

BRIEFING NOTE

MOTION: TO SUPPORT THE DECISION TO LOCATE THE NEW ROYAL LANCASTER INFIRMARY IN SOUTH LANCASTER

This Council applauds the New Hospitals Programme's decision to buy land in Bailrigg East in readiness for building a replacement Royal Lancaster Infirmary. This site is located to the south of the City Centre, in close proximity to Lancaster University. It is immediately adjacent to the Health Innovation Campus, offering obvious benefits for training, research and close partnership working between the NHS and the University.

The development of a new hospital in South Lancaster brings opportunities to improve key infrastructure (such as J33 of the M6), enhance the existing well established and frequent public transport links, and bring forward residential developments that better enable active transport to work options for NHS staff.

The current Royal Lancaster Infirmary building is crumbling and past its sell by date. The staff do a brilliant job, creating fantastic care and support for the patients, but are hampered by a lack of good facilities. The new hospital will be designed and built to the national 'Hospital 2.0' guidelines and will be state-of-the-art, net-zero-carbon facilities. This development will not only enhance the environment for both patients and staff but will also ensure we are well-prepared for the future of healthcare delivery, giving the opportunity to design a hospital that is fit for the needs of our future population, based on local data and clinical expertise.

After the previous Conservative Government infamously failed to deliver its manifesto pledge of building 40 new hospitals, the new Labour Government is to be congratulated for finally moving forward with plans for a much-needed new hospital for Lancaster.

Council resolves that:

The Chief Executive writes to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, Cat Smith MP and Lizzi Collinge MP, to express Lancaster City Council's support for the action taken to secure the site and its suitability as a location for the replacement Royal Lancaster Infirmary.

A full response to the public consultation is prepared on behalf of the Council by Business Committee at the appropriate time.

PROPOSERS:

The motion is proposed by Councillor Jean Parr.

The motion is seconded by Councillor Phillip Black.

OFFICER BRIEFING NOTE

Background

The New Hospital Programme is a programme of national investment in healthcare infrastructure. The Programme is currently subject to Government review, which aims to “consider the options for putting the New Hospital Programme onto a realistic, deliverable and affordable footing”. A new build Royal Lancaster Infirmary (RLI), to replace the existing Infirmary, forms part of the New Hospitals Programme and is one of a number of sites within the scope of the national review.

Notwithstanding this, on 2 December 2024 the University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay (NHS Foundation) Trust (UHMBT) announced that they have secured their preferred site for the proposed new hospital. The preferred site is at Bailrigg East, located north of Lancaster University, off the A6.

In announcing this preference, the UHMBT have undertaken a comprehensive review of sites (including plot size for anticipated design requirements), location (including proximity to existing site), motorway access, existing highways infrastructure, public transport, planning and environmental conditions has been undertaken to assess sites for their suitability.

A new RLI will allow UHMBT to address the significant problems caused by the current, ageing buildings at the RLI. In making the announcement, the UHMBT said:

“We have the opportunity to create a legacy, with a hospital specifically designed for the needs of our population, improving their experience and giving them the best clinical care. We additionally have significant ambitions to create facilities that are digitally innovative, much more cost effective, and with a reduced carbon footprint.”

The announcement of a preferred site at Bailrigg East does not preclude the submission of alternative sites. The criteria for consideration of an alternative site has been published by UHMBT and is available at <https://newhospitals.info/news/guide-submitting-potential-site-replacement-royal-preston-hospital-or-royal-lancaster-infirmary-consideration>

UHMBT have made it clear that no final decisions have been made, and any such decision would be subject to full public consultation by the NHS at a later date.

A helpful ‘frequently asked questions’ webpage has been created regarding the New Hospitals Programme, and this can be viewed at <https://newhospitals.info/information-hub/faqs>

The Proposed Council Resolution

The proposed resolution asks that the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care, and to both MPs, expressing the Council’s support for the action to secure the site and its suitability as a location. The Resolution also states that a response to the public consultation (via the Council’s Business Committee) should be drafted at the appropriate time.

In drafting any such letter, the Council has to ensure that it does not fetter its potential future decision-making (i.e. local planning authority) functions. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to offer congratulations more generally, i.e. for advancing the Programme to the current stage. Council could also choose to offer its support to help inform and enable the NHS to make a final site decision, following full public consultation.

With regard to the submission of a response to any future public consultation, the appropriate

route would be via Council Business Committee.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no more comments to add to those already in the Officer Briefing Note