

Whipps Cross Redevelopment - Options for Health Scrutiny June 2021

Background: Whipps Cross University Hospital is in Leytonstone, in the London Borough of Waltham Forest. It is run by Barts Health NHS Trust, and provides a range of general inpatient, outpatient and day case services. It also provides maternity services and a 24-hour Emergency Department and Urgent Care Centre.

The hospital serves a population of roughly 350,000 people from Waltham Forest, Redbridge, Epping Forest and further afield. The bulk of patients accessing the service are from Waltham Forest, with around 55% of the patient population coming from the borough.¹

In September 2019, central Government confirmed additional funding for the redevelopment of the hospital site. Public engagement took place throughout 2020 prior to the submission of a strategic outline case in March 2020, which was approved in September that year. Further engagement took place in the autumn, as more details became known. Outline planning permission was submitted in May 2021.

The development represents significant change to the way all services will be delivered across the site, although it will continue to provide all the core services currently offered, including A&E and maternity care, throughout the development and afterwards.

The pace of the engagement exercise has prevented a formal JHOSC arrangement being established in time for the initial engagement activity. However, each local authority has input into discussions about the development of Whipps Cross, and scrutiny committees have considered the preliminary proposals as they have been drafted over the preceding years.

Over the months of engagement, some themes have emerged as areas of particular interest or concern. These include: the proposal to cut the numbers of beds; uncertainty around palliative or end-of-life care which is currently housed at the Margaret Centre; queries around available car parking and the transport infrastructure that would serve the hospital; and queries around the future of the ophthalmology department.

Inner North East London JHOSC (INEL JHOSC) has representation from Waltham Forest and one member from Redbridge as an observer. However, the JHOSC membership includes other local authorities and its composition does not proportionately reflect the authorities affected by the Whipps Cross redevelopment

¹ According to figures provided by Barts Trust, between November 2019 and December 2020 55% of patients at Whipps Cross were from Waltham Forest CCG

plans. This could impact detrimentally on the time and focus given to the plans at INEL JHOSC.

Outer North East London JHOSC (ONEL JHOSC) has representation from Redbridge and one member from Waltham Forest as an observer. However, similarly to INEL, the membership includes other local authorities and its composition does not proportionately reflect the authorities affected by the redevelopment plans. In other words, neither existing JHOSC maps appropriately on to the area affected by the hospital redevelopment.

The Local Authority (Public Health, Health and Wellbeing Boards and Health Scrutiny) Regulations 2013 stipulate that where a substantial development to health services in the local area is proposed, the responsible organisation must consult with the health scrutiny function. The health scrutiny function must invite the views of interested parties and consider any relevant information made available to it. This includes Healthwatch.

The 2013 regulations state that where health services in more than one local authority are affected, the local authorities must appoint a joint health overview and scrutiny committee (JHOSC) for the purposes of the consultation. The regulations further state that only the joint committee may

- (a) make comments on the proposal consulted
- (b) require the provision of information about the proposal
- (c) require a member or employee of a responsible person to attend to answer questions in connection with the consultation.

The regulations only make provision for scrutiny in relation to health services. The JHOSC would not be able to scrutinise proposals in relation to – for example – the residential development, car park, infrastructure or other non-health related elements of the hospital redevelopment.

Proposal: The three local authorities with health scrutiny duties impacted by the Whipps Cross redevelopment are London Borough of Waltham Forest, London Borough of Redbridge and Essex County Council.

In order to ensure that the redevelopment plans are scrutinised in a manner compliant with the regulations, it is proposed that each council appoints to a Whipps Cross JHOSC. The following membership is proposed: Waltham Forest 4; Redbridge 2; Essex 1; Epping Forest District Council 1 observing member (non-voting). It is proposed that the committee is granted the power of referral to the Secretary of State.

The establishment of a JHOSC is typically retained as a decision for full Council, though individual local authorities can delegate these powers to the health scrutiny committee. Officers will ensure that the formal creation and appointment to the Whipps Cross JHOSC are compliant with the constitutional requirements of each local authority.

Other options considered: There is an option to ‘do nothing’ and use existing scrutiny structures. This would see scrutiny continue at, respectively, Waltham Forest Health Scrutiny, Redbridge Health Scrutiny, ONEL and INEL. The disadvantage of this approach would be a piecemeal approach to scrutiny, with reports and witness statements scattered across committees. As mentioned above, the two JHOSCs do not map the area affected by the redevelopment and are unlikely to give over the requisite scrutiny time needed by the development. Additionally, the power of referral would not be concentrated in one committee and would instead require all committees to come together and agree to refer the development.

For information: breakdown of patients at Whipps Cross by CCG, December 2019 to November 2020:

CCGName	Total Inpatient Discharges	%
Total	55216	
NHS WALTHAM FOREST CCG	30781	55.7%
NHS REDBRIDGE CCG	11582	21.0%
NHS WEST ESSEX CCG	4110	7.4%
NHS NEWHAM CCG	3639	6.6%