

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Open				
Lead Member: Leader of the Council, Councillor Alistair Beales Email: cllr.alistair.beales@west-norfolk.gov.uk				
Lead Officer: Kate Blakemore, Chief Executive E-mail: kate.blakemore@west-norfolk.gov.uk		Other Officers consulted:		
Financial Implications NO	Policy/Personnel Implications NO	Statutory Implications NO	Equality Impact Assessment req'd NO	Risk Management Implications NO

Date of Meeting : 24th September 2026

QUEEN ELIZABETH HOSPITAL (QEH), KING'S LYNN

RECOMMENDED:

That Council resolves to:

1. Support the retention at QEH of 24/7 A&E, acute medicine, emergency general surgery, critical care, anaesthesia and emergency theatres, consultant-led maternity and obstetrics, paediatrics and appropriate neonatal care, trauma and orthopaedics, core acute medical specialties, stroke assessment and inpatient care, and comprehensive diagnostic services.
2. Recognise that highly specialised services may appropriately be provided at regional or tertiary centres where there is a clear clinical case.
3. Ask the Leader of the Council to write to the Norfolk and Waveney University Hospitals Group seeking assurance that the new hospital and any future clinical strategy will maintain the complete package of services necessary for QEH to continue functioning as a full District General Hospital serving West Norfolk and its wider catchment.
4. That Council notes the significance of this matter and its relevance to the Council's scrutiny function, and requests the Chairs of the relevant Panels to convene a Joint Panel meeting to consider the future provision of services at the Queen Elizabeth Hospital.
5. The Joint Panel should be informed by the Councillors' Briefing Session arranged with the Hospital, with Members encouraged to identify and raise key questions and lines of enquiry during that briefing to support the Panel's subsequent consideration of the issues.
6. That representatives of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital be invited to attend the Joint Panel meeting to provide information, respond to Members' questions, and

assist the Council in understanding the implications of future service delivery and hospital development plans for West Norfolk and its wider catchment area.

1. Introduction

This report sets out the Council's position on the future of QEH and reaffirms its commitment to retaining a comprehensive District General Hospital in King's Lynn. It outlines the key services that should remain available locally, recognises the appropriate role of regional specialist centres for highly specialised treatments, and seeks assurances that future clinical strategies will preserve the hospital's ability to provide the full package of services required to meet the healthcare needs of West Norfolk and its wider communities.

2. Background

The Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH), King's Lynn, faces significant infrastructure and operational challenges linked to the age and condition of its buildings. Although efforts are underway to maintain services and improve patient care, concerns have been raised through regulatory inspections and media coverage. Plans for a new hospital are underway, with enabling works due to commence in 2026 and main construction expected from around 2028.

The hospital was originally constructed in 1980 with an anticipated operational lifespan of approximately 30 years. As a result, the main building is now operating well beyond its intended design life, creating ongoing maintenance and structural challenges.

A major issue emerged in 2021 when reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete (RAAC) was identified within the hospital roof structure and subsequently deemed structurally unsafe. This has become one of the most significant estate-related risks facing the organisation.

Following inspections undertaken in March 2026, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) published a report rating the hospital as "Requires Improvement" overall.

3. Future Plans

Recognising the long-term challenges associated with the existing facility, plans for a replacement hospital have been prioritised. The first phase of redevelopment includes construction of a new multi-storey car park to free up the existing surface car park, which forms the intended footprint for the new hospital building.

4. Council's position

The Council recognises the vital importance of the Queen Elizabeth Hospital (QEH) to the residents of West Norfolk and its wider catchment and welcomes confirmation through the Government's New Hospital Programme that a new District General Hospital will be built in King's Lynn.

Council notes QEH's existing commitment that King's Lynn will continue to have a District General Hospital providing core services, with Accident & Emergency and maternity services remaining locally available.

Maintaining a genuine District General Hospital requires more than retaining A&E and maternity in name. These services depend upon the critical mass of supporting acute services necessary to operate a safe and effective emergency hospital.

5. Summary of recommendations

The recommendations seek to secure the long-term future of the QEH as a fully functioning District General Hospital serving West Norfolk and surrounding communities. They also propose robust Council scrutiny and engagement with hospital leaders to provide transparency and reassurance to residents about the hospital's future.