Dear Dame Fiona,

We write as local General Practitioners who oppose the OUH proposals to downgrade the Horton Hospital, including, but not limited to, consultant led obstetrics.

We are opposed to the proposals on the grounds of safety, sustainability and the reduction in access to basic health care and choice for our patients, which will affect especially the most vulnerable.

We maintain that a midwife led unit with a delivery rate of 450+ per annum, which is 25 miles away from the nearest obstetrician and paediatrician, is not safe. Through no fault of the midwives working in such a unit, GPs would have to consider the wisdom of recommending mothers to this service. Numbers would drop further and the service soon become non-viable.

We believe that these proposals, and the tenor of discussions relating to them, pose a risk to the overall integrity and sustainability of The Horton as a general hospital. They undermine the morale of its staff and impact adversely on recruitment and retention of high quality personnel. Far from creating excellence in health care in the north of the county (where the population is increasing), they betray a lack of will, vision and imagination and consequently degrade it.

We feel the proposals

- will result in services which are unsafe and unsustainable into the future.

- are not in the best interest of our patients who will be faced with serious obstacles in both accessing services and visiting sick relatives. The most vulnerable will be hardest hit.

- will increase demands on the ambulance services and its crews and on already overstretched departments at the JRH.
- will have consequences both in medico-legal and human terms that are far reaching and expensive.

- adhere to an outmoded model of centralisation that ignores more modern trends to bring services closer to patients.

- ignore the clear recommendations of the Davidson Inquiry and the prerequisites of the agreement to merge into a single trust.

We, the GPs of North Oxfordshire, request that, with immediate effect, you use whatever power and influence you have to reverse these proposals to downgrade The Horton.

Dr Emma Haskew
For and on behalf of
The GPs of

- Bloxham Surgery and Hook Norton Surgery
- Chipping Norton Surgery
- Cropredy Surgery
- Deddington Surgery
- Fenny Compton & Shenington Surgery
- Hightown Surgery
- Horsefair Surgery and Middleton Cheney Surgery
- Shipston Medical Centre
- Sibford Surgery
- West Bar Surgery
- Windrush Surgery
- Woodlands Surgery
- Wychwood Surgery