

The Rt Hon William Hague MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

14 November 2012

Dear Jim,

I am writing to you in your capacity as Chairman of the Scrutiny of Health Committee at North Yorkshire County Council with regards the proposals to reconfigure maternity and paediatric provision at the Friarage Hospital.

As you know, I have consistently campaigned against the proposals by North Yorkshire and York PCT and the Hambleton, Richmondshire and Whitby CCG to downgrade maternity and children's services at the Friarage. I have received many letters from constituents expressing concern at the proposed changes and I addressed thousands of people in Northallerton in May before joining them on a march through the High Street in opposition to the proposals. I have met representatives from the Trust and CCG on numerous occasions to raise these concerns and I have also brought the matter to the attention of government health officials.

In the light of clear public opposition to these proposals, it was therefore regrettable that the Trust chose only to put forward for formal consultation two clinical models that both propose a midwifery-led maternity unit. This is deeply disappointing and would mean hundreds of mothers-to-be are no longer eligible to deliver their babies at the Friarage. There are also serious concerns about the long-term viability of a midwifery-led unit, which the CCG has acknowledged could be at risk if not enough people choose to use the service.

It is important that there continues to be a vigorous public debate around these proposals and I welcome your decision to hold a special public meeting next week to allow members of the public to express their opinions and air their concerns.

I am aware that the Scrutiny of Health Committee is considering referring the decision to the Independent Reconfiguration Panel and I would encourage you to do so. There is a clear gulf between the Trust and CCG's preferred clinical model and the public desire to maintain paediatric and maternity services as they are. A rigorous, independent and thorough analysis by the IRP will help bring some much needed clarity to the issue.

It is true that there are legitimate concerns about how the Friarage continues to provide safe maternity and children's services in light of factors such as the growing specialisation of staff, but these are challenges to be overcome and not surrendered to and I would welcome the IRP's evaluation of the situation.

I look forward to receiving your reply and I hope the meeting next Thursday is well attended.

Yours sincerely,

**The Rt Hon. William Hague MP**

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