

ANDREA LEADSOM MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Yvonne Constance OBE
Chairman
Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview & Scrutiny Committee
Oxfordshire County Council
County Hall
New Road
Oxford
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19th February 2017

Ref: AL/TG/1702

Dear Yvonne

I understand that on the 7th March 2017 the Oxfordshire Joint Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OJHOSC) plans to scrutinise the proposals in Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group's (OCCG) phase one consultation of their Sustainability & Transformation Plan.

Given that the outcomes of this debate will shape OJHOSC's formal response to the OCCG consultation, ending 9th April, I should like to submit comments and concerns that have been raised with me by my constituents in South Northamptonshire who use services at the Horton General Hospital.

Many have written to me to share their heart-warming stories of the excellent care and attention they have received from staff at the Horton hospital, and I should like to add my own thanks to those staff as well.

However, my constituents are particularly concerned, overwhelmingly so, about the journey times to the John Radcliffe from South Northamptonshire. This is separate from, but related to, the "blue-light" journeys from the MLU at the Horton. These correspondents have queried what would have happened to mother and child had they had to travel the long distances to the JR in an emergency, and whether their own children would have survived the journey. Examples included umbilical cords around necks, births within 15 minutes of arriving at the Horton, emergency caesareans, low oxygen supplies, and so on.

It is simply unacceptable that the OCCG may be putting the lives of mother and baby at risk through these travel times. We all know that traffic on the roads in and around Brackley, Banbury, Oxford and the surrounding area can be extremely slow.

This leads onto my second point. There seems to be a lack of consideration for what you might term "low risk mothers with complications". I understand that low risk mothers are being advised they can use the MLU at the Horton in future, and high risk mothers will be cared for

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through the obstetrics unit at the John Radcliffe, but the low risk mothers who subsequently develop complications are almost an afterthought in this process.

What are these mothers expected to do if they need to get from somewhere like Greatworth or Edgcote to an obstetrics unit in Oxford, but the A43 is slow or closed for whatever reason and traffic has diverted, as it will, onto the local road network?

Further, I have constituents who have been advised that they should arrive with an hour to spare to find a parking space. This is the last thing that any mother, regardless of her condition, is wanting to hear. What about the fathers, or those accompanying, who may very well miss the moment of birth because they were driving round the car park?

Banbury and its surrounding environs are in a state of expansion, with significant new housing going up in the next few years. The growing population is going to lead to a large increase in pressure on the JR, and my constituents ask what forward planning is being undertaken to futureproof this?

My constituents feel that the closure of obstetrics at the Horton amounts to a loss of choice in their area, and that as South Northants residents they have been treated as an inconvenience to the consultation process; it has been badly undertaken.

It is exceptionally difficult for my constituents to understand the whole STP given that it is being split into two halves across a vast and unwieldy timescale. Further, the consultation times, dates and locations themselves are not accessible to all – there is only one in South Northamptonshire (held mid-morning on a Monday), and none on a weekend. This makes it very difficult for working people (including myself) to attend one of the sessions.

Thank you for allowing me to put my constituents' concerns to your committee, and I confirm that you are welcome to publish this submission alongside others as part of your papers.

With best wishes,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Andrea".

The Rt Hon. Andrea Leadsom MP
Member of Parliament for South Northamptonshire