

Received 4/9/17



COUNCILLOR JOAN HENRY
(Labour, Pollards Hill Ward)

Mr Daniel Elkeles
ESTH 2020-2030
Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals NHS Trust
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Date: 31 August 2017

Dear Mr Elkeles,

Re: 2020-2030 engagement

I am a local Councillor representing the Pollards Hill ward in Mitcham which is part of the London Borough of Merton. On behalf of the local residents I represent, I wanted to respond to your recent "involvement document" *Providing high quality Health services 2020-2030* to express support for re-building St Helier hospital on its current site and retaining its full range of services including a "blue light" A&E and consultant-led maternity unit.

Can I firstly say that I am astounded that you would undertake what at least appears to be a public consultation during the summer holidays and during the period when both the council and parliament is in recess. This deprives many residents, particularly those with children, of an adequate window within which to respond and it reduces democratic scrutiny of your proposals. Indeed I had to find out about this engagement process myself as I have received no notification from you as a local Councillor.

Furthermore, I do not understand how you can carry out an "engagement" on proposals where there is no identified public funding and I am concerned that you may be misleading local residents and the entire exercise may be a misuse of public funds. In fact I would be interested to know how much this exercise is costing the Trust and would be grateful if you could respond with this information.

My ward of Pollards Hill is in a deprived area of Mitcham and my residents have significant health needs and lower life spans than in other areas of south west London and Surrey. Due to the geographical positioning of the ward, my residents are referred to St Helier, St George's and Croydon hospital, all of which are accessible by public transport.

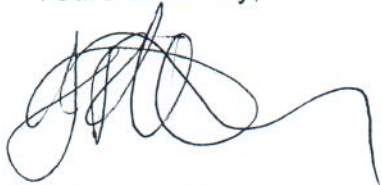
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I understand from your proposals that you are considering transferring some of the most critical services at St Helier hospital to either Belmont or Epsom. Fundamentally, this would mean moving these services from an area of higher deprivation and health inequalities to more affluent, healthier areas. I believe such a move would be a dereliction of your duty to consider health inequalities when taking decisions on the future of local health services. This is also a duty on local councils and it is one I take very seriously, hence my decision to write to you on the matter.

Such a move would also increase travel times for poorer residents in the Mitcham and Morden areas, including in my ward. It is unlikely that my residents would consider the trek to Epsom or Belmont. Moving these services away from St Helier would therefore only increase pressure on St George's and Croydon. I know Croydon has had serious financial issues and St George's is currently struggling with its own financial situation. It does not make sense to close services at St Helier when this will lead to additional pressure on both of these hospitals.

Local residents in Pollards Hill are frankly tired of continuous consultations on the future of St Helier hospital which I gather have so far wasted about £40m of tax payers money with zero to show for it. It is now time to focus on how we improve and re-build St Helier hospital on its current site, including retaining its full range of services such as a "blue light" A&E and a consultant-led maternity unit. I look forward to working with you on this in the future.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Joan Henry', with a long, sweeping tail that extends to the right.

Cllr Joan Henry