

Cllr Sara Naylor: Colchester Hospital – the case for 140 extra beds 11 January 2026

Cllr Sara Naylor is the Local Authority Appointed Governor for East Suffolk and North Essex NHS Foundation Trust (ESNEFT), which runs Colchester Hospital.

ESNEFT's experts in NHS strategy examined all the evidence and stated in February 2025 that Colchester Hospital will need an extra 140 inpatient beds to cope with the influx of new residents from the mass house-building that is being imposed on the Colchester area by the Government. Cllr Naylor gave a statement outlining the evidence and urgent need to the Local Plan Committee in February 2025. This evidence is as relevant today as it was in February 2025.

Colchester Hospital will need the equivalent of 5 new wards so that current and future residents who are too poorly to be treated at home can be sure of a hospital bed when needed.

The hospital currently does not have enough beds for everyone who needs one. It is estimated that they already need another 38 beds. The consequence is the number of emergency patients who are cared for in beds in corridors. A report by the Royal College of Nursing sets out the negative impact on patients and staff.

The hospital has developed a business case for a new building on its existing site at Turner Road in Colchester for 90 extra beds. It is estimated that it will cost approximately £120m, based on the costs of the recently opened Dame Clare Marx elective orthopaedic centre.

Work must begin urgently on the new block. It took 8 years to build and open the Dame Clare Marx centre.

The Government's recently published Ten Year Plan for the NHS prioritises improving the health of those needing emergency hospital treatment most frequently.

Although prevention is welcome, it is also accepted that this will not in itself resolve the urgent need for 140 inpatient beds for the following reasons.

The population of Colchester is set to grow by 26% under the draft Local Plan (Cllr William Sunnucks's submission to the consultation).

Colchester City Council area has been the fastest growing local authority area in England since 2010 and will continue to be until the end of Office for National Statistics forecast in 2043.

Colchester Hospital does not only treat people who live in Colchester. It is also the catchment hospital for North East Essex including some of the most deprived wards in England. Deprivation leads to higher health needs and more emergency patients attending hospital services.

ESNEFT requires Government funding to begin work. So far the Government has not promised any of the millions of pounds that is needed to start building. ESNEFT will then require millions of pounds more every year to staff the extra beds and care for the patients.

Summary of evidence for immediate need for 140 inpatient beds

For these very compelling reasons, this plan cannot be found sound without 140 new hospital beds and guaranteed Government funding for Colchester Hospital. The article in the Colchester Gazette 20 February 2025 includes quotes from Cllr Sara Naylor, Bernard Jenkin MP and ESNEFT chief executive at the time, Nick Hulme, confirming that over 100 beds are needed to cope with new residents as a result of growth.

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CHARITIES JOIN FORCES TO OFFER HEALTH SUPPORT AT STATION

DRUG and alcohol recovery support charity Open Road has been out at Hythe Station with The Samaritans engaging with passengers.

Open Road's SOS and community bus parked up at the station to offer support and advice on health and wellbeing.

The team were joined by representatives of The Samaritans and in total they held conversations with 126 passengers.

The engagement was part of the Public Health Accelerator Bid, awarded to Open Road by Public Health England and Essex County Council.

Recovery worker Ellie Bland said: "We spent the afternoon speaking with the public and offering a safe space to come and talk about concerns."

"One person approached the bus and disclosed that she had recently moved to the area and was in need of treatment. I was able to support her in getting an assessment."

"This also gave me the opportunity to promote our partnership with the University of Essex in a busy student area."



Action - members of Open Road and The Samaritans at Hythe Station Image: Open Road

KFC applies to install signs at retail park

PLANS have been submitted for permission to put up signs for KFC at Colchester Retail Park.

The Gazette revealed last summer that KFC and Greggs were bidding to move into the former Shoezone unit at the retail park, in Sheepen Road.

Colchester Council gave approval in September for the unit to be split into two - a restaurant and cafe.

Shoezone left the retail park in December and now only has one location in Colchester's High Street.

Last month, it was confirmed KFC will close its High Street branch and open at the retail park in June.

On Monday, Kefco Group Limited submitted two applications to Colchester Council in connection with KFC.

One application wants to add different KFC signage to the building and a KFC logo to the Colchester Retail Park sign found at the front entrance of the site.

The other wants to create an area next to the building on the left-hand-side for a steel frame timber bin store with drop kerbs and a concrete access ramp.

The KFC building signs would be a mixture of illuminated signs and vinyl graphics.

Signage includes an image of Colonel Sanders and a KFC bucket, the KFC logo, a neon hello Colchester sign, and a "come on in" lightbox near the entrance to the unit.

A decision is yet to be made on both applications.

'Sort NHS bed crisis before homes'

By BRANDON PENNY

LEADING Conservatives have raised concerns over the hospital bed shortage in Colchester as thousands more homes look set to be built in the city.

Sara Naylor, deputy leader of the Conservatives on Colchester Council, and Harwich and North Essex MP Sir Bernard Jenkin have both raised concerns over the Local Plan housing allocation of a further 11,000 houses.

Colchester General Hospital is currently 38 beds short and within ten years the figure is projected to rise to 140 due to the rising population.

During the Local Plan meeting, Ms Naylor mentioned the current issues with the hospital.

She said: "It is fair to say those in touch with me cannot see how Colchester could absorb a further 11,000 new houses without more hospital beds, GPs, school

places and improved roads.

"Now is not the time to restate obvious national points that more houses are needed."

"It is the time for the Local Plan committee to acknowledge that Colchester is one of the smallest and newest cities with a legacy infrastructure of a market town."

"We are bursting at the seams. Colchester Hospital is already full, not just in flu season, but every day."

"Some think that's positive, that we are using the hospital well. But it isn't - it's a siren call that every member and officers of this council needs to listen to."

"NHS national policy states 92 per cent of a hospital's beds should be occupied on average - in Colchester the average is 98 per cent."

"Colchester Hospital has recently been operating at 120 per cent."

"It means our loved ones be-

ing cared for in corridors. A 2025 UK survey by the RCN, the nurses' union, finds giving 'corridor care' stresses staff."

Ms Naylor continued: "Some say reforming social care is the answer so people are discharged with support faster."

"But reform is years away as Government has ordered yet another social care review with a final report not due until 2028."

"Our local NHS experts tell us we are short of 38 beds right now."

"Within 10 years Colchester will need 140 more hospital beds. A new block will cost around £120m to build in today's money - we need to build this extra capacity now as it takes about eight years to build and open."

Ms Naylor called for the Government to guarantee funding for a new three-ward block of beds so patients who need a bed at Colchester Hospital are more likely to get one.

MP demands more hospital funding

SIR Bernard Jenkin has called on Colchester Council to focus on infrastructure ahead of more homes.

"They cannot agree to more and more houses without the necessary new schools, roads, GP surgeries and other facilities," said the Harwich and North Essex MP.

"We are already fighting a battle with the Government over the

A120/A138 link road.

"I fully share the concern from councillor Sara Naylor about the lack of hospital beds."

"I am writing to Wes Streeting, the health secretary, to insist that the NHS funds more beds for Colchester Hospital so that it can keep pace with the rising demand in this area."

Nick Hulme is chief executive of East Suffolk and North Essex

NHS Trust, which runs Colchester and Ipswich hospitals.

He said: "We welcome growth in the city of Colchester."

"Growth is positive and benefits everyone, but there is a need to ensure the infrastructure is in place, which includes acute beds at Colchester Hospital."

"There is around a 100-bed deficit between what we have now and what we will need in the future".

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