

***MEDIA RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE USE – 25 MAY 2023***

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***RELAUNCH RAISES SERIOUS QUESTIONS OVER WATFORD SCHEME***

***Investment acknowledges West Herts’ needs, but fundamental access problems have been ignored***

Philip Aylett, Co-ordinator of the New Hospital Campaign, reacted today to the announcement on West Hertfordshire hospitals:

‘This announcement, just the latest of many relaunches for the Watford General scheme, leaves many vital questions unanswered. The Trust have failed to gain approval for their preferred option, and will now have to adapt their plans to standardised modular methods of construction to fit into the national programme. That will take yet more time.

‘Tower blocks of the sort desired by the Trust, but disliked by so many in Watford, may well not be easy to adapt to modular methods. Much uncertainty continues about the viability of the project.

‘Whatever happens at Watford General, the problems of access to a constricted and congested site in a highly built-up area will remain. The impact of building work on patients during construction will be severe.

‘The fact is that the Vicarage Road site is a very bad place to put an emergency care and specialist hospital. The Trust’s obstinacy in clinging to it is not in the long-term interests of people across West Herts.

‘This planned investment does recognise the need for better hospital services in the West Herts area and is welcome as far as it goes. But much better options on clear new sites have never been properly assessed. We at the New Hospital Campaign will be looking very carefully at the plans developed by the Trust and will give a full verdict later, based on the interests of people across West Herts.

‘We will also be pressing for details of what is planned for St Albans and Hemel Hempstead Hospitals. The Trust’s persistent favouring of Watford casts doubt on the future of Hemel Hospital in particular.’

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