

Concerns are raised about delays for emergency patients

'How can they justify closing Chase Farm A&E when other units are already overstretched?'

By Kim Brett-Richards

EMERGENCY ambulance journeys to hospital will take extra vital minutes if the accident and emergency unit at Chase Farm closes.

It currently takes up to 17 minutes for an ambulance to get to the hospital, in The Ridgeway, Enfield, from anywhere in the borough.

But in the future it could take an extra seven minutes to get an emergency patient to another A&E department if Chase Farm's unit closes under new proposals.

These timings, which were revealed by Richard Webber from the London Ambulance Service, were met by gasps from the public at Enfield Council's health scrutiny panel meeting last Tuesday evening.

It was revealed that the borough's overstretched A&E departments already have to divert blue light ambulances to other hospitals when there is a high influx of patients.

Campaigner and Conservative parliamentary spokesman for Enfield North Nick de Bois said: "They admit that ambulances are regularly being diverted to other hospitals because A&E units are already being overstretched, and yet the hospital chiefs are still trying to justify closing Chase Farm A&E and quite probably the hospital itself."

Geoff Hinchley, A&E consultant for



Extra risk? Journeys to A&E could be up to seven minutes longer

Barnet and Chase Farm Hospitals NHS Trust, defended the revelation saying: "Paramedics are active carers. The fact that you are in an ambulance for an extra seven minutes, well so what. There are few cases where I would say this is an issue."

The meeting, which was meant to discuss Enfield Primary Care Trust's plans to bring more hospital care into the community, turned into a debate about the strategy board's four options for the future of the hospital.

Of the four options which will be

put to a citizens' jury on November 10, and consulted on in the new year, three of them will see Chase Farm lose its A&E department and the fourth will see it lose children's and maternity services.

At the end of the meeting, campaigner Irene Wilson presented Averil Dongworth, chief executive of the trust, with another 5,000 signatures in protest at the closure of the hospital's A&E. The total number of signatures on her petition is now 27,470.

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