

COUNCILLOR ROSS GARROD
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
(Labour, Longthornton Ward)



By email only

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27 November 2023

Dear Ms Atkins,

Proposed closure of vital services at St Helier Hospital

I am writing to welcome you to your new role as Secretary of State for Health and Social Care and to request the opportunity to discuss at the earliest opportunity the proposed closure of vital services at St Helier Hospital.

As you may be aware, recent coverage in local and national media has shown St Helier Hospital to be in an appalling state of disrepair, with the former Chief Medical Officer at Epsom and St Helier describing the building as “crumbling”, “dilapidated” and an “unpleasant environment”. Despite this state of disrepair, St Helier remains a trusted and much loved hospital for local people.

However, rather than properly invest in the hospital and safeguard its future, there are currently proposals in place to close the Accident & Emergency, Maternity, and Paediatric services at the hospital and relocate them to the Belmont site – these proposals are due to be carried out as part of the New Hospital Programme.

I believe this decision would be to the detriment of local people who rely on these vital services at St Helier Hospital, and that especially following the unprecedented increase in pressure on local healthcare systems following the pandemic, this would overwhelm nearby hospitals such as St George’s, Kingston and Croydon.

To fully understand the impact these proposals would have on people in the borough, Merton Council commissioned an Independent Impact Assessment. The report highlights how travel times, accessibility to public transport, staff volumes and quality of care will be impacted if vital services, which Merton residents heavily depend on, are closed.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and explore how we can ensure that all Merton residents have access to vital healthcare services, within a clean, safe, and local environment.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ross Garrod". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'G' at the end.

Councillor Ross Garrod
Leader of the Council