increased costs and travel times could contribute to increased health inequalities.

It should be noted that visitors as well as patients would be affected by the increased travel times. Visitors would potentially need to access the new hospital site. In order to minimise travel time, a direct bus service from Newbury should be provided, rather than making passengers travel to Basingstoke and change buses. However, even with a direct service, travel times are likely to be significantly affected.

The Travel Times fact sheet states: 'Evidence shows that where there are longer journey times, these would be more than offset by shorter waits to see a senior doctor and for diagnostics on arrival at hospital, more consistent high quality care, improved outcomes, shorter hospital stays, and services that are sustainable for the long term.' This is considered to be a red herring.

Ageing Population

West Berkshire's population will have a higher population of older people in future years, which will be likely to increase demand on hospital services and ease of access will be key. The West Berkshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment indicates that although the proportion of the population aged 70 plus in West Berkshire is no greater than the England average, the fact that there is a large population currently aged 40 to 69 indicates that an increasingly ageing population over the next 10 plus years is likely, and the rate of increase will be higher than that seen in other areas. It is not clear whether the relative differences in future demographics between the different local authorities that fall within the catchment for the Basingstoke and North Hampshire Hospitals have been fully taken into account.

Adult Social Care

West Berkshire Council's Adult Social Care work with North Hampshire Hospital to facilitate Hospital Discharges for those residents who require care and support in the Community or require admission to a residential or nursing home. West Berkshire Council has link workers on site to support our residents and carry out assessments under the Care Act 2014 for their care and support to facilitate a safe hospital discharge.

Hospital discharges from North Hampshire Hospital account for around 25% of all the hospital discharges West Berkshire Council's Adult Social Care service support, so the volumes are significant. Therefore, some thought should be given to providing a base at the hospital for the Local Authority staff with adequate access to the internet.

Also, travel time will be an issue for staff supporting these residents in terms of time, cost and accessibility to the new site.

If you have any questions concerning our response, then please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Alan Macro

Chairman of West Berkshire Health & Wellbeing Board