

By email: mike.penning.mp@parliament.uk

The Rt. Hon. Sir Mike Penning MP

We hope this letter finds you well.

As you know, we are approaching a key milestone in our outline business case. Our boards will meet next month to consider and approve a shortlist of options and review feedback from the public and staff, including results from a shortlist survey that we are launching today and will be live on our [website](#) soon.

All the proposed shortlisted options are based on our current three site configuration and feature Watford General Hospital as the focus for the major share of the potential investment and the site from where emergency and specialist care will be provided. We believe that making improvements to emergency and specialist care facilities is the highest immediate priority; this is because our emergency and specialist care patients have the highest clinical needs and spend more time in hospital than other patients. Additionally the buildings at Watford General Hospital are in the poorest condition and most in need of improvement.

Our plans also include investment in improving planned care facilities at Hemel Hempstead and St Albans Hospitals. At Hemel Hempstead Hospital this includes a new build urgent treatment centre, new diagnostic facilities and increasing the range of planned medical care services. Investment is also planned at St Albans City Hospital in a new rapid cancer diagnostics centre and improvements to theatres.

Both hospitals are really important to our future service model and the trust will continue to develop and invest in the services provided from these hospitals over the coming years.

We know that excluding a 'greenfield' option will be a disappointment to you and so we wanted to explain our rationale.

Findings from the independent [feasibility study](#) show that the Watford site (either using the existing hospital footprint or adjacent land on the Riverwell site) can be successfully developed by 2025 or soon after.

This deadline is very important; we need to demonstrate it is deliverable in order to secure funding and we want to bring benefits to patients in the shortest time possible. The expectation from the Government is that HIP One schemes are up and running by 2025 or soon after. We have been advised by regulators not to consider any options that significantly increase that timeline.

Our clinicians are keen to move on with their plans to deliver care from better buildings. We also need to provide our staff with a much-improved working environment and we do not want them – or our patients – to experience further delays in what has already been a long-awaited project.

The Watford site is large enough to accommodate an overwhelmingly new hospital. Our ambition is for the vast majority of buildings to be new, with the older buildings that remain being kept for non-clinical use. Our architect design team will develop a detailed plan for new facilities, working closely with Watford Borough Council and

partners to integrate the new hospital into the masterplan for the Watford Riverwell development. We genuinely believe this provides the opportunity to secure 21st century hospital facilities for local people.

Our aims are to:-

- Use this once in a generation opportunity to transform our hospital buildings, enhance the patient experience and create a great place to work
- Prioritise new emergency care buildings whilst ensuring that planned care sites are also improved
- Build on partnership working to bring care closer to home, maximising digital technology and making our services simpler to access
- Pursue the best value for public money in how we develop new buildings and deliver care.

Our boards are now tasked with approving a shortlist that can deliver these aims.

We have been engaging with local people via the Stakeholder Reference Group, via correspondence and through the media. We intend to share the news about the shortlist later today and will seek feedback using a short survey. We want to hear from our communities and we will also be asking our staff to give us their views as we think it is important that the voices of those who work at our hospitals are heard.

The briefing note that accompanies the survey will be on our [webpage](#) and closing date for the survey is Tuesday September 15 (midnight).

Our Boards will consider the proposed shortlist and all the feedback we have received through our engagement over the last few months at a joint meeting on the 1st October 2020. In the meantime, please do get in touch if you wish to discuss this.



Christine Allen
Chief Executive
West Hertfordshire Hospitals NHS Trust



David Evans
Managing Director
Herts Valleys Clinical Commissioning Group