

Public Submission – 06.01.21

Dear Scrutiny Panel

Please find below my responses to the questions referred to in your Press Release dated 4 January 2021.

Will you be affected by the proposed access route to Overdale? If so, how?

As a proximate resident to Overdale and a taxpayer, my starting point is that I am not necessarily opposed to the siting of the future hospital on the Overdale site.

However, Jersey's overall health ultimately derives from the success of the financial services industry and being able to attract the brightest and best to Jersey, which means staying competitive and balancing the books. In view of increasing threats and uncertainty, it is vital that a fiscally responsible decision is made regarding the future hospital. It seems to me that insufficient weight is being placed on the significant additional costs associated with the preferred site access arrangements via Westmount.

As a resident of [REDACTED] (already overburdened with traffic given its narrowness and layout), I suggest that traffic mitigation measures (e.g. no through road except for access signs and speed bumps) need to be put in place on Old St John Road to prevent the "rat run" problem getting even worse as a result of persons travelling by car from the town centre to the hospital. This should be done in any event notwithstanding the siting of the future hospital. It is only a matter of time before a pedestrian is hit by a speeding car on Old St Johns Rd.

How do you think the access route will affect the homes, leisure facilities and surrounding areas and the overall impact on the landscape

The actual hospital would improve the landscape at Overdale by clearing up the asbestos infested buildings which have been idle for many years. This would be at the cost of some wildlife habitat.

It is difficult to regard the access arrangements via Westmount as being anything other than aesthetically catastrophic. The proposals risk creating an eyesore which would be visible across vast swathes of the town.

The arrangements will significantly reduce the amenity of People's Park which is an important green space in the west of the town and is well used in summers for events creating community cohesion and promoting well-being. The very character of People's Park will be hollowed out by the proposed layout changes. It would no longer be a desirable place to spend leisure time.

All of this appears to me to be unnecessary if an equally good hospital can be built at Warwick Farm or elsewhere without destroying the amenity of a prominent and historic hill, St Helier Bowling Club and the People's Park. Most cities and towns in the UK appear to function with campus style hospitals which are located out of town, town centre infirmaries having been steadily reduced since the foundation of the NHS.

Alternatively, different access proposals to Westmount could be considered, e.g. by building a ramped embankment in the meadow behind the King George V homes. Given the proposed environmental

degradation at Westmount and the impact on lots of people's homes (up to 60 according to ROK Construction), why are the King George V homes being treated as a sacred cow? Westmount Hill, being the position where Major Pierson mustered the troops before the Battle of Jersey is incontrovertibly of more historic value than the King George V homes.

The ramp arrangement which I propose could potentially be temporary and achieved using scaffolding if the access changes are really only required for the construction phase of the hospital. In overall terms, access to the site from the Inner Road must be preferable to channelling hospital traffic from the west of the Island into the already heavily congested urban core of St Helier and causing the destruction / desecration of Westmount and the People's Park.

Has any thought been given to siting the hospital on reclaimed land at La Colette? This would allow a hospital to be built in a position which already has good site access and would allow patients to enjoy sea views – a point which the Connétable of St Helier has been reported as finding desirable.

Do you feel the plans offer easy access using bus, bicycle or walking and take into account appropriate sustainable methods of transport?

This will be a challenge anywhere the hospital is sited given the lack of availability of space in the urban core of St Helier.

Do you feel that the public were given adequate time to properly consider all the information provided by the States to engage properly in consultation

It is clear to me that there is a sustained push on the part of certain politicians to ram through the Overdale proposal including site access via Westmount without stopping to draw breath. As a voter, I appreciate that politicians are under pressure to deliver the future hospital – that it has been bogged down for many years does not look great for our political processes as a whole and the future hospital is not the only such issue upon which there is or has been political inertia. However, this pressure does not mean that we should forge ahead at any cost, particularly with Jersey's public finances under pressure like never before and with the full fiscal impact for Jersey of Covid-19 and Brexit yet to become known.

In overall terms, I think that what the public of Jersey want (even if they have not fully realised it with all of the other distractions for their attention at the present time) is a fit for purpose hospital delivered at the lowest possible cost. It seems to me that the access arrangements in particular indicate that Overdale may not be the most fiscally sound choice for the new hospital.

Was your voice heard

Ultimately elected politicians have a mandate to make decisions in the public good but subject to scrutiny. There is a balance to be struck between too much consultation at inordinate cost to the public purse and letting everybody think that their voice has been heard.

There is clearly a critical role for scrutiny in this process given the Government of Jersey's apparent determination to place the hospital at Overdale despite it being basic common sense that there are significant access challenges which do not affect other potentially suitable sites. As I say, even though I am a local resident, my primary concern is that Jersey spends £300m or more than is necessary in

delivering this project due to the convoluted access arrangements that we are being told need to be put in place for the Overdale Site, the need for which in my opinion needs to be reconsidered in the interests of Jersey as a whole. A bad decision risks burdening us all in circumstances where future financial challenges to Jersey are more uncertain than ever.

Keep up the scrutiny!