

Statement from The Royal Bournemouth and Christchurch Hospitals NHS
Foundation Trust

Christchurch Hospital planning application

We are deeply disappointed by the Planning Committee's decision to reject the developments proposed for Christchurch Hospital, despite planning officers recommending granting the application. The plans would have secured local services and ensured the hospital remains a focal point for the local community.

It appears that the Planning Committee has not fully appreciated the financial constraints facing the NHS, and other public services, and the stark choice we have of either keeping empty buildings that are no longer fit for providing modern day care, or continuing to provide health services. We simply cannot afford to do both.

Two years ago we understood the Borough's priority was to retain the site for health care use. We have worked hard, following extensive engagement and consultation with the public and health partners, to develop an option for Christchurch that does this. Yesterday's disappointing decision is a missed opportunity and goes against this and the amount of community support we have for our scheme. Over 600 people took the time to show support for this scheme, whose opinions appear to have been overlooked.

The Planning Committee has opted to keep empty buildings over local health care for residents. H block is a non-listed building in a degraded conservation which has been empty for three years. We cannot justify investing significant public money in a building that is unfit for delivering any kind of modern health care. The viability of the scheme presented to the Committee relied entirely on the demolition of H block.

The Foundation Trust, Quantum and the GP practice will jointly review what options we now have. We know that we may lose the funding for the GP practice. We will have to review what health services we can continue to deliver from Christchurch and what can be delivered from the Royal Bournemouth, where they can be more efficiently delivered, and reduce the investment costs in the older buildings at Christchurch.

The simple reality is that the £10m+ investment in health care accommodation at Christchurch relied on the funds generated from the nursing home and the key worker and senior living accommodation to make these affordable. Without the scheme as it stands we are no longer in a position to make that investment.

We will continue to work with planning officers and councillors and hope to find a way forward in the very near future. However our options must include considering whether to appeal and the amount of services that can continue on site.

Thank you to all the residents in Christchurch for their enormous levels of support. Together we must find a solution.