

Committee(s): Epping Forest Consultative – For Information Epping Forest & Commons – For decision	Date(s): 23 10 2019 18 11 2019
Subject: City of London Corporation response to the Barts Health NHS Trust Public Consultation on the Future of Whipps Cross Hospital (SEF 42/19b)	Public
Report of: Director of Open Spaces	For Decision
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Summary

The Barts Health NHS Trust published public consultation documents in September 2019 relating to options for the future of the 44.13-acre Whipps Cross University Hospital site, adjacent to Epping Forest land at Leyton Flats, which forms part of the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation.

Some of the options propose an intensification of the use of the site through a housing-led approach, which would see the addition of substantial housing and leisure development. This development has the potential to impact on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation at Leyton Flats.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to:

- Consider the comments made by the Consultative Committee on the proposals made by the Barts Health NHS Trust
- Approve a response to the public consultation on the future of the Hospital in line with comments for the Whipps Cross Strategic location.

Main Report

Background

1. Whipps Cross Hospital started life in 1894, following the purchase of the Forest House and Gardens which overlooked the Forest at Leyton Flats. The West Ham Union Workhouse opened an annexe known as Forest House Annexe to care for sick and elderly inhabitants of the workhouse, while they raised funds to construct a new infirmary accommodating 672 beds in 24 wards, which opened as the West Ham Union Infirmary in 1903.
2. The Infirmary, and during the Great War of 1914-1918 cared for thousands of wounded servicemen. In 1917, the Infirmary changed its name to Whipps Cross

Hospital, in 1992, Whipps Cross University Hospital became a trust hospital, and following the development of teaching links with South Bank University, in 2001 it became Whipps Cross University Hospital NHS Trust. In 2012, Whipps Cross, Newham and Barts and The London merged to form Barts Health NHS Trust.

3. Between 2001 and 2005, the Epping Forest and Commons Committee considered proposals from Whipps Cross University Hospital NHS Trust for the redevelopment of the hospital site including a 25% increase in the size of the hospital, enlarged associated infrastructure and new residential accommodation and consequently a new vehicular access road across Epping Forest land. These proposals were eventually abandoned by the Trust.
4. In 2011, the Government-sponsored Independent Reconfiguration Panel considered options for the provision of services at Whipps Cross and King George Hospitals will enable the provision of safe, sustainable and accessible health services for the area. A widespread public campaign resulted in the retention of Accident and Emergency and Maternity Services at Whipps Cross.
5. Whipps Cross Hospital has been rated as 'improving' in 2018, two years after being placed in special measures by the Care Quality Commission. The layout and condition of the buildings within the hospital campus were cited as a key issue for Barts Health NHS Trust.

Current Position

6. In August 2018, NHS Improvement confirmed its support for Barts Health NHS Trust to develop detailed proposals for the redevelopment of the 44.13-acre (17.86 hectare) Whipps Cross University Hospital site, building on work previously undertaken as part of its original Strategic Outline case submitted during 2016/17.
7. In September 2019, the Government pledged £2.7 Billion in new funding to support hospital projects including Whipps Cross Hospital.
8. As indicated in the associated report regarding the City Corporation's response to the London Borough of Waltham Forest Regulation 18 Local Plan, the Plan's dedicated Policy 11 proposes 1,700 new homes in the Whipps Cross Area 'Strategic Location', while committing to the protection and enhancement of Epping Forest.
9. As outlined in the associated report for the Leyton Flats Integrated Site Plan the 78.03 ha Leyton Flats site is already the Forest's most popular location, with over 440,000 visits each year and insufficient provision in terms of visitor infrastructure to cope with the current or increased level of visiting. The Site of Special Scientific Interest compartment covering Leyton Flats is currently rated as 'Unfavourable no change'. The Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation (SAC) Mitigation Strategy already identifies Leyton Flats as a focus for Mitigation interventions.

10. The Barts Health NHS Trust published in September 2019 public consultation documents in relation to options for the future of the Whipps Cross University Hospital site. Some of the options propose an intensification of the use of the site through the addition of housing and leisure development which has the potential to impact on the Epping Forest Special Area of Conservation at Leyton Flats. The consultation closed on the 15 November 2019, though Barts have agreed to receive your Committee's views after this date.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

11. The recommendations of this report support the Corporate Plan with particular reference to the following aims:

a. Contribute to a flourishing society

- i. People enjoy good health and wellbeing
- ii. Communities are cohesive and have the facilities they need.

b. Shape Outstanding Environments

- i. We inspire enterprise, excellence, creativity and collaboration
- ii. We have clean air, land and water and a thriving and sustainable natural environment
- iii. Our spaces are secure, resilient and well maintained.

12. And supports the Open Spaces Business Plan as follows:

a. Open Spaces and historic sites are thriving and accessible.

- i. Our open spaces, heritage and cultural assets are protected, conserved and enhanced
- ii. London has clean air and mitigates flood risk and climate change

Implications

13. **Financial:** There are no immediate financial implications for responding to the Consultation. However, the added visitor pressure associated with any new development is likely to have ongoing financial implications for the Local Risk budget.
14. **Consultative Committee:** The Consultative Committee expressed their thanks to the Barts Health NHS Trust for presenting to the Committee. In response to a presentation regarding the pressing need to redevelop the ageing and poorly integrated hospital site, Members of the Committee raised a number of points and concerns regarding the development ranging from the adequacy of parking onsite and the impact this has on Leyton Flats car parks to concerns about creating a new neighbourhood so close to the SAC/SSSI site. There was surprise that the proposal was considered to be housing-led and members questioned whether sufficient space would be retained for future hospital expansion. At this early stage Barts were unable to answer questions regarding construction timescales; a zero carbon commitment for the building project, land swaps or returns with the Forest and the amount of residents parking which would be provided onsite. Barts also made a commitment to ensure that the

residents of Loughton many of whom rely on Whipps Cross hospital would be consulted.

15. **Charity:** Epping Forest is a registered charity (number 232990). Charity Law obliges Members to ensure that the decisions they take in relation to the Charity must be taken in the best interests of the Charity.
16. **Equalities & diversity:** An initial screening exercise of the equality impact of this decision has been undertaken by the London Borough of Waltham Forest. At this stage, it is considered that there are no negative impacts on the protected equality groups.
17. **Exiting the European Union (EEU):** The main influence of EU law on development close to the Epping Forest SAC relates to the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the 'SEA Regulations') and the Council Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna & Flora, which is incorporated into UK law as the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 (the 'Habitats Regulations'). The future influence of existing EU Directives and the Regulations may be affected by the EU and will also be consequent on the terms reached with the EU as part of Brexit negotiations and the future governments views on 'Retained EU law' contained within the EU (Withdrawal) Act 2018.

Conclusion

18. The Barts Health NHS Trust Public Consultation Document on the future of Whipps Cross Hospital sets out potential options for the site which could result in a major expansion of the residential and leisure potential of the hospital site. The scheme is also reflected in the London Borough of Waltham Forest Local Plan which is the subject of a separate report. The potential impact of a major development at the hospital site adjacent to the Epping Forest SAC at Leyton Flats is likely to be very significant. Subject to an Appropriate Assessment, the Epping Forest SAC Mitigation Strategy will play a pivotal role in managing the impact of intensification of the hospital site on Leyton Flats.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Paper
- Appendix 2 – Barts Health NHS Trust – Public Consultation Document (Sept 2019)

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