

15 April 2024

Steve Brine MP

Chair of the Health and Social Care Committee

Re: Rosalind Franklin Laboratory

Dear Mr Brine,

I am writing to update you on the latest developments relating to the Rosalind Franklin Laboratory (RFL). I know this is a topic the Committee has expressed a strong interest in recently and which has been discussed on a number of occasions.

As you are aware, alongside other laboratories within the lighthouse laboratory network, the RFL supported the provision of diagnostic testing capacity during the Covid-19 pandemic. On its peak day RFL delivered some 70,000 tests out of a total capacity across the country of around 850,000. It was scaled down as the threat from Covid-19 receded, lateral flow point of care testing was introduced and the demand for testing significantly decreased. This was in order to ensure value for money and the exercise of good commercial judgement within appropriate health protection provision.

In January 2023, RFL ceased testing on the basis that the capacity was no longer required to support testing policy for the current Covid-19 response. DHSC and UKHSA considered options on the long-term future requirements for testing capacity and for the potential use of the site on an ongoing basis for life science applications, including with the NHS, other Government users, academia, and potential third-party partners.

No parties have put forward the capital to support a transfer of the lease. With further consideration of the appropriate design of national testing requirements for future health protection provision, early surrender of the RFL site to the landlord has been agreed and UKHSA have enacted the appropriate contractual process. Specialist equipment will be retained to support ongoing pandemic preparedness work.

The early exit from the lease, prior to the lease break in November 2025, is in line with normal practice for surplus public sector estates as an effective means of minimising ongoing cost and the related risk to the Exchequer.

At the recent Committee hearing, I provided details of our wider pandemic preparedness plans and how these fit with cross-departmental planning. As ever, I look forward to updating the Committee further should you have any questions.

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dame Jennifer Harries DBE

Chief Executive Officer

UK Health Security Agency