

# STATES OF JERSEY



## **FUTURE HOSPITAL: RESCINDMENT OF GLOUCESTER STREET AS PREFERRED SITE (P.5/2019) – AMENDMENT**

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**Lodged au Greffe on 5th February 2019  
by the Connétable of St. Helier**

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**STATES GREFFE**

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**PAGE 2 –**

After the words “Westaway Court” insert the words “; to agree that the new General Hospital shall not be located at People’s Park, Lower Park, Victoria Park, Westmount Gardens or Parade Gardens, in St. Helier”.

CONNÉTABLE OF ST. HELIER

**Note:** After this amendment, the proposition would read as follows –

**THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –**

to refer to their Act dated 1st December 2016, which approved in principle the site location for the new Jersey General Hospital, and their Act of 13th December 2017, in which the preferred scheme and funding was approved, and to agree to rescind its decision that the site location should be the current Jersey General Hospital site with an extension along the east side of Kensington Place and other nearby sites, including Westaway Court; to agree that the new General Hospital shall not be located at People’s Park, Lower Park, Victoria Park, Westmount Gardens or Parade Gardens, in St. Helier; and to authorise the Minister for Treasury and Resources to make the necessary changes to the terms of the Hospital Construction Fund to facilitate the payment of costs incurred as a consequence of this rescindment and the winding-up and decommissioning of the works associated with the previous scheme and the continuation of other elements necessary to the overall project, irrespective of the eventual site location.

## REPORT

### 1. Introduction

My proposition, [P.3/2016](#), **People's Park: removal from list of sites under consideration for future new hospital**, was due to be debated just over 3 years ago, but I withdrew it following assurances from the then Minister for Health and Social Services that People's Park would not be included in the list of sites under consideration for new hospital at that time. Since then, and especially since the refusal of planning permission for a new hospital in Gloucester Street last month, arguments have been advanced in the media for People's Park and St. Helier's other green spaces to be looked at again as alternative sites for the new facility. The report of the planning inspector who conducted the Public Inquiry into the Gloucester Street planning application may also give some encouragement to those who would wish to re-open discussions about the possibility of building our new hospital on People's Park. If [P.5/2019](#) is approved the threat level will be raised further as far as St. Helier's parks are concerned, especially when it becomes clear that they are the only locations which equal the Gloucester Street site in terms of accessibility. It is for these reasons that I wish the debate to be had on whether it is acceptable to sacrifice the town's amenity space to make way for the new hospital.

### 2. Open space in St. Helier

The shortage of amenity space in St. Helier was highlighted in the Open Space Study carried out for the Planning Department in 2008 which states that 'Amenity Greenspace – Provision varies from parish to parish, however, under supply in many of the rural parishes is offset by good supply to natural greenspace and/or beaches. The under provision of amenity greenspace is more of an issue in the parishes with larger urban areas, and this is the case in St. Helier (minus 11.67 vergées) and to a lesser extent St. Clement (minus 1.08 vergées)'.

I have sought to remedy the situation in recent years by resisting the loss of amenity space in Springfield Park ([P.125/2014](#) – not debated as the proposition was accepted by the Minister for Education, Deputy P.J.D. Ryan of St. John, and the plans changed); attempting to have the Millennium Town Park extended ([P.156/2014](#) – debated 20th January 2015); and a similar objective in my 7th amendment to the Draft Strategic Plan ([P.27/2015\(Amd\)\(7\)](#) – debated 29th April 2015), and the arguments made in those documents and in the transcripts of the debates on Hansard are equally relevant here. The arguments made in these reports and propositions, including P.3/2016, and the debates, are more relevant than ever: given the policy of the States to concentrate new housing developments in St. Helier, the Island's capital needs to conserve the amenity space and parkland that it has, and to increase provision, if the future residents of the town are not to be short-changed when it comes to amenity space, with all of the social consequences that go with town cramming.

The excellent and welcome initiative by Andium Homes to purchase the former Jersey Gas site and to announce a reduction of nearly two thirds in the housing density proposed for the site in order to allow the Millennium Town Park to expand by 50% ([P.114/2017](#), approved by the States 17th January 2018) does not alter the situation: the extra open space to be created in the northern part of St. Helier will hardly cater for the needs of the residents of all the new homes that are under construction or in the pipeline in the immediate vicinity of the park; it cannot possibly be seen to mitigate the loss of open space that would be involved if the new hospital were to be built on People's Park

or indeed at Parade Gardens, though development of the latter area, as with Lower Park, would require the consent of the Seigneur de Mèlèches.

### **3. The Planning Inspector's Report to the Minister for the Environment (10th December 2018)**

As well as evaluating the revised planning application to build the new hospital in Gloucester Street, the Planning Inspector was asked to consider whether any of the alternative sites were better in planning terms. The relevant section of the report is reproduced in the attached Appendix, but the key judgement of each of the sites is shown in italics below:

- St. Saviour's Hospital '*would fundamentally conflict with the Island Plan;*'
- Overdale '*would create significant challenges with the Island Plan;*'
- Warwick Farm '*would involve major challenges to the Island Plan and could only be realistically considered, in Planning terms, if more sustainably located sites were demonstrably not available or workable;*'

Of the remaining 2 options considered, the Waterfront and People's Park, the inspector begins by pointing out their superiority to St. Saviour's Hospital, Warwick Farm and Overdale because of their central location: 'Due to their sustainable locations, they both score well in terms of the Island Plan's strategic focus (as does the application proposal). However, there are challenges with each.

- The Waterfront '*raises some significant Island Plan challenges,*' while
- People's Park '*along with all the others, raises Island Plan tensions and challenges.*'

It is unclear why the inspector has prefaced his judgement of the People's Park option, 'Along with all the others,' as the terms in which it is scored, which arise out of his analysis of the site, suggest that 'the final alternative' is, in fact, the best alternative. In the summary that follows the individual site analysis, the inspector is more equivocal: 'in Planning terms, there is not one 'stand out' alternative site option that would be clearly superior in Planning terms,' he states. 'However, there are a number of realistic alternative site options that could physically accommodate the new hospital ... There is no perfect site, but there are alternatives that could deliver the hospital project with different environmental effects and consequences.'

This, it seems to me, leaves the door open as far as a fresh attack on People's Park is concerned, were all Gloucester Street options to be ruled out by P.5/2019.

### **4. The value of People's Park**

People's Park is the jewel in the crown of the Island's urban parks. (A rival case might be made for Howard Davis Park, but it is on the other side of town and is also a closed formal park; it hosts some large events but does not have the versatility and accessibility of People's Park.) People's Park is used for an extraordinary number and variety of events each year with some, like the Portuguese Food Festival, attracting tens of thousands of visitors during the course of an event; it is a vital component in the Island's

major annual festivals, including the Battle of Flowers, the International Motor Festival, the Real Ale festival and the International Air Display; it is also ideal for sporting events, playing a key role in the NatWest Island Games, and hosting a cyclo-cross events. It is used by local schools and sporting clubs for football practice, sports days and so on. The park is also a much used and valued area of grass for thousands of residents and visitors who use it for walking, jogging, picnicking and recreation. Together with the Lower Park and the wooded backdrop of Westmount Gardens, it is of important aesthetic value in an increasingly built up environment.

In the past there have been attempts, well meant, no doubt, to cobble together a number of potential replacement areas in order to make the loss of People's Park acceptable: an extension to the Millennium Town Park has already been discussed, but the central plank in this argument is that the site of the present hospital could deliver the replacement to the park. If we set aside the question of where children would play and events take place during the construction and demolition phases, this would still leave the town with a much inferior and less versatile park sandwiched between Gloucester Street, Patriotic Street, Kensington Place and the Parade.

## **5. Parade Gardens, Victoria Park, Lower Park and Westmount Gardens**

The remainder of St. Helier's parks and gardens are added to this amendment in order to safeguard them from the future development of the new hospital, as the same arguments hold true for conserving them as important open space in which town residents, workers and visitors can relax and take exercise. The extent of the Parish of St. Helier's open space at Westmount has been extended in recent years following the land-swap that was agreed between the States and the Parish to allow a new electricity substation to be built in Westmount Gardens. This has extended the woodlands to include Val Andre which is in the vicinity of Overdale, although the public maintains a pedestrian and vehicular right of way from St. Aubin's Inner Road to the valley of Val André over the track that runs alongside the King George V. Homes.

## **6. Conclusion**

If the Minister for Health and Social Services is working behind the scenes to find a combination of separate areas of open space whose sum will equal or even surpass the size of People's Park, it seems inconceivable that such a package would be acceptable to the majority of Islanders, let alone to St. Helier parishioners. The importance of People's Park lies in its being a single area of open space with an attractive wooded backdrop and views down to the sea and Elizabeth Castle, a park which is accessible, versatile and robust. There is nowhere else like it. There are, however, alternative sites for the new hospital. The improvement of St. Helier remains a priority of the States, with particular emphasis now placed on St. Helier's environmental strategic quality as a place in which to live, work and visit. People's Park is a vital part of what St. Helier offers the people of Jersey, and the States are accordingly asked to send a clear message to the Minister for Health and Social Services that it is not to be built upon.

## **Financial and manpower implications**

None quantifiable at the time of presenting this amendment.

Open Space to the West of St Helier



**Extract from the Report of the Planning Inspector**

*High level assessment of the alternative sites*

363. My note of 23 July 2018 expressed my view that any consideration of alternative sites evidence should be high level, strictly Planning based and proportionate. It is simply focused on the question of whether there are any obviously better sites in Planning terms. I have undertaken my assessment in this manner through a review of the submitted written evidence, listening to submissions at the Inquiry and through undertaking site inspections of the main alternative sites.

364. The first alternative site I assessed was the St. Saviours Hospital option. Whilst I can understand advocates saying that it is an established hospital site, currently vacant and available, and that it would provide a therapeutic healing environment, the pursuit of this option would fundamentally conflict with the Island Plan. Its remoteness from the main centre of the Island's population, the potential destruction of a fine Grade 1 Listed building, and the likely serious impacts on the character and appearance of the area, would conflict with a raft of strategic and other policies in the Island Plan.

365. The second alternative I assessed was the Overdale hospital site. Whilst this is an existing hospital location and within the built-up area, it is physically separated from the main town and the topography makes it inaccessible, particularly by walking and cycling modes of travel. The intensification of development required to accommodate the hospital, combined with the elevated ridge location within the Green Backdrop Zone, would result in very significant adverse visual impacts. There could also be adverse residential amenity and biodiversity impacts. This option would create significant challenges with the Island Plan.

366. The third alternative I considered was the 'dual site' option which would split the new hospital between the Overdale and Gloucester Street sites. Whilst this could lessen the Planning impacts (compared to one large building), I understand that it is not considered to be an operationally feasible option. Accordingly, I have not considered it further.

367. The fourth alternative site I explored was Warwick Farm. This large greenfield site is situated in the countryside to the north of St. Helier. It is within the Green Zone where there is presumption against all forms of development, although the associated Policy NE 7 does allow possible exceptions for 'strategic development', which could include a new general hospital. Whilst it could physically accommodate a large hospital and allow for expansion, it would conflict with the Island Plan's strategic focus of new development in the built-up area. Its location would not be particularly accessible or sustainable. It is likely that visual impacts would be significant and far reaching, given its relative elevation above the town. This option would involve major challenges to the Island Plan and could only be realistically considered, in Planning terms, if more sustainably located sites were demonstrably not available or workable.

368. The remaining two sites I assessed are both in relatively central locations within St. Helier. These were the Waterfront and Peoples Park. Due to their sustainable locations, they both score well in terms of the Island Plan's strategic focus (as does the application proposal). However, there are challenges with each.

369. The Waterfront option that has been formally appraised embraces the site elements known as Zephyrus, Crosslands and the seaside park, Les Jardin de la Mer. However, others have suggested variants which would embrace undeveloped parts of the Esplanade car park, connected with a high level bridge link over the A1 dual carriageway and thereby avoiding the need to sacrifice Les Jardin de la Mer. Whatever permutation was employed, it would raise significant Planning issues and would challenge the land use, urban design and economic ambitions for this key part of the town. Accommodating such a large institutional building on a prominent waterfront site would have dramatic and far reaching impacts. The loss of Les Jardin de la Mer would be a significant conflict with Planning policy (SCO 4) and it is difficult to see how it could be re-provided / compensated. It is likely that there would also be heritage impacts, including harm to the setting of Elizabeth Castle. This option raises some significant Island Plan challenges.

370. The final alternative I considered was Peoples Park. I am well aware that this site option is locally controversial. I am also aware that, whilst scoring well as an option in earlier assessment work, it was withdrawn from consideration by the then Health Minister, in the light of public opposition. In pure Planning terms, the location is sustainable, accessible and very close to the existing hospital. The key Planning issues would centre around the complete loss of an existing open space, which is also a Grade 3 Listed space. A case could be made that the public benefit of the new hospital justified these losses and the existing hospital site could, in part, provide compensatory new park provision. Its development for a new hospital would significantly change the townscape in this part of St. Helier, although the West Mount escarpment would mitigate some of the effects and impacts of large buildings on this site. There would be some adverse impacts on residential amenities, views and vistas and the settings of Listed buildings. This option, along with all the others, raises Island Plan tensions and challenges.

### ***Main Issue (IX) - Summary Findings***

371. My assessment is that, in Planning terms, there is not one 'stand out' alternative site option that would be clearly superior in Planning terms. However, there are a number of realistic alternative site options that could physically accommodate the new hospital. Clearly, each of these would avoid, or at least radically reduce, the adverse demolition / construction impacts, including the disruption to the existing hospital. Each would also, rather obviously, avoid the scheme specific Planning harm that I have identified with the current proposal. However, each of the alternatives would come with its own set of significant adverse environmental effects and consequent tensions with the Island Plan.

372. The presumed environmental effects, and the severity of tensions with the Island Plan, would be very different for each alternative site option. Some of the alternatives would raise quite fundamental and strategic tensions, whereas others could be seen as broadly in line with the plan but still likely to result in some significant adverse effects.

373. Making comparisons between the application proposal and the alternatives is not a straightforward matter, as there is only one worked up application proposal. Furthermore, it is inordinately difficult, to weigh one set of adverse environmental effects on one site to a different set of adverse effects on another, without entering the political realm.



374. The initial alternative sites question that I posed was: *are there alternative site options that would clearly avoid those adverse effects or substantially reduce them?* My finding is that, based on the evidence before me, the answer is ‘no’. There is no perfect site, but there are alternatives that could deliver the hospital project with different environmental effects and consequences.