

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

HEALTH & WELLBEING BOARD

14 MARCH 2025

QUESTION No. 2 in accordance with Standing Order No 36

Tom Lake to ask the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board:

Parking at Royal Berkshire Hospital

We now hear that the Royal Berkshire Hospital replacement is unlikely to be open before 2040.

It is well attested that the parking difficulties at the Craven Road site cause a great deal of anxiety to patients. I have often seen patients in nightwear waiting on the pavement of Addington Road to be picked up. There is good public transport at the site but it is not suitable or convenient for patients in some conditions coming from some parts of the RBH catchment area.

Could the Health and Wellbeing Board, working with the RBH trust and the Reading planning directorate, elicit a practical plan for relieving the parking difficulties at the Craven Road site - which cause so much anxiety to hospital patients?

REPLY by the Chair of the Health & Wellbeing Board (Councillor McEwan):

I thank Mr Lake for his question.

The provision of parking spaces within the Royal Berkshire Hospital estate for patients and staff is principally a matter for the Hospital Trust, however the Council is committed to working with the Trust to improve access to the Hospital in its current location. In addition, the Council does manage the on-street parking spaces in roads in close proximity to the Hospital, which provide valuable parking capacity in addition to the provision at the Hospital itself. Parking restrictions and charges for these on-street spaces are carefully considered to balance the needs of patients and local residents at different times of the day, whilst also encouraging the turnover of spaces to maximise availability.

Historically, the Hospital has explored proposals to increase parking provision on the site and if the Trust wishes to revisit any such proposals they could be discussed with the Council through the usual pre-application planning process.

The location of the Hospital, within a built-up residential area with limited highway space, does pose challenges regarding access and severely limits the Council's ability to provide additional parking capacity. The Council has therefore worked with the Hospital Trust, alongside Reading Buses and Wokingham Borough Council, to enhance sustainable access for patients and staff through the provision of the Hospital 300 park and ride service. This runs from both Thames Valley Park and MereOak park and ride sites, providing an alternative option to access the Hospital and the University of Reading from the east and south of Reading.

I have also received the following response from the Royal Berkshire NHS Foundation Trust:

Due to high demand for services and a challenging location, demand for parking outpaces capacity at Royal Berkshire Hospital. Over the past few years, the Trust, in conjunction with Reading Borough Council, has taken several steps to reduce parking demand including free off-site parking for staff at nearby car parks, a Park and Ride service for patients and visitors, as well as delivering more services closer to patients at its other hospital sites across Berkshire and South Oxfordshire. Despite these improvements,

parking continues to be a challenge at Royal Berkshire Hospital due to difficulties increasing the number of spaces available on site. The Trust is keen to work closely with Reading Borough Council to explore how we both support patients, visitors and staff to access the hospital as we as encourage use of alternative modes of transport.

In relation to a plan, this is a matter primarily for the Hospital Trust, but there is willingness to engage on all sides. I would highlight, however, that this is a parking and transport matter so should Mr Lake wish to make further enquiries these should be raised in the first instance to the Traffic Management Sub-Committee. It should be noted that neither this Board nor the Council can compel the Hospital Trust to build a plan to manage their parking in a different way.