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Subject: Future hospital development in west Hertfordshire - response to your email of last month

Dear hospital supporter,

In response to the email you sent to us last month, we'd like to thank you for taking the time to comment as part of our engagement about the future of hospital development in the area.

We note that you:

- do not support the shortlisted options presented at the public meeting in March;
- do not consider that the evaluation panel had sufficient information to make an informed decision;
- believe the removal of the option of building a new acute and specialist hospital on a greenfield site from the shortlist is wrong;
- urge that we halt the current process and re-consider options.

We have been carrying out a thorough assessment of options. Detailed information about the options was presented to the evaluation panel. Whilst we are sorry that you do not consider that the information that the panel received was sufficient, we are confident that the quantity and quality of information provided allowed the panel to undertake their task in this process. We consider that the panel – made up of clinicians and managers from the NHS and partner organisations, together with patient representatives – has been very helpful in providing a range of perspectives on the relative merits of the different options.

The stakeholder panel is an advisory group, formed to consider options from a non-financial perspective with the patient reps in particular providing a lay person's view. Detailed financial review of options is completed by technical experts and so is not part of the stakeholder panel's remit. The content of the panel's discussions and the panel's overall scoring of options will be presented to the trust and CCG boards, to form part of the information that the boards use to confirm the preferred way forward in June.

We note that you wish to have the greenfield site option included on the shortlist for evaluation. As you may be aware, this option is not on the shortlist because the estimated cost of building a new single site emergency and planned care hospital exceeds the funding threshold. Our regulators have advised us that the financial threshold for investment should not exceed the Trust's turnover.

The criteria you list in your letter – such as patient experience, quality and so on – are key considerations for us too: the work that we are doing to assess the qualities of the shortlisted options is reflective of the importance that we attach to these factors.

We are also continuing to listen to the views of local people – for example through the comments made at the public meetings and through correspondence such as this. The trust and CCG boards will be making their decision on the preferred way forward during June – at board meetings held in public - and the views of local people will be conveyed to the boards in the reports presented, as has been the case throughout this process.

We will not be suspending the process. In practical terms, we need to submit a realistic and compelling application for investment with a firm plan to improve our buildings and facilities in line with national requirements. Suspending the process would place that application at risk, especially when considering that the comprehensive spending reviews usually occur every five years. We consider that the work undertaken to determine the shortlist has been robust, and a suspension and re-consideration would not lead to a different outcome in view of the funding threshold.

Many thanks once again for writing to us and for sharing your views on this important piece of work. As this project develops, we will want to engage with as many people as possible in the weeks and months ahead and so we hope you will continue to find out what's going on and to get involved.

We will be providing updates and promoting future engagement activities through our websites, www.hertsvalleysccg.nhs.uk and www.westhertshospitals.nhs.uk

Kind regards,

Communications and Engagement Team
On behalf of the acute hospital transformation project group

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