

5th July 2007

Dear Editor,

The Princess Royal Hospital

Local people will have heard with disbelief that the Primary Care Trust felt able to press ahead with the Fit for the Future consultation without apparently paying any attention to the wealth of detail and evidence that has already been submitted to them particularly in respect of the Princess Royal Hospital.

All local people will be determined to face this challenge together and to see to it that we do all we can to keep our precious and vital A&E and Maternity services at the Princess Royal Hospital.

Of course all of us want to see improvements in health care, and acknowledge that there will be some good ideas to consider but people in Mid Sussex are entitled to have proper local services. These proposals do nothing to make essential services more accessible or more convenient. The truth is West Sussex itself cannot possibly be served by only one major hospital; in my view it requires at least two full A&E and Maternity facilities.

We have to accept that some changes will occur. Given that the Government has sold out to the European Working Time Directive, given that there are substantial changes in medical practice and the very real problem of the health service deficit, obviously not all acute hospitals can keep all services particularly when they are close to other acute hospitals. But in my judgement, and I make this judgement as the Member of Parliament for Mid Sussex, the loss of acute in-patient services and the total loss of A&E services and Maternity services in an area of such high growth and poor infrastructure will never be acceptable.

I think people want fairness; I think they understand the need to travel to treat rare and complex conditions in specialist units but they insist that the common serious emergencies should be treated closer to home. I make this appeal to the Government, to a new

Prime Minister and a new Secretary of State for Health that they should look at the criticisms and evidence that have already been made and that these reconfigurations should be carried out far more sympathetically and the process of reform given time to mature.

It is my strongly held view that people in Mid Sussex will not feel safe without access to an A&E that they can reach within a reasonable time. They would definitely prefer to have their babies in a local hospital which frankly means maintaining a full maternity unit. And when a baby is born or someone is taken ill in the night the family wants to be able to visit the next day without making a long round trip, being unable to park and having great difficulty getting there and back. These are human needs and the Government needs to grasp them and understand them.

Finally, the community now expects the clinicians and the GPs to let us know what they think of the proposals, which are so potentially damaging to the lives of local people, and the future of our much needed hospitals and its essential services.

Yours sincerely,

Nicholas Soames
Member of Parliament for Mid Sussex