

## Future for Whipps

Part 1 26 April 2019



Whipps Cross Hospital

**Wanstead resident Charlotte Monro explains her involvement in the campaign to ensure the community has a strong voice in Whipps Cross Hospital's redevelopment plans.**

A new hospital is being proposed for Whipps Cross with a health 'campus' on the site. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity. We want a hospital designed to the best of standards, and which will meet our health needs of the future. But with the resource-starved NHS of today this won't happen unless we all fight for it.

I have worked in the local health service as an occupational therapist since moving to Wanstead in the mid-1980s with my husband Stuart and our young daughter. For much of that time, I have also been a union rep and campaigned to protect services. Just 13 years ago Whipps Cross Hospital was fighting for its existence. Staff and the local community came together in the Save Whipps Cross campaign, gaining huge support. We succeeded. Then, again in 2013, the future of the hospital felt uncertain when, following the merger into Barts Health, we were sinking under devastating staff cuts accompanied by a climate of fear. I found myself sacked after speaking out over cuts in our stroke unit and reinstated after a long fight supported by colleagues, unions and health campaigns.

So, I was truly happy to be speaking at a recent packed public meeting about building a new Whipps Cross, also addressed by John Cryer MP and Alwen Williams, Chief Executive of Barts Health. The health campaign group Waltham Forest Save Our NHS organised the meeting to bring the potential new hospital to the attention of the public, and to set out some crucial concerns. Will there be enough beds and capacity for the fast-growing population? This is a must. Our campaign is challenging the initial proposal to provide fewer beds than there are currently. We want public funding – no more crippling PFI-type debts. There must be enough land for future expansion needs; key worker housing for health staff; and proper public and staff involvement and consultation.

Why is a new hospital so urgent now? The age and layout of the buildings cause constant difficulties for care and make the hospital much more expensive to run. I remember many a risk assessment on staff trundling laden cages across the uneven road and pavement surfaces, or doorways too narrow for modern hospital beds. But most of all, the daily problem of lack of space on nightingale-style wards. As you assist a patient from their bed to their chair or commode, it is quite an art to avoid the next patient sitting a few inches away, let alone privacy and infection control being compromised.

A new Whipps is not yet a certainty. But Barts Trust has been given the go-ahead to develop the next stage of planning, reiterated by the Secretary of State for Health Matt Hancock, when he visited Whipps in March.

## Future for Whipps

**Part 2** 3 September 2019

**In the second of a series of articles looking at the redevelopment of Whipps Cross Hospital, Wanstead resident Charlotte Monroe explains why she is supporting a petition calling for government funding**

**Our community desperately needs a new hospital. Rebuilding Whipps has wide support, not least in Wanstead, as I discovered when gathering signatures on the High Street for our petition calling on the government to fund the build.**

Quite a team is now set up at Whipps, working on more detailed proposals for the new hospital. I recently attended a community partners' workshop as one of five Waltham Forest Save Our NHS delegates. Redbridge was also well represented with Councillor Dan Morgan-Thomas and Mike New, chair of Redbridge Health Watch. We were told the redevelopment work from now until September is focused on (one) developing ideas for how health services will be delivered in the future and the size of hospital needed, and (two) options for the land occupied by Whipps. This will inform a revised 'Strategic Outline Case' to be submitted to the NHS powers that be in December, the first hurdle for government approval.

I believe it is vital that we, the communities who rely on our hospital, have a determining voice in these decisions. Certainly, this was the spirit among people attending the workshop.

Discussion about the future shape of services showed peoples' concern that the hospital must be designed with enough beds. They challenged the realism of expectations that care in the

community – already over-stretched – will significantly reduce the need for hospital care, and therefore the size of hospital needed. Back in 2016, the local health strategy made this assumption; some excellent community intermediate care services are now in place, but pressure on hospitals appears no less. “Rigorously evaluate predictions around bed numbers – have previous plans achieved what they promised?” is the message now recorded. Even the head of NHS England says the loss of beds has gone too far, we now need more.

Can our new hospital be a model for environmental design? This we also asked. Surely, as we face the tipping point for climate change, this is a time for a carbon neutral hospital. The healthcare sector is responsible for anywhere from 3–10% of all carbon emissions worldwide. But some hospitals around the world have paid dividends through design features, such as those that allow natural sunlight to permeate throughout the building, offering the dual benefit of cutting back on winter heating costs and offering proven health benefits for patients over artificial lighting. So, where and how the new Whipps is positioned on the site could be crucial. Expertise in environmental design must be brought in now.

Such an investment in a new hospital with enough beds for the growing population is a priority. Without adequate funding, it cannot happen. Please sign our petition and share it.

## Future for Whipps

**Part 3** 29 October 2019

**In the third of a series of articles looking at the redevelopment of Whipps Cross Hospital, Wanstead resident Charlotte Monro explains why campaigning must continue, despite government funding confirmation**

**At a public meeting on 15 October, Barts Health Trust presented their current proposals for the new hospital and the other developments on the Whipps Cross site. There was intense interest from the 200 people attending, with pertinent and searching questions asked, and discussions continued as the meeting was breaking up.**

Whipps is one of the six hospital developments the government has announced will benefit from a share of a £2.7bn funding allocation. A letter has been received from the Secretary of State for Health confirming government support for a ‘brand new hospital’. “We don’t know how much yet,” said Alastair Finney, Director for Whipps Cross Redevelopment, but the total divided by six gives £450m. Not nearly sufficient for a new-build hospital, he added, so the campaign needs to continue (please sign our petition!). At the meeting, we heard the reworked proposals for the strategic outline case:

A hospital of similar total size as the current one but compacted to a smaller footprint (about a fifth), between eight and 12 storeys high, with A&E, maternity and core services.

Fewer beds, apart from more in critical care and maternity, and more space for day surgery, including for children. The rationale for this, despite a growing population, is based on hospital and primary care clinician working groups’ vision of models of care.

Becoming a specialist centre for the treatment of frail older people, including residents from Newham and Tower Hamlets.

Some community or social care facilities next to the hospital.

Much of the site to be disposed of for housing and community amenities, with up to 1,700 new homes envisaged.

No commitment to sustainable building and energy design was evident.

“I fear you may be overestimating how much your plans will reduce the need for hospital beds,” said the final questioner to applause. No evidence has been presented as to how far their proposed model of care closer to home can or will reduce the need for hospital admissions, or the resources needed for this. Without additional beds, the future in reality will be a cut, and a new hospital under as much pressure as now, or more.

This is our hospital. Our say in it has to be real. This will only happen by our action. The next two months will be critical as the revised outline business case will be resubmitted at the end of the year, which includes the total capital needed. The new hospital must be based on need, not the funding on offer.

Let's make it happen.

## Future for Whipps

**Part 4** 1 February 2020

**In the fourth of a series of articles looking at the redevelopment of Whipps Cross Hospital, Gordon Drakes is pleased to report that being environmentally friendly will be a key design principle in the new build**

**Campaigners were informed last month that an environmentally friendly hospital and the lowest possible carbon footprint will be a key design principle in the new Whipps Cross Hospital, and that the redevelopment team want this to go further and enable the whole of the site to achieve a carbon neutral footprint.**

To cover additional costs, a 3% uplift to the capital bid for building the hospital is to be included. They are aiming to achieve the ‘Excellent’ level of BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method). Alastair Finney, the Whipps Redevelopment Director, said they will appoint a dedicated sustainability consultant to the team for the next phase: “We will also make sure there are opportunities for expert stakeholders and local people to be engaged and involved in the work as it progresses.”

The recent election has demonstrated that, aside from the ‘B’ word, securing a sustainable future for the NHS and the planet are perhaps the two most important issues for the British public. So, this is welcome news indeed.

In the summer of 2019, the government enshrined into law a commitment to reach net zero carbon by 2050 (not soon enough, but a positive starting point), and it is clear that if governments of the future are to achieve this target, it will be because of action taken now and over the coming years. Given the scale of the task, the principle of net zero carbon needs to infuse and influence all government decision-making going forward.

How the government spends tax revenue on large-scale land development projects must surely be a prime area for implementing this new environmental *modus operandi*. Indeed, in the government's response to a recent report issued by the Climate Change Commission, it acknowledged that the built environment accounts for 40% of national energy use and around one-third of emissions.

Whipps Cross is one of the six hospital developments the government has announced will benefit from a share of a £2.7bn funding allocation. The plans are still in flux and the amount of funding for Whipps is still not confirmed – do sign and share the Waltham Forest Save Our NHS petition to the Secretary of State for Health, which is to be handed in on 14 February. But by putting the environment at the centre of the plans, there is an opportunity to reap many benefits.

Members of Wanstead Climate Action (WCA) joined with local health campaigners to urge Barts Health Trust to ensure that low carbon or net zero carbon is a core principal of the Whipps redevelopment plans. Now that we have a positive response to this plea, we need to keep on the case. There are many hurdles to go through yet.

## Future for Whipps

**Part 5** 3 September 2020

**In the fifth of a series of articles looking at the redevelopment of Whipps Cross Hospital, Charlotte Monro reflects on a recent public meeting and expresses concern over plans for 51 fewer beds**

**Work towards the new Whipps Cross Hospital is advancing apace with the architect team in the process of being appointed. A public meeting hosted by Waltham Forest Save Our NHS (WFSO NHS) at the end of July demonstrated our communities' determination that the new hospital must be designed to meet our needs in the future. Alarm that the latest plans are for 51 fewer beds than now – despite the area having the fastest-growing population in London – has led to the launch of a community-wide campaign.**

People found the meeting informative and inspiring. Enthusiastic discussion followed the three speakers. Residents spoke of the reality on the ground: 8,000 more people moving into new developments in Leabridge ward, which is already 10 GPs short and has no health centre. And housing for staff on the Whipps site; public transport – sufficient and green – and genuine consultation were all raised. People are eager to act.

John Cryer MP spoke first: “We can't be in a position where we have got a nice new hospital but it cannot cope with the demand.” He has witnessed the “absolutely desperate” pressure on

Whipps. “The hospital has been at 100% bed occupancy for the last two winters. Once you get to 90%, you start to compromise safety, you should not even go near 100%.” Sufficient beds is a critical issue, of which he has long experience, from the new Queen’s Hospital in Romford to the closure of Wanstead Hospital’s Heronwood and Galleon unit “which provided excellent rehab... Now, I am getting cases of people who cannot get the services in their homes that were promised when the wards closed. So, people go back needing more intense hospital care.”

The idea the new hospital needs fewer beds relies on assumptions that fewer people will need hospital treatment because of proposed new models of care in the community and improved organisation of hospital care. A close look at the strategy documents, said the next speaker Mary Burnette of WFSO NHS, shows major flaws in the modelling used. For one, Waltham Forest has less to spend on both hospital and community health care than most of the boroughs to which it is compared. Decisions resting on untested assumptions could give us the same pressures and ambulance queues stretching into our future.

The final presentation from Green at Barts Health staff group called for the new Whipps to be the first UK net zero-carbon hospital, designed for the wellbeing of all who use it. With danger from climate change, anything less would be unforgivable. Natural light, views and ventilation, green spaces and nature, renewable clean energy from solar panels on roofs of both hospital and houses, all this is doable. But our guarantee will be the involvement throughout of community, staff and patients. And funding!