

20.11.02

20 Deputy G.J. Truscott of the Assistant Chief Minister regarding the plans to address traffic around Overdale in the event the site was confirmed as the location of the new Hospital. (OQ.313/2020)

Will the Minister advise what plans, if any, are being considered to reduce the level of traffic and to deal with traffic issues around Overdale in the event that the area is confirmed as the site for the new hospital?

Senator L.J. Farnham (Assistant Chief Minister):

Access and transport is a key issue that will be addressed in full detail when the Assembly has chosen the site for our new hospital. Outline options for transport links are outlined in the site selection report that was published early in October as an appendix to P.123. That is a proposition that proposes Overdale as the preferred site, and I can refer Members to pages 63, 64 and 67 of that report. An initial audit as part of the site evaluation process looked at public transport, at walking, cycling and the local highway network. That report illustrates Westmount Road is the preferred option for primary access to Overdale but that significant road improvements would be necessary. However, it also recognises that there are opportunities to improve access by foot, cycle and public transport in order to limit the traffic flow. Page 76 of the report identifies that enhancements to the existing infrastructure, including pavements and pathways, are necessary, a shuttle bus service, micro mobility and e-bike hire, and other new travel initiatives. Other options we have heard about such as a funicular railway have been mentioned in the report only in passing but are not part of the proposal for the main hospital project. Initial analysis of traffic flows has been undertaken but full and further detailed traffic flow modelling and design can commence after the Assembly has selected the site.

4.20.1 Deputy G.J. Truscott:

I think that is the tricky one for me. It is that we have to select the site and then we get the details. Hospitals are by their very nature significant generators of vehicle movements. Tower Road, St. John's Road, Old Saint John's Road are already heavily congested, often gridlocked at school drop-off and pick-up times. The said roads are narrow with various pinch points and inadequate pavement provision. Does the Minister agree that road safety is of paramount importance and could the Minister assure the Assembly that the road infrastructure in the Overdale area will be given the full consideration it plainly deserves?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Yes, I can absolutely reassure Members that is the case. Some early research has been carried out to forecast the capacity of several roads and junctions in the vicinity and the report deals with how those areas would also be improved to ease traffic flow to take account of the additional traffic to the potential new hospital site. That work would have the additional benefit of freeing up or improving those road networks and junctions at all times, not just for the hospital but as we know, on the inner road, Victoria Avenue and along the bottom of People's Park, and the roads the Deputy mentioned, they are and can be heavily congested at rush hour, so any improvements will help to alleviate that as well.

4.20.2 Deputy J.M. Maçon:

Being a St. Saviour representative, I am certainly aware of the impact of traffic, but I wonder if the Deputy Chief Minister could explain, with regard to any potential shuttle bus up to the hospital site,

whether options to include a wider town hoppla bus service that could be tied into it would be considered under the plans.

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Yes, I think many options will be considered. I think we have an opportunity to be innovative here and to try to be a visionary, so we will look at ... and I understand the Minister for Infrastructure is already working on aspects of this, but we have an opportunity to provide some new and different and very effective types of transport. It does not just have to be transport running from town to the hospital and back. We could, with careful consideration, produce some new routes, some new public transport routes, some circular routes that include the hospital, and include them into existing public transport routes as well.

Deputy J.M. Maçon:

I thank the Minister for his reply.

4.20.3 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Could the Deputy Chief Minister give an undertaking that before we debate the Future Hospital site at Overdale he will bring to the States the information about the impact on the People's Park and if it does include removing the parking spaces and widening the road and other effects on the park that he will bring that to Members so we have that information before we debate Overdale?

Senator L.J. Farnham:

Yes, all of that information is included in the proposition and the report. As Members will know, we are carrying out a number of presentations between now and 17th November where we are attempting to share with Members as much information as possible and provide Members with the opportunity to ask questions. But all that information is available and I am happy to speak with any Members offline to run through that detail if they so wish, including Deputy Higgins.

Deputy M.R. Higgins:

I just say to the Minister that if it is not available I will be voting against. Thank you.

Deputy G.J. Truscott:

For the moment I have no further questions. Thank you.