Epsom & St Helier: Statement from Cllr Paul Kennedy, Liberal Democrat Parliamentary Spokesperson for Mole Valley Constituency

Please avoid a healthcare "black hole" in Mole Valley.

I understand that my colleague Cllr Elizabeth Daly has submitted a statement on behalf of Mole Valley District Council, which emphasises that Epsom Hospital is the most convenient site for many Mole Valley residents. This is particularly the case in the North of Mole Valley, which is also the focus of Government housing targets.

Mole Valley Constituency includes the whole of Mole Valley District excluding Ashtead, as well as the Eastern wards of Guildford Borough, which are also the focus of planned extra housing over the next decade and beyond.

Mole Valley Constituency contains no major hospitals, and primary healthcare is severely stretched as a result of national GP shortages and other local factors, including a large elderly population, with many surgeries heavily oversubscribed.

I welcome the extra investment, but there is a danger that decisions outside Mole Valley will leave a "black hole", particularly for residents in Effingham, Bookham and Fetcham who would be left furthest from any major hospital if a decision is made to locate the proposed NECH in Sutton or St Helier.

Epsom & St Helier Hospitals and their staff have done a wonderful and very courageous job in the face of this terrible pandemic, and we all owe them a huge debt of gratitude.

Epsom & St Helier also stepped in last year to secure a GP surgery in Fetcham which was at risk of closure. I hope this support will continue even if the selection of a NECH means that Fetcham is no longer part of its catchment area.

I was also pleased to see the reopening of the rehabilitation facility at Headley Court to support patients as they recover from the virus.

It is vital that we learn the lessons of the pandemic and ensure that we invest in developing world-class primary and secondary healthcare provision, both nationally and to support Mole Valley residents.