Windlesham Parish Council

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The Council Offices
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By email: fhft.newfphcomms@nhs.net

Dear Sir/Madam,

Subject: Windlesham Parish Council Response – New Frimley Park Hospital

Windlesham Parish Council welcomes the opportunity to respond on behalf of the communities of Bagshot, Lightwater and Windlesham to the consultation on the proposed new Frimley Park Hospital.

The Council recognises the need for modern, resilient acute hospital provision for the area currently served by Frimley Park Hospital and supports the principle of ensuring that high-quality hospital services remain accessible to our residents for generations to come.

Location and accessibility

The consultation asks specifically about the proposed five-mile radius and the suitability of the Pine Ridge Golf Club site. The Council does not consider that it is appropriately placed to determine the technical suitability of individual hospital sites and does not seek to substitute its judgement for the detailed site-selection process undertaken by the Trust.

Our principal concern is that whatever site is selected, its consequences for the communities we represent are properly understood, planned for and mitigated.

Ease of travel, parking and access is particularly important. A hospital is not genuinely accessible simply because it is geographically close. Patients, visitors and staff must be able to reach it safely and reliably, and the impact of those journeys on surrounding communities must also be properly considered.

Transport and infrastructure

The Council has significant concerns about the potential impact of the proposed hospital on the capacity and resilience of the wider strategic and local road network serving Bagshot, Lightwater and Windlesham.

The assessment should not be confined to roads immediately surrounding the proposed hospital site. Hospital-related journeys will interact with traffic across a much wider area, including the M3, Junction 3, the A322 and the network of local roads connecting our three villages.

Of particular concern is the capacity of the A322/M3 Junction 3 interchange and the A322 corridor to accommodate additional demand. The Council would expect detailed modelling of individual junction capacity as well as overall traffic flows, including conditions at peak periods and the cumulative effect of other planned development and background traffic growth.

The modelling must also consider what happens when the principal routes become congested. Increased congestion on the A322 or around Junction 3 has the potential to displace traffic onto surrounding local roads as drivers seek alternative routes. Bagshot, Lightwater and Windlesham must not become rat-runs for traffic attempting to avoid congestion on the strategic road network.

The Council therefore considers it essential that traffic modelling examines not only the principal routes to the proposed hospital, but also the potential for traffic displacement through all three villages, including residential roads and routes which may become attractive alternatives during periods of congestion.

This assessment should consider the combined effect of journeys made by patients, visitors, staff, deliveries and other hospital-related activity and should examine normal operating conditions, peak periods and periods of disruption on the M3 and A322.

The Council would also expect the assessment to take a long-term view. A new hospital will serve the area for generations, and its supporting transport infrastructure must therefore be planned around anticipated future demand, rather than simply demonstrating that the network can accommodate traffic when the hospital first opens.

Where modelling identifies capacity constraints, increased congestion, road-safety issues or displacement of traffic into surrounding communities, the necessary highway improvements and mitigation measures should be identified and secured as an integral part of the project.

Consideration should also be given to public transport provision, parking, active travel where appropriate and accessibility for residents who do not have access to a car. Reducing dependency on private-car journeys should form part of the transport strategy but should not be used as a substitute for properly assessing and addressing the capacity of the road network.

Engagement and communication

The Council also wishes to raise a significant concern which is not adequately captured by the specific questions in the consultation: the quality and timing of engagement with affected communities and their elected representatives.

For a project of this magnitude, the Council would have expected meaningful and structured engagement with local councils and elected representatives much earlier in the process.

That has not been our experience.

Windlesham Parish Council represents communities which will use the new hospital, and which may experience significant consequences arising from its location, particularly in relation to transport and infrastructure. Nevertheless, there has been insufficient proactive and direct engagement with the Council and its elected members.

The Council is concerned that this has contributed to a situation in which much of the information and public debate reaching residents has been mediated through others rather than communicated directly by the Trust.

Good engagement should not begin once opposition or concern has gathered momentum. It should take place early enough for communities to understand what is proposed, why decisions are being considered and what the implications may be, but also early enough for local knowledge and legitimate concerns to influence the development of proposals and appropriate mitigation.

Communication should not simply be about explaining decisions that have already been made. Engagement must provide a genuine opportunity to listen as well as inform.

The Council therefore strongly encourages the Trust to establish a regular and structured mechanism for direct engagement with local councils and elected representatives throughout the next stages of the project, alongside clear and accessible communication directly with affected communities.

Conclusion

Windlesham Parish Council recognises the importance of securing high-quality and resilient hospital provision for the future and does not seek to determine the technical merits of competing sites.

Our priority is to ensure that the interests of residents across Bagshot, Lightwater and Windlesham are properly represented.

For this Council, that means ensuring that the transport and infrastructure consequences of the proposed hospital are comprehensively assessed; that the capacity of the strategic and local road network and its junctions is properly understood; that the risk of traffic displacement through our villages is addressed; that appropriate infrastructure and mitigation are secured; that the hospital remains genuinely accessible to our residents; and that the Trust substantially improves its direct engagement with the communities and elected representatives affected by this major project.

A development of this scale will shape healthcare provision, infrastructure and travel patterns in this area for many decades. The planning, infrastructure and engagement supporting it need to reflect that same long-term perspective.

Yours faithfully



Joanna Whitfield PSLCC
Clerk to the Council