

2020.09.08

2 Deputy J.H. Perchard of St. Saviour of the Chief Minister regarding shortlisted hospital sites: (OQ.206/2020)

Which of the shortlisted sites, if any, would require residents to leave their homes in order for the new hospital to be built?

Senator L.J. Farnham (Deputy Chief Minister - rapporteur):

The Chief Minister has asked me to take this question, if that is okay with Deputy Perchard.

Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Yes.

Senator L.J. Farnham:

As Members will be aware, the shortlist of hospital sites was reduced from 5 to 2 last Friday. The remaining sites, Overdale and People's Park, are the least likely to have an impact on nearby residents in the terms that the Deputy is asking about. Further technical and financial investigations are now underway in relation to these remaining 2 sites. Once we have received this additional and detailed information we will be in a position to provide more clarity about the potential impact on neighbours of a new hospital. I know that all of us would wish to avoid impact or compulsory purchase on Islanders as far as possible, however a building of this size and magnitude might well require road or access adjustments to the surrounding environment and once the States Assembly have selected a site it will of course be a priority to continue to keep landowners and neighbours fully informed of any implications as the project progresses.

4.2.1 Deputy J.H. Perchard:

Is the Deputy Chief Minister aware that there is in fact a written record of conversations had with residents who might be affected by the building of certain sites and that their willingness perhaps to move is rated?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I know we have been keeping neighbours of all the potential shortlisted sites fully informed of the process. The States appointed land agents to discuss with neighbours the implications of any potential purchaser. So I know conversations have been ongoing but I have yet to have the full details of those conversations shared. I think we can only go so far at this stage, conversations with neighbours can only go so far until the States have decided on the site and once that decision has been made, which I very much hope will be this November as scheduled, we will be able to progress those conversations with a means to an end.

4.2.2 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Can the Minister commit himself now to guarantee that any expenses required of residents in moving away from this area will be fully met?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I am not in a position to make that commitment right now. Although I would fully expect that any inconvenience or upheaval required by neighbours, that the process will ensure that no unnecessary expense is incurred by them from requirements of the project. I will look into that because I think it is important, as we move closer to the project, that we do reassure neighbours and I would think it

would only be fair for the States to act properly and cover costs in those sort of circumstances, but I cannot give that absolute assurance at this stage.

4.2.3 Deputy G.P. Southern:

Would he go further and commit himself to providing compensation for any stress that may be involved, especially moving elderly people from what they saw as lifetime homes?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I am afraid I cannot give those assurances. Financial compensation for stress is not in my gift. Ultimately I think it would possibly be in the gift of the Assembly. What I can give assurance of is that any process that requires people to move will be conducted properly, carefully and with the best interests of the residents at heart and in mind.

4.2.4 Connétable A.S. Crowcroft of St. Helier:

The Deputy Chief Minister says that the discussions will be handled carefully. Would he agree with me that that certainly has not been the case to date and a former Assistant Chief Minister indeed talked about driving a road up involving a demolition of people's houses? Is it not also the case that Andium Homes are already speaking to potential clients of theirs and how long is the Deputy Chief Minister going to wait before having conversations with people whose lives and dwellings may be affected?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

As I have previously stated, it is difficult to have those conversations until the States has made a final decision. I do accept that the Constable of St. John, albeit in good faith, did cause some concern and upset to residents previously, which is why we have been especially careful with the new process to keep neighbours and property or landowners within the vicinity of any potential site fully informed. That is what we did after the 5 sites were shortlisted and that is what we are going to continue to do. I would like to reassure the Constable and Members, we will stay on top of that process and make sure that any upheaval, if there is to be any upheaval to residents or neighbours, then we will work very closely with them. We will make sure it is handled absolutely properly and correctly.

4.2.5 Deputy M.R. Higgins of St. Helier:

The Constable of St. Helier has entered into the area that I was going to discuss. How can the Assistant Chief Minister ask us to accept the reassurances when, to be perfectly honest, the 5 sites included 3 that were non-starters from the beginning and the other one was pretty much the same? How can we accept what is being said about the reassurances for the people when we know that the owners, Andium, of some properties are starting to discuss these things and these people are being kept in the dark for so long?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Firstly, I take issue with the Deputy's assumption and opinion that 3 or possibly 4 of the sites are no-hoppers. They would not have made the shortlist if they were no-hoppers. I know that is a popular myth that has been pedalled, especially by those States Members and others with interests in the particular areas. But the process we have deployed this time has been open. It was a sequential process with a procedure and the priorities from the new site put in place by the systems panel, and the shortlisting carried on by our panel of experts and ratified by the political oversight group, and then Council of Ministers. So at no time were any of those sites put on with any view that they would be no-hoppers. Every site was considered. The shortlisting process has now delivered the final

2 and I undertake, as does the oversight group and the Council of Ministers, to ensure that any communication with neighbours and landowners in the vicinity of the sites will receive full communication as the project progresses. But I would like to stress, it is impossible to start entering proper negotiations along those lines until the Assembly has selected the final site.

4.2.6 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Can the Assistant Chief Minister tell us the role of U.K. (United Kingdom) consultants because I believe on one of the panels there were no Jersey people on it at all. They were U.K. people who were deciding on the sites that were going to be accepted early on?

The Bailiff:

I am sorry, Deputy, I do not allow that. That is too far outside the parameters of the original question and I am very conscious that we have a large number of questions to fit within. You can obviously raise that in the one hour that will be available to Members later on.

4.2.7 Connétable D.W. Mezbourian of St. Lawrence:

The Minister has referred to technical and financial assessments that have been undertaken as well as to conversations that have been had with residents. Were those conversations recorded in the written assessments and will those reports be shared with Members?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Sorry, I am not sure I fully understand the question. Is the Constable referring to conversations that were allegedly had with her parishioners in relation to the site at Millbrook or ...?

The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

No, the Minister referred to the conversations that have been had with residents of all the 5 sites that were identified. So my question is: are those conversations referred to in the financial and technical assessment reports that the Minister referred to? Will those reports be shared with Members?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

A log of all conversations will have been kept. Depending on the subject, and I am thinking of data protection here and the protection of residents, that information I think may well be shared. There is certainly no resistance for that to be shared from our perspective. Of course we need to make sure that the other parties would be happy to have that information shared. Of course, as we move on now to more detailed technical and financial assessments for the final 2 sites, far greater diligence will be necessary in logging and detailing all of the technical and financial aspects because that information is going to be absolutely essential for when we have ultimately the debate on choosing the final site. As I said to Members recently in previous correspondence, I will provide separate briefings as we move towards that time, keeping all Members updated.

4.2.8 The Connétable of St. Lawrence:

May I ask for clarification from the Minister please? I am sorry, the sound is very poor and he kept breaking up so I was not clear on what he was advising Members. What I want to know is: will the technical and financial assessments that have been undertaken on the 5 selected sites be made available to Members so that we have the reasons that the 3 sites that have been rejected were actually rejected for.

Senator L.J. Farnham:

I am having trouble hearing the Connétable as well. But the answer to that is, yes, we said the process is transparent and we are happy to share all information that is relevant. The only caveat I would put in is private conversations with residents might require their permission to protect their privacy, before that is shared. But certainly all of the workings and the selection process will be available.

[10:00]

4.2.9 Deputy J.H. Perchard:

How was the willingness to move rating calculated for residents and what bearing will this rating have on the final decision of the site?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

The impact on residents is a very important aspect of any choice that ultimately will be made. I do not think it is any accident that the 2 sites left are likely the 2 sites to have the least impact on nearby residents and neighbours. However, having said that, it is only a part of the process because, perhaps more importantly, and I do not say that easily because as we have said, nobody wants to compulsory purchase land or property, the suitability, technical and financial aspects of building this new hospital, which will provide healthcare for Islanders in decades to come, the impact on neighbours has been a part of the process and decision-making process but equally there are a lot more other aspects that have to be taken into consideration.

The Bailiff:

Deputy Doublet has raised in the chat with me the question as to whether her question can be put to the end. In the circumstances I am prepared to list it at the end if the Deputy is not available to ask it, but I should give warning to anyone who is thinking of that, that there is a very good chance any question at the end will simply not be reached within the 2 hours available.