



London Ambulance Service estates vision

In 2019, the London Ambulance Service (LAS) published an Estates Vision, which set out the Board's desire to transform its estate to meet future needs. The vision, which covers ambulance stations, training centres and other facilities, builds on the recommendations of the national 2018 Carter Review which highlighted the variation in the number of operational sites ambulance trusts run and scope to increase quality and reduce costs by rationalising their estate.

The vision, which we shared with stakeholders across London following its publication, detailed how we plan to modernise our estate by replacing our existing 68 stations with a network of circa 18 state-of-the-art Ambulance Deployment Centre (ADC), operating under a new 'Hub and Spoke' model.

These ADCs, which would be supported by strategically located standby points and rest and refreshment posts for our staff and volunteers across London, would aim to have ambulance 'make ready' and light vehicle maintenance facilities, modern management, administrative, training and wellbeing facilities available to our crews at the start and end of their shift. In understanding the benefits of this model, it is really important to understand that healthcare is not provided directly from ambulance stations. As a fully mobile service whose dispatch methodology allocates the most appropriate resources to each and every incident, the majority of incidents attended by LAS are dispatched from hospitals, strategic standby points or other locations once our clinicians have finished care and treatment of their previous patient.

This means that at the start of a shift our crews will collect their vehicle from the station and travel to various standby points or to patients directly in the area - the locations of which are dictated by modelled patient demand. Often our crews will therefore only return to the ambulance station again at the end of their shift.

Through developing ADCs, which are equipped with co-located facilities and access to management, wellbeing services and equipment, we believe this will help ensure we can get more ambulance crews out on the road faster and in turn, improve the standard of care we provide to our patients across London. This model is already successfully used across other ambulance services, including West Midlands Ambulance Service and South East Coast Ambulance Service.

In June 2021, LAS shared with stakeholders in North East London and our North West London Commissioners our ambitions to take the first step towards achieving this vision through the development of our pioneer ADC in North East London. We shared how LAS was in the very early stages of realising this vision, with a desired site chosen for exploration, yet still subject to planning permission.

In developing an ADC in North East London we then planned to merge our existing stations of Romford, Ilford, Hornchurch and Becontree. Once the new station was up and running, this plan would have resulted in the subsequent permanent closure of these four ambulance stations. The 'Romford Group' of ambulance stations was chosen as the first site for development as the current Romford Ambulance Station location is in a site designated for major regeneration as part of Havering Borough Council's proposed Bridge Close Regeneration Scheme, so a new location is needed.

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NHS Trust

It is important to clarify that we have not embarked on specific plans to create an ADC in North Central London, further than what has been set out in our Estates Vision in 2019.

With the Trust experiencing significant demand and pressures on our 111 and 999 services this year, with June, July and August being three of the top five busiest months ever, we recently announced (29 September) our decision to pause our plans on our estates vision and our first pioneer site in North East London, including the withdrawal of our planning application on the site of the proposed ADC. This means we can prioritise our resources to support our frontline operations this winter, and be there for Londoners when they need us most.

Over the winter, we will review our existing estate and our plans for how this will evolve in the future to meet patients' needs as effectively and efficiently as possible across the capital, including North East London. As part of this work, we will engage and, as appropriate, consult with the public and other partners on any proposed plans to move or close stations. This includes continuing to work closely with the London Ambulance Service Public and Patients Council, which provides a voice for patients, the public and carers in the design, development and delivery of LAS services, who we have been working closely with on this programme since August 2020.

More information about our estates vision and our recent announcement to pause plans can be found here: <https://www.londonambulance.nhs.uk/about-us/our-plans-for-the-future/upgrading-our-ambulance-stations-modernise-estate/>